At the crossroad of performativity and the market: Schools' logics of action under post-bureaucratic and hybrid accountabilities

Abstract:	School systems are shifting towards forms of post-bureaucratic governance (PBG), implying higher levels of school autonomy, choice, and performance-based management. Under this governance approach, which combines forms of administrative and market accountability, schools face greater levels of competition and external pressure to perform. Schools experience such pressures unevenly and address them through different responses. The paper develops a mixed-methods case study conducted in Madrid, a Spanish region where PBG reform has intensified in the last decades, and proposes a novel index to position schools within their reference local education markets. The results show that schools articulate a broad range of logics of action, largely interrelated with their position in the education marketplace. We also show that schools' responses to external pressures are dynamic and marked by tensions of a different nature, which schools need to navigate, often without sufficient support from public authorities.

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At the crossroad of performativity and the market: Schools' logics of action under post-bureaucratic and hybrid accountabilities

School systems are shifting towards forms of post-bureaucratic governance (PBG), implying higher levels of school autonomy, choice, and performance-based management. Under this governance approach, which combines forms of administrative and market accountability, schools face greater levels of competition and external pressure to perform. Schools experience such pressures unevenly and address them through different responses. The paper develops a mixed-methods case study conducted in Madrid, a Spanish region where PBG reform has intensified in the last decades, and proposes a novel index to position schools within their reference local education markets. The results show that schools articulate a broad range of logics of action, largely interrelated with their position in the education marketplace. We also show that schools' responses to external pressures are dynamic and marked by tensions of a different nature, which schools need to navigate, often without sufficient support from public authorities.

Keywords: logics of action; Madrid; Spain; local education markets; post-bureaucratic governance; school accountability; school autonomy

Introduction

Policy ideas about school autonomy and external control are intrinsically in tension within post-bureaucratic forms of governance. The post-bureaucratic governance (PBG) approach evolves through decentralisation, school choice, and school autonomy measures – which aim to diversify the educational offer – but also through stricter administrative and market forms of accountability – which make schools more responsive to performance standards and families' demands (Maroy, 2009). This process of combining market and administrative forms of accountability activates competitive dynamics with the ultimate objective of transforming schools into more effective, but also innovative and context-sensitive, organisations (West et al., 2011).

1

However, schools' responses to external pressures are contingent on contextual and organisational factors (Jabbar, 2016; Zancajo, 2020). As sociological research has shown for decades, organisations can react differently to the same external stimuli, and quite often do so in ways that deviate from external expectations (Scott, 2013; Boxenbaum and Jonsson, 2017). Against PBG reform expectations, schools facing market competition or performance pressure do not necessarily implement improvement measures in instruction or pedagogy. Often, schools adopt superficial changes related to their image under logics of marketing and promotion, relying more on symbolic and emotional appeals than on substantive innovations or fragmented educational practices that allow them to 'fabricate' better learning outcomes in the short term, rather than on substantive innovations (Lubienski, 2007; Landri, 2021).

Both deviance and differentiation in school responses multiply in increasingly fragmented and multi-layered educational systems, especially when subject to reform pressure. School responses to educational reform are contingent and relational, and response patterns can be identified. However, this is far from meaning that school responses follow a strategic action rationale in all circumstances. In this paper, we rely on the concept of logics of action, understood as 'predominant orientations given to the conduct of a school in different spheres of action' (Maroy & van Zanten, 2009, p. 72), as it contributes to capture the informal, implicit, and not necessarily strategic nature of schools' reactions to educational reform.

Even though PBG is widespread in countries that were early adopters of the New Public Management agenda in the 1980s, such as the US, Chile, or the UK, more recently, it has also been enacted in countries with other public sector reform trajectories (Sahlberg, 2016). In Spain, the educational governance tradition is characterised by a bureaucratic school governance approach and an input-oriented

accountability system, which focuses more on rule compliance than on performance metrics. Despite this, there are significant differences between Spanish regions, with Madrid being the one that has been more determined to follow the school choice, autonomy and accountability reform agenda. In Madrid, the nature of schools' and teachers' autonomy has been challenged by new regulatory governance instruments, such as performance-based accountability, school browsers, and the amplification of school-choice freedom in the last fifteen years (Authors, 2020). This makes the Madrid urban area a unique setting to analyse schools' responses to the simultaneous intensification of market and administrative accountability pressures.

The objective of this paper is two-fold. First, we aim to identify the predominant logics of action of schools in response to competitive pressures, and whether and how these logics are associated with schools' positions in the marketplace. Second, we pinpoint the main tensions emerging when schools need to negotiate between what they experience as often contradictory sources of pressure. To address these objectives, the paper presents a case study conducted in the Madrid metropolitan area, based on qualitative interviews and survey responses.

Post-bureaucratic Governance: Schools' Logics of Action against Hybrid Accountabilities

The notion of PBG captures the transition from a governance model that relies on common rules and procedures, organisational rationality, predictability, and universality towards the conception of schools as independent managerial units whose behaviour can be regulated through multiple policy instruments, including forms of outcomes-based accountability, standardised data and parental pressure (Maroy, 2009; Maroy, 2012). PBG implies what some authors see as the hybridisation of accountability in education, understood as "the integration of accountability arrangements between and across the

3

boundaries of the public, market and social regimes of accountability" (Benish, & Mattei, 2020, p. 284; see also Milner, Mattei & Ydesen, 2021).

Along with the growing involvement of private actors in education systems worldwide as result of decades of neo-liberal reforms (Klees, 2008), we are currently witnessing a reform process that pushes public bureaucracies to increasingly adopt core values, mechanisms and modes of operation borrowed from the private sector, resulting in dynamics of so-called 'endogenous' privatisation (Ball & Youdell, 2007). As such, PBG favours the introduction of market logics into school systems through the diversification of the school provision and the competition between schools. In this context, 'educational quality' is expected to operate as a core regulatory mechanism, even if it appears to be an uncertain, opaque, plural and heterogeneous notion (Felouzis & Perroton, 2007).

Indeed, the publication of school quality data, as measured by large-scale assessments, is a precarious way to democratise school choice. Families tend to choose schools according to factors influenced by social class dispositions, preferences, and cultures (Ball et al., 1996; Bell, 2008; Authors, 2017). School choice, when "linked to the presence of desirable or undesirable others" (van Zanten, 2003, p. 109), becomes a class strategy that may generate dynamics of social closure and class reproduction, and the student population of schools often appears to be a sign of external reputation (Billingham & Hunt, 2016). Middle- and upper-class families benefit most from freedom of choice (OECD, 2019), not only because they are better able to navigate the system, but because they are more appealing to the better positioned schools.

In PBG frameworks, schools are meant to compete with other providers to attract students from the same school district (Holme et al., 2013). Nonetheless, the level of competition between schools is not only the result of formal school choice and

4

accountability regulations, but of locally contingent market dynamics that can be as determinant as formal state policies in shaping school actors' behaviour (Lubienski, 2005; van Zanten, 2009; Woods et al 2005). As we show next, schools develop a varied repertoire of logics of action as a reaction to intensifying competitive pressures.

Schools' reaction to competitive pressures: on the concept of logics of action

Logics of action can be understood as ex post facto reconstructions that capture a broad set of practices, activities, and routines in both the pedagogical and organisational domains through which schools address competitive interdependencies (Maroy & van Zanten, 2009). Such practices, which can be oriented at attracting and retaining a certain profile of students (usually to improve or maintain the school's relative market position), might be proactive but can also follow a survival rationale. Logics of action are distinguished from strategies, as they do not necessarily follow a systematic implementation pattern, nor a conscious choice of practices, nor awareness of their impact (Ball & Maroy, 2009; van Zanten, 2009).

The notion of logics of action draws from Weberian organisational theory according to which organisational logics are the result of the implicit relationship between goals and means assumed by actors (Bacharach & Mundell, 1993). From this perspective, the concept of logics of action aims to capture certain regularities, practices and routines involved in how schools respond to environmental pressures, including micro political processes at the school level (Ball, 2012). However, the concept of logics of action highlights the contingent and relational nature of school responses to external stimuli: the logics of action that emerge in one context might not emerge in another, and are strongly influenced by how reference schools react to similar competitive environments (Ball & Maroy, 2009; Jabbar, 2016; Moschetti, 2019; Zancajo, 2020).

5

Variation in schools' logics of action depends on two main factors: first, on the level of openness and stability of the immediate educational market; second, on the positions providers occupy in the education market hierarchy. Based on these variables, Maroy and van Zanten (2009) and van Zanten (2009) state that schools might adopt entrepreneurial, monopolistic, tactician or adaptive logics of action. Schools with entrepreneurial logics maintain a good image and reputation in open and unstable markets and deploy a set of practices to attract and retain middle-class students as a mechanism for distinction. In contrast, schools with monopolistic orientations take advantage of their dominant position and aspire to retain their status, often with academic-oriented and traditional educational approaches. Schools with tactician logics have an intermediate or low reputation and face unstable market dynamics by diversifying their student body and attracting middle-class students through instrumental and symbolic changes. Finally, adaptive schools have low reputation and attractiveness and accept their position, adopting organisational and pedagogical changes to adapt the school approach to the profile of their students (van Zanten, 2009; Maroy & van Zanten, 2009).

This classification of schools' logics of action is comprehensive and has influenced educational research – mainly qualitative – in different European educational realities and elsewhere (see for instance Moschetti (2019), Gurova and Camphuijsen (2020), Authors (2020), and Zancajo (2020)). Our study introduces some innovations in this line of inquiry by adopting a mixed-methods strategy and identifying the main tensions that schools with different logics of action experience when facing competition.

6

Madrid in context: a region with an emerging post-bureaucratic school governance approach

Spain is a country with a strong bureaucratic administrative tradition. The management of public services is mainly input-oriented and public bureaucracies are primarily controlled through legalistic forms of accountability (Ongaro, 2010). However, over the last few decades, several Spanish regions have adopted post-bureaucratic governance instruments to enhance diversified and competitive educational environments (Authors, 2020). Madrid is a salient example in this regard, combining three main reform strands, which have contributed to increasing competitive pressures on schools (Authors, 2013). First, an external standardised test was implemented in 2005, and its results were posted publicly in different formats. Since 2015, the test results are no longer publicly disseminated even though competitive pressures associated with test performance remain through informal channels (Authors, 2021). Second, so-called 'school autonomy' programmes were enacted following a top-down approach to diversify the educational offer and specialise schools into different fields, such as sports, technology, or foreign languages. Within this last group, the Spanish-English bilingual program created in 2004 for public schools by the regional administration became very popular among families. Nowadays 50% of primary education students are enrolled in bilingual schools, rising to 59% in secondary education (Consejería de Educación, 2021). Third, a reform process of increasing parental school choice culminated in 2013 with the establishment of an open enrolment policy across the whole region.

Another important feature to understand market pressures in the Madrilenian educational system is the strong presence of both independent and dependent private schools. Traditionally, most private schools are managed by religious institutions, although increasingly by commercial companies. To a great extent, such a high level of

7

educational privatisation explains why Madrid reports one of the highest levels of

school segregation in Spain and in Europe (Bonal & Zancajo, 2018; Murillo &

Martinez-Garrido, 2018).

In short, for all these reasons, Madrid represents an extraordinary scenario where

the emergence of diverse schools' logics of action against competitive pressures, in the

context of PBG reforms, can be studied.

Methodological Strategy

Data and method

The article relies on a case-study approach of a qualitative nature, triangulating semi-

structured interviews with primary education teachers, principals, and school leaders,

with survey responses and descriptive analyses of school practices[1]. Data triangulation

is used as the main source of retroductive thinking (see Downward & Mearman, 2007),

which aims to identify the mechanisms and the necessary conditions for a phenomenon

to exist.

We use data from an original survey administered through the [project title] to

principals (n=179) and teachers (n=844) from 91 Spanish schools, sampled in the

regions of Madrid and Catalonia, as two of the most developed and urbanised areas in

Spain. Schools were selected through a two-stage stratified design (authors, 2022): first,

sampling schools with systematic probability proportional to size (PPS), using the

school ownership as the explicit stratum and both the educational level and the province

as implicit stratums, and, secondly, surveying the management teams and 20 teachers

randomly sampled in each school.

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[1] Our analysis focuses on the primary education level, but some of the schools interviewed (mainly private subsidised schools) include both primary and secondary education.

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The survey was conducted to explore different school practices, pedagogical and instructional approaches, and elements regarding the school context (see Levatino (2021)). The survey results have been triangulated with data from a qualitative study conducted in a sub-sample of 12 schools from Madrid with diverging market positions and school providers. The qualitative data relies on a set of semi-structured interviews with principals and school leaders (n=26), and teachers from both tested and non-tested subjects of grades externally evaluated (n=24). The schools of the qualitative study were selected from those who answered the survey, considering school ownership and the socio-economic composition as the main sampling criteria. Both the survey and the qualitative study were carried out in urban areas to analyse schools' logics of action in spaces where the dynamics of school choice and between-school competition are more likely to come into play.

An index to position schools within the Local Education Market

This article proposes an index to establish the relative position of schools in the local education market (LEM). We have combined data from the survey with secondary data from administrative sources. An exploratory factor analysis enabled us to explore the underlying structure of a set of variables: sources of perceived performative pressure, level of performance, perceived reputation of the school, and the ratio between available places and demand. The commonalities among items have enabled us to identify a significant linear combination and extract a factor from three variables, as a proxy for the position in the local market: the schools' perceived reputation, the ratio between available places and applications, and the school performance.

As a robustness test to approach triangulation with qualitative analysis, we have compared the position of the schools derived from this index with a classification we made by combining primary data from fieldwork observations and interviews, with

9

secondary administrative data (see Table 1). The schools' positions in both

classifications are consistent, especially in the case of schools at the extremes of the

index.

[TABLE 1 HERE]

Results: How Schools Face Competitive Pressure

First, we provide an overview of the relationship between the schools' market positions

and their action logics, to then go into the detail of the practices and routines that

configure the action logics in question. Secondly, we reflect on the tensions that schools

experience when responding to competitive pressures.

Logics of action, market position and interdependent competition

The classification of schools based on their predominant logic of action shows a pattern,

following the schools' ranking as derived from the LEM index (Table 1). The schools

appear homogeneously distributed throughout the position index according to their

logics of action. At the lower end of the hierarchy, we find the adaptive schools, which

in our sample are all public. In the intermediate positions, there are the tactician schools,

which are also all public but with a higher market position. At the higher end of the

hierarchy, we find both the entrepreneurial and the monopolistic schools. All the

schools at the top, except one, are private.

Adaptive schools: struggling with no expected improvements

Schools with the lowest market position and poor external reputation are more likely to

adopt adaptive logics of action. These schools accept their disadvantaged position, seen

as structurally determined, and withdraw from competition. According to interviews

conducted in schools placed in lower segments of the LEM, a bad social reputation

10

places them in a stigmatised position, which hinders them from competing and triggers

a resigned attitude:

> We are realising we are becoming a ghetto school. Parents come to the school
> happy, but in general we don't have a good reputation. Our reputation is that of a
> school with a lot of immigrants, Romani families (…) this is our image... (Public 4,
> Principal 1)

They do not give credit to the testing and accountability system for measuring school

quality, nor do they agree with the publication and comparison of school results, e.g.,

Public 4, Public 3 and Public 7 schools (see Table 1, Index of attitudes and beliefs

toward PBA). Tested learning standards are not a priority in their teaching strategy, and

importance is given to deepening a value-oriented educational approach:

> For me the results of the external test are not important at all. I think they are not
> measuring anything truly important (…) I don't care excessively about it, I am
> much more concerned about students learning values in the school. (Public 3,
> Principal 1)

Adaptive schools often have a low academic orientation, embrace a compliant attitude

regarding the possibility of improving student learning, and focus instead on improving

the school climate:

> My goal is avoiding troubles and problems among students, improving coexistence
> and ensuring teachers feel comfortable at the school. (…) It is very difficult to
> obtain good educational results; we are content with the students being able to read
> and write. (Public 7, Principal 1)

Another priority of these schools is meeting the social and affective needs of students,

as well as improving social cohesion:

11

> To improve learning outcomes, we first must improve living together; it is very
> difficult to be able to approach a classroom and a standardised test if it is
> impossible to give a lesson. (Public 7, Principal 1)

Most adaptive schools may turn to innovation processes in search of methods that can
help students improve their learning experience, without expectations of changing the
school composition or making structural improvements (Public 4, Principal 1). For
example, they may foster specific programmes as a strategy to promote meaningful
education and student engagement.

Adaptation appears to be a more expressive than instrumental logic, as action is
driven by axiological motivations of remedial education. Changes are translated into
inclusive educational practices, where measures of compensation prevail. Aware of their
disadvantaged position in the marketplace, they prefer to adjust school practices
according to their student population needs and interests, adapt the schoolwork for
students with learning difficulties, and modify teaching materials and instructional
strategies (see also Table 1, Indices of internal differentiation):

> We are trying to work in a lighter way, with another textbook publisher, with
> different materials, with a more manipulative approach… We are trying to work
> with other kinds of things, not only book, book, book, assignment, assignment,
> assignment. (Public 4, Principal 1)

Some schools even reach a certain level of inclusive specialisation and take market
advantage of such conditions (Public 5). Other schools report being labelled as the
'inclusive school' in the neighbourhood, enrolling students excluded from academic-
oriented schools (Public 3). Schools are also aware of how being associated with
specialising in a lower market segment is a self-reinforcing social exclusion dynamic:

> Families are removing students with difficulties from bilingual schools; then, if you
> have a reputation for doing things well in terms of inclusion, you may have a

12

serious problem because of having too many students with difficulties. (Public 3, Principal 1)

When we consider the intersections between LEM and how schools use data to build reputation and compare their own performance with that of other schools (Figure 1), as well as in how much importance is placed on preparing students for external evaluation (Figure 2), it becomes clear how schools enact standardised tests quite differently. Adaptive schools do not make standardised tests a priority but may adopt test preparation practices following an inclusive rationale. Unlike better positioned schools in the market, which teach-to-the-test to further improve their image and external reputation (PPP 3 and Public 1, in Figure 2), schools with adaptive logics of action (Public 7, Public 4, Public 5, and Public 3, in Figure 2) often conceive teaching-to-the-test 'to familiarise students with the test and limit stress and frustration' (Teacher 3, Public 4).

[FIGURES 1 & 2 HERE]

Motivated by remedial education approaches, adaptive schools use internal segmentation mechanisms to address their disadvantaged composition (predominantly pupils with immigrant backgrounds), such as attainment grouping or reinforcement groups to cope with students' learning difficulties (see schools Public 4 and Public 7 in Table 1, indices of internal differentiation).

Adaptive schools try to better align school practices with student needs but do not focus on competing with other schools. They also do not give much importance to disseminating the activities of the school, such as open days and ad hoc visits arranged with families. These schools face promotional actions as a ritual and with resignation, acknowledging that their student composition 'will remain the same' as stigmatisation 'makes it very difficult' (Public 4, Principal 1) to attract students from better-off social

13

backgrounds. Consistently, we see how all adaptive schools rank below average in data usage: indicating that comparing to other schools or building their own reputation is not a priority (see Figure 1).

Some of these schools also renounce adopting other strategies to externally differentiate their educational offer and embrace conformist attitudes regarding their student intake: 'We are in this neighbourhood, and this is what we have.' (Public 7, Principal 1).

Entrepreneurial schools: competing to reinforce the privileged position

Although enjoying a good position in the local hierarchy, entrepreneurial schools perceive high competition levels and carry out actions of distinction to attract certain family profiles. These schools are defined as 'great companies and marketing projects' (PPP 1, Teacher 2) as they are most active in adopting instrumental actions to further improve their market position. They need to instrumentally respond to families' preferences and expectations in a context of open competition:

> Families have become clients and they have changed their role, in part, because us, the schools, have allowed them to become clients, to change their role. Currently, parents come here with a demanding attitude, because if you don't give me what I want, I change to the school in front of me, because they have what I want. (PPP 1, Teacher 2)

In Madrid, the existence of hubs of prestigious schools in some neighbourhoods means that well-positioned schools have most of their competing schools close by (PPP 2, Public 1 and PPP 1). Competition is intrinsically related to market, demographic, and spatial dynamics in their closest area, and, importantly, shapes how schools present their pedagogical approaches and facilities:

14

> There are too many schools in this area. It might be the case that in the next 6, 7, 10
> years, 25% of the schools won't exist because there is not sufficient demand. So,
> there is a very competitive struggle between schools – very close to each other,
> with a very small market share – and therefore there is eagerness for pedagogic
> innovation, client care, and personalised attention. (PPP 1, Principal 3)

The entrepreneurial schools usually develop direct strategies to meet accountability goals. They use test preparation activities and align teaching to the external evaluation. Virtually all schools acknowledge having intensively prepared students to face standardised tests and achieve better results (PPP 1, PPP 3 and Public 1, in Figure 2). The alignment with external testing is actively encouraged by the management team, and teachers are instructed or recommended to adjust teaching to evaluable learning standards and make students practise for the tests (Figure 3).

[FIGURE 3 HERE]

Concern for school image and competitive pressure appear to be a factor involved in test preparation activities, as expressed in the school where teachers broadly consider that teaching should be more adjusted to learning standards (Public 1):

> I want the students to know what kind of tests they will face and if there is
> anything they don't remember from previous courses. We are looking for good
> results; I'm not going to say the contrary. We want good results because that says a
> lot about us as a school. (Public 1, Teacher 3)

Entrepreneurial schools work to improve their image in the marketplace. For example, school actors make the most use of standardised test data both to compare themselves with other schools and to build and further increase their reputation (see Figure 1 for PPP 1, PPP 2, PPP 3, PPP 4 and Public 1). All entrepreneurial schools deploy such practices, even those holding the best positions in the educational market, combining high performance, a good reputation, and over-demand for places (See Table 1, Indices

15

of promotional and marketing activities and Figure 1).

The competitive nature of entrepreneurial schools leads them to attract a certain profile of families to reinforce their privileged position. This then turns into higher levels of parents' performative expectations and pressure (Public 1, PPP 2, PPP 1, Public 2). 'Families ask about the results in the open day events' (Public 1, Principal 1) and are very 'interested in the level of [school] performance' (PPP 1, Principal 1).

As for promotional and marketing activities, these schools encourage ad hoc visits to help families develop greater awareness of the activities of the school. Almost all of them are above average in organising open days and in using their website and social media to offer visits for families (Table 1, Indices of promotional and marketing activities). They also carry out sophisticated and specialised promotional strategies, for example, relying on 'marketing teams' in charge of the website, the school publicity, and the communication strategy (PPP 1 and PPP 2). They use banners, flyers, and targeted advertising campaigns. The schools engaged in more complex promotion strategies are subsidised private schools, part of broader foundations and congregations, which urge them to develop marketing plans:

Q: Do you advertise the school in any way?

R: Yes, we do it, all the time. Last year we used a billboard, we are continuously on social networks. Anything we do, we upload it there. There are advertising campaigns for the open days, and we perform targeted campaigns, so we have a marketing service for that. We look for a lot of resources to upload and we are always thinking about what people want. (PPP 2, Principal 1)

Entrepreneurial schools are also aware of the importance of distinguishing their educational offer by deploying differentiation strategies. This involves different instructional and educational programmes, and other extracurricular activities and complementary services:

16

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> We offer services lacking in other schools. We opened an artistic baccalaureate, a
> high school of music, which is unique in the city, (…) we have broadened the
> schedule of different extracurricular activities; this is what parents demand, (…) we
> offer more personalised attention, more orientation, a nursing service, etc. (PPP 1,
> Principal 3)

Entrepreneurial schools use their margins of organisational autonomy to improve their
image and market position. They participate in school autonomy and improvement
projects defined by educational authorities to attract and retain student enrolment and
build a particular external image:

> We are involved in all these school projects because we are aware of what school
> autonomy means… which is a bit more competition, let's say; developing certain
> aspects that allow us to attract the population and not run out of students. (Public 1,
> Teacher 3)

Tactician schools: strategising to improve the precarious market position

Schools with a medium or low reputation, but actively engaged in market competition,
adopt tactician logics of action to attract and retain middle-class students. They usually
have a heterogeneous student body and are aware of their precarious position in the
market hierarchy. To avoid becoming segregated schools, they need to find some
balance between enrolling students with diverse learning levels, to 'maintain a very
heterogeneous population', and prevent middle-class families 'abandoning the school
for other institutions' (Public 6, Principal 1).

Tactician schools carry out several strategies to be more attractive to certain
profiles of families. Schools may tactically adopt pedagogical innovations, which are
expected to be appealing to a certain profile of families that 'choose the school because
of active and updated educational methods'. These schools see innovation as a strategy

17

to compete and ensure that families perceive the school as 'giving the same opportunities as other schools in the district' (Public 2, Principal 2).

They also implement internal differentiation strategies (i.e., tracking and ability grouping) which are more present in schools with a diverse student population (Public 6 and Public 2 schools). Such instructional targeting practices become outstanding ways to accommodate, simultaneously, middle-class parents' expectations and socially disadvantaged students' needs (van Zanten, 2009).

Unlike adaptive schools, which carry out differentiation practices of a compensatory nature, tactician schools apply internal segmentation mechanisms for instrumental purposes, with an intensity between medium and high (Table 1, Indices of internal segmentation). These mechanisms are applied to adapt to different student profiles and according to their diverging needs, trying to establish non-permanent two-speed groups:

> Yes, we provide some specific support already when they are children. Then, in
> first and second grades, this support is focused on non-readers, students coming
> from ethnic minorities, migrant backgrounds, or those with a late entry to the
> education system. (…) This diversity in the classrooms slows us down a lot. We
> also do the opposite in some courses: there is a teacher who takes the best students
> for advanced classes and the tutor stays with those who are at the normal level,
> with the rest of the group. (Public 6, Principal 2)

Tactician schools enact the external test with an instrumental logic. They show an inconsistent adherence to the accountability system and do not intrinsically believe in the test as a useful educational device (Table 1, Index of attitudes and beliefs toward PBA: Public 2 and Public 6). However, they are aware of the importance of the external test performance in market terms:

18

> For me, the test has very little importance, but I am aware that families come to the
> open day events to enrol their 3-year-old children, and they already ask for the
> results of sixth grade students in the test… (Public 2, Principal 1)

As a result of such dynamics, schools carry out, with a moderate intensity, actions to prepare students for the tests (Figure 2: Public 2 and Public 6), a strategy recommended by the management team (Figure 3: Public 2 and Public 6). Principals consider such practices as an effective strategy to avoid the 'risk that outstanding students do not know the mechanics of the test' (Public 6, Principal 1), which would lead to a poor performance.

Moreover, these schools may develop forms of external differentiation because of competitive pressures. For instance, schools use the Spanish-English Bilingual Programme as a 'tactic and a marketing issue', strategically adopted to 'deal with [enrolment] difficulties' and as a way to offer 'something different' to face external pressure and improve their market position in the local hierarchy (Public 2, Teacher 1).

Monopolistic schools: no stress to maintain the privileged position

Schools with a monopolistic orientation are in the upper positions of the market hierarchy and take advantage of it to maintain their status. They have good average scores and a good reputation. The competition space goes beyond its immediate surroundings, as more than half of its students come from outside the neighbourhood. Principals describe themselves as 'not a neighbourhood school' attracting families 'from everywhere' who 'choose the school project' (Private 1, Principal 1). Despite the wide competition space, they do not show any interest in competitive logics from their niche position:

> Q: Do you have more demand than vacancies?

19

> A: Yes, we have much more demand, but we do not want to extend the school size. We could open another group, but we do not want to do it. And the demand we have mostly comes from the families we already have in the school. (Private 1, Principal 1)

The closed position in the market, and the absence of competitive pressure, lead these schools to adopt expressive approaches to education. Given their homogeneous composition, they are not interested in carrying out instrumental actions of internal segmentation to respond to different student profiles and learning rhythms (Table 1). They develop pedagogical innovations with a holistic curricular approach, working with a broad repertoire of strategies and activities and encompassing areas of knowledge that are not strictly academic:

> What makes this school different are the methodologies. We have a good balance of different areas: humanities, science, and arts. Arts are very important, we work deeply on creativity, theatre, music, and plastic arts. This also makes us very different to other schools, for us these subjects are essential. (Private 1, Principal 1)

These schools adopt pedagogical views focused on academic excellence, but not to be aligned with the goals and tools of the accountability system (Figure 3). They 'pay little attention' to the external test and take it just because 'it is mandatory' (Private 1, Principal 1). Tests would not reflect their standard of 'education quality', which is achieved 'slowly', and even see tests with scepticism as learning evaluation devices.

The external test is an issue of minor importance also in terms of how it affects their market position and the school's pedagogical approach. The monopolistic school is the only one in our sample whose management team does not instruct, or recommend, teachers make students practise for the test or be aligned with the learning standards (Figure 3), being the school with the lowest teaching-to-the-test rate (Figure 2).

20

The more elitist schools do not feel 'any pressure at all for competition' because they do not need to compete for enrolment. They avoid engaging in large-scale marketing actions and organising promotional events such as open days (see Table 1, Indices of promotional and marketing activities). They already have a good reputation in a closed and stable market position and focus on a public that 'finds very few alternatives' (Private 1, Principal 1).

Schools at the top of the market hierarchy resemble the worst-off schools in that they have also given up competing with other schools. The motives are obviously different, since it is the privileged position that leads them not to put competition at the centre of their educational and organisational decisions. They prefer 'to receive families individually as vacancies need to be covered' (Private 1, Principal 2) and rely on face-to-face interviews or personalised school visits, which allow them to deploy informal selective practices (see also Table 1). As a niche strategy to attract high-income families seeking non-academic models, they use an innovative progressive pedagogical approach as a seal of quality (Private 1).

Schools' logics of action, market position and inner tensions

Even though different logics of action predominate in each market segment, individual schools' responses to market pressures are neither univocal nor predictable. Three kinds of tensions have been inductively identified within schools when addressing competitive pressure: emulation-differentiation, innovation-tradition, and segmentation-accommodation.

First, schools implement instructional and organisational changes as a response to market pressures. These changes sit between emulation and differentiation mechanisms. Schools seem to face a dilemma between reducing risks of competition by behaving as others do, i.e., adopting school policies to 'jump on board' (Public 1,

21

Principal 2), and 'drifting along for trends' (PPP 1, Principal 1). The rationale of the

emulative mechanism is the minimisation of uncertainty and the risk of being left

behind market trends:

> Schools look around in search of what works because they do not want to be left
> behind, but the problem is that many times these things are implemented
> meaninglessly, too quickly, or without laying the necessary foundations first. (PPP
> 2, Principal 2)

However, as schools try to adhere to trends to attract families' or students', they also

need to distinguish their educational offer from potential competitors to create market

niches and dilute external market pressures:

> Q: Why did you join the bilingual program?
> A: Above all, this [school] was the first in the municipality, so I guess it was for
> differentiation and to give importance to English (Public 1, Principal 1)

Schools deploying different logics of action move between emulation and

differentiation mechanisms. This tension is clearly perceived in entrepreneurial schools,

which share marketing and promotional activities such as open days or the use of

standardised test results as an indicator of quality, but try to differentiate themselves

from school alternatives by adopting educational programmes and offering

extracurricular activities and services. This tension is also present in tactician schools,

which develop pedagogical innovations to attract middle-class families as a form of

emulation, and, at the same time, engage in specific programmes to ensure

differentiation.

Second, most schools report adopting pedagogical and organisational changes to

adjust their teaching-learning processes, and emphasise competence-based and active

learning and promote an image of the school as innovative and updated. Tactician

22

schools also report innovative pedagogical approaches to be attractive to middle-class

families. The monopolistic school has made innovation their seal of quality. However,

an explicit tension between innovation and tradition is reported by principals, mainly

from entrepreneurial schools, because of the diverse interests and preferences of

families. Schools with a more academic reputation describe families as worried about

academic results and standards. Schools report parental pressure as families fear that

educational innovations could contribute to lowering academic standards:

> Families with small children do not care about [educational] change, but when they
> reach higher grades, they start to worry about what can happen with their children
> and they start asking questions and challenging us, about doing classes with books
> or not... (PPP 1, Teacher 1)

Finally, adaptive schools adopt an accommodation approach to adjust their practices to

their students' learning needs. Nonetheless, schools with a more heterogeneous student

population, such as the tactician and the entrepreneurial schools, combine

accommodation with segmentation approaches, such as tracking, attainment grouping,

and so on, to adapt to different students' profiles and attend to their diverging needs:

> Individualised learning is very important because we have very different learning
> levels, Romani people, Moroccans, immigrants who join during the course, so
> attention to diversity is very important in this school. (Public 6, Principal 2)

Discussion and conclusions

Post-bureaucratic governance implies complex modes of educational regulation and

coordination between educational actors. This mode of governance reinforces external

pressures over schools, from administrative control to interdependent market

competition. However, schools receive and experience pressure unevenly, and therefore,

as our study shows, schools behave differently and establish different organisational

23

routines when reacting to external pressures. Analytically, the notion of schools' logics

of action contributes to capture this complexity by operating as an intermediary concept

between, on the one hand, the pressure that comes from administrative and market

accountabilities and, on the other hand, specific and observable school decisions and

practices.

The categories of schools' logics of action identified by van Zanten (2009) and

Maroy and van Zanten (2009) in other European settings apply to the case of Madrid to

a great extent. In Table 2, we organise the main results of our research around them. We

relate the logics of action to the main conditions that contribute to their emergence, the

main challenges that schools aim to address, the practices in which the logics crystallise,

and the tensions observed.

[TABLE 2 HERE]

Our research corroborates the outstanding role and influence the position that schools

occupy in the LEM has in understanding the different logics of action through which

schools manage external pressures. Even though positions in the LEM are not fixed and

can vary over time, our research shows that there is an important correspondence

between a school's position in the market and the practices they deploy to address

competitive pressure. Previous research considers that the level of openness and

stability of the educational market also conditions schools' logics of action. Since our

study has been conducted in densely populated areas of Madrid with similar levels of

market openness, we have instead highlighted how the level of perceived competition

by schools is a variable that, together with the LEM position, can predict how schools

will behave in competitive environments.

The LEM index developed in this paper can help future research to analyse

24

systematically how the relative position of schools in the local hierarchy involves

certain school practices and responses. As an analytical device, the index can contribute

to making better sense of organisational variation and deviance in complex and multi-

layered systems, such as education. The dynamics of local education markets are highly

context-sensitive and therefore need to be nuanced and locally situated. At the same

time, the objective measurement of schools' relative position in their lived market

(Taylor, 2001), and their correspondence to particular schools' logics of action (van

Zanten, 2009) might contribute to unveiling underlying mechanisms of competitive

interdependence in quasi-market school systems. Comparative evidence from different

settings can help to improve our understanding of the limits and impacts of market

mechanisms in education.

Overall, the notion of logics of action appears to be a useful analytical concept

to understand the interdependent patterns of organisational behaviour within local

education spaces. Nonetheless, the fact that our results identify regularities in the

association between types of logics of action, schools' positions within the LEM, and

perceived competition, does not mean that the schools' reactions to market pressures are

univocal or seamless. Indeed, these reactions can be labelled as tentative guesses based

on observed tensions, namely: emulation-differentiation, innovation-tradition and

segmentation-accommodation.

Our study contributes to the understanding of how PBG policies may facilitate

the reproduction and deepening of educational inequalities in local education markets.

Two main policy implications can be derived from our analysis. First, the fact that

segmentation in the educational system can be clearly marked by public or private

provision should urge educational authorities to adopt measures to revalorise the public

sector, provide public schools with the necessary resources to serve disadvantaged students, and reduce the existing levels of student selection and school segregation.

Second, the fact that schools in the bottom of the local education market hierarchy tend to feel hopeless and resigned, raises the need to revisit the current accountability paradigm, in which schools bear the primary responsibility for their results. Public authorities should consider providing these schools with the necessary economic and pedagogic support, instead of expecting that external pressures will urge schools to address demand and/or performance difficulties on their own. Instead of reinforcing open market dynamics, the accountability system should help to identify troubled schools and get involved in reversing their declining trajectory.

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30

Table 1. Schools' logics of action, position in the Local Education Market and indices of schools' attitudes and practices

| School	Logics of action	LEM position *	LEM position index**		Index of attitudes and beliefs toward PBA		Indices of internal differentiation								Indices of promotional and marketing activities					
							Internal differentiation		Ability grouping		Adapted to students with learning difficulties		Adapted to advanced students		Open days		Web and social networks		Ad-hoc visits	
PPP 1	*Entrepreneurial*	Mid-high	1,1	High	1,18	Positive	-1,07	Low	-0,30	Med	-1,30	Low	-0,51	Low	0,31	Med-low	0,02	Med-low	0,91	Med-high
PPP 2	*Entrepreneurial*	High	1,5	High	1,27	Positive	-0,23	Med	0,18	Med	-0,11	Med	-0,29	Med	0,31	Med-low	0,89	Med-high	0,91	Med-high
PPP 3	*Entrepreneurial*	High	1,9	High	0,11	Mid	0,06	Med	0,78	High	-0,35	Low	-0,27	Med	0,31	Med-low	0,89	Med-high	0,91	Med-high
PPP 4	*Entrepreneurial*	High	0,9	High	0,72	Positive	-0,96	Low	-0,03	Med	-0,95	Low	-0,64	Low	0,58	Med-low	0,24	Med-low	0,67	Med-high
Private 1	*Monopolistic*	Mid-high	1,1	High	-0,92	Negative	-0,47	Med	0,05	Med	-0,64	Low	-0,38	Med	-1,83	Low	0,89	Med-high	0,91	Med-high
Public 1	*Entrepreneurial*	Mid-high	1,2	High	0,07	Mid	0,06	Med	0,51	High	0,08	Med	-0,04	Med	0,58	Med-low	0,24	Med-low	-1,50	Low
Public 2	*Tactician*	Mid-high	0,1	Mid-high	-0,54	Mid	0,66	High	0,66	High	0,26	Med	0,63	High	0,58	Med-low	0,89	Med-high	0,43	Med-low
Public 3	*Adaptive*	Low	-0,1	Mid-low	-0,87	Negative	0,57	High	-0,06	Med	1,38	High	-0,51	Low	0,58	Med-low	0,89	Med-high	0,43	Med-low
Public 4	*Adaptive*	Low	-1,4	Low	-1,12	Negative	1,50	High	0,40	High	1,73	High	0,56	High	-0,22	Low	-1,07	Low	-1,01	Low
Public 5	*Adaptive*	Mid-low	-0,3	Mid-low	0,59	Positive	1,54	High	1,09	High	0,93	High	1,37	High	0,58	Med-low	0,24	Med-low	0,91	Med-high
Public 6	*Tactician*	Mid-low	0,3	Mid-high	0,14	Mid	0,26	Med	0,02	Med	0,18	Med	-0,08	Med	0,58	Med-low	0,89	Med-high	-1,98	Low
Public 7	*Adaptive*	Low	-2,0	Low	0,24	Mid	1,04	High	1,16	High	0,73	High	0,35	Med	-0,22	Low	0,89	Med-high	-0,53	Low

Source: Authors

* Constructed with primary data from fieldwork and secondary administrative data

** Constructed with primary data from a questionnaire and secondary administrative data

Table 2. Logics of action and distinctive responses

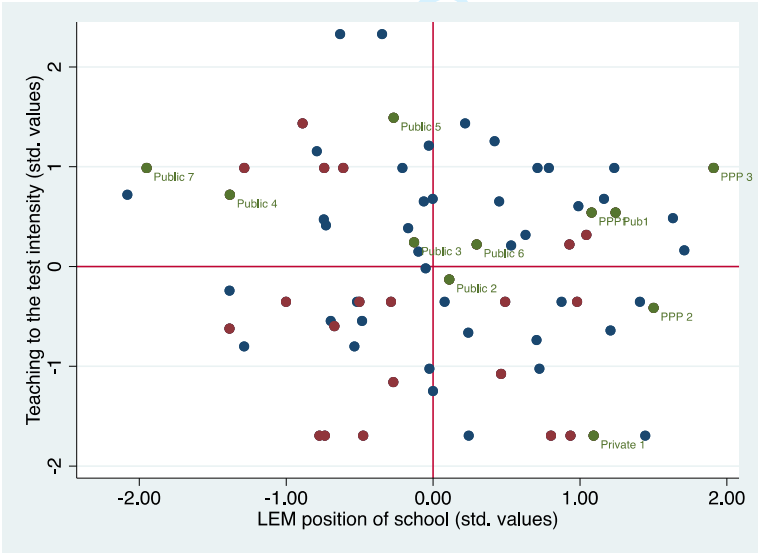| Logics of action	Market position	Perceived competition	Main challenges	Main distinctive practices	Other compatible practices	Main tensions observed
Adaptive	Low	Low – med.	Deal with vulnerable students & avoid marginalization	Instructional inclusive strategies & remedial approaches	Discipline & coexistence, internal differentiation, teaching to the test under remedial rationales	Adaptation over segmentation
Tactician	Low to med	High	Deal with heterogeneity. Avoid decline & improve market position	Tracking, internal differentiation & ability grouping	Superficial innovation; behavioural selection; school open days; teaching to the test for instrumental purposes	Segmentation over adaptation, and innovation over tradition
Entrepreneurial	Med to high	High	Deal with competition & improve market position	Extensive promotion and marketing activities / Alignment with accountability goals; data use for comparison and reputation building	Selection (second order competition); superficial innovation; niche strategies; selective ad-hoc visits, teaching to the test under reputational rationales	Emulation and differentiation coexist; tradition and innovation coexist
Monopolistic	High	Low	Maintain Status Quo	Niche strategies, selective ad hoc visits; , expressive educational approaches	Cultural distinction activities / absence of instrumental actions	Innovation over tradition, and differentiation over emulation

Source: Authors.
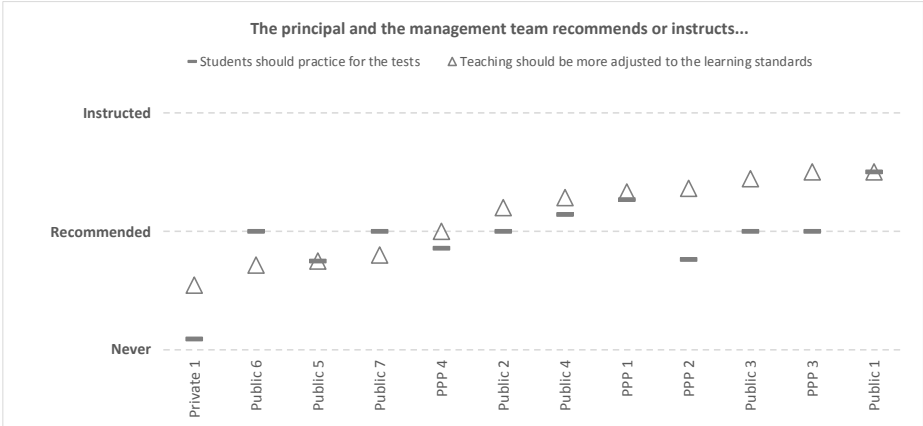
Figure 1. LEM position and data use
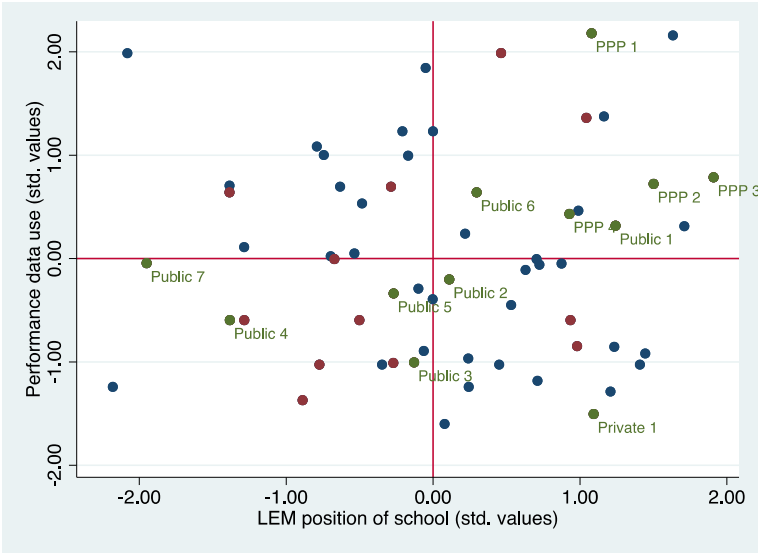
Note: The data use index combines two variables: data use to build reputation and data use to compare school's performance with that of other schools.

Figure 2. LEM position and teaching to the test practices

Figure 3. Actions to meet accountability goals: alignment and teaching to the test