

CHAPTER 6 : MEDIATIONS

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6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims to analyze and compare the mediation processes at work during the implementation of performance-based accountability policies, in particular, those which occur at the intermediate level of public action, the *académies* in France and school boards in Quebec. The idea of mediation signifies that one is attentive to the local translations and recontextualizations of policies by these bodies and their actors.

This chapter is underpinned by an empirical observation: although the more centralized and hierarchical nature of the administration of national education in France might suggest that the implementation of performance-based accountability policies would be more uniform throughout the *académies* than across Quebec SBs in a system which is, in comparison very decentralized, we observe the

contrary. Indeed, in France, we see a greater variation in the implementation of performance-based accountability policies at the level of *rectorats* and schools than that observed in Quebec among various SBs and schools. How then can we explain that the implementation of these policies is rather divergent in France from one *académie* to another while in Quebec we observe a strong convergence among at least formally relatively autonomous SBs (Brassard, 2014)?

In order to understand this phenomenon, this chapter focuses on the way in which intermediate bodies contribute to the “co-construction” of public action (Datnow & Park, 2009). As others have highlighted (Lipsky, 1980; Dubois, 2010), we argue that implementation is the process which defines public action itself, in contrast to approaches which consider implementation as merely the phase when earlier policy decisions are applied, more or less consistently (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1984). In this respect, this chapter contends that policy makers include both national actors *and* those at other territorial scales who could be in a subordinate administrative position, as is the case in France. From this perspective, the chapter is attentive to *académies*' (here as administrations) and SB actors' logics when mediating central institutional accountability mechanisms.

In empirical terms, the chapter documents the implementation of performance-based accountability policies from the perspective of their convergence/divergence among French *académies* and among Quebec SBs. The analysis concentrates on two aspects: the cognitive and instrumental facets of these policies. Contrary to what an approach centered on formal institutions and the administrative organization prevalent in the two case studies would suggest, we demonstrate that the implementation of accountability policies is not uniform from one territory

to another. The divergence is even strong in France, while it is weak in Quebec. In analytical terms, the chapter proposes to explain the different mediation logics at work at the intermediate level through a combination of four explanatory factors: the institutional context at work, the problematization of educational issues, the local configurations of interests, and the actors' professional ethos. These logics lead to a variety of performance-based accountability policies among French *académies* and Quebec SBs: bureaucratic governance, reflexive governance, and regulatory results-based governance.

The chapter is divided into two sections. The first is devoted to the description of the implementation of performance-based accountability policies, largely divergent in France and rather convergent in Quebec. The second provides explanatory factors by developing an analysis of the varieties of performance-based accountability at work in different *académies* and SBs as a function of mediation logics at work.

6.2 DIVERGENCE IN FRANCE, CONVERGENCE IN QUEBEC

How are performance-based accountability policies implemented in France and Quebec? In order to characterize implementation at the level of *académies* and SBs, we will examine the degree of convergence of these policies from one intermediate

body to another. The notion of convergence is useful since it allows us to describe how a public policy is translated when it is enacted, as opposed, for example, to that of transfer which focuses on the analysis of the processes at play in the circulation of models and ideas orienting the policies at the formulation stage. More precisely, here we will focus on sigma convergence (Holzinger & Knill, 2005) and describe the variation in the policies observed.¹

The investigation reveals a marked convergence in Quebec in the implementation of “results-based management” (RBM) in the four SBs studied, both from the normative perspective and from that of the instruments deployed. Among the French *académies*, in contrast, we observe a clear divergence in the implementation of the steering by results policy, while the convergence of instruments used is merely formal.

6.2.1 QUEBEC: NORMATIVE AND INSTRUMENTAL CONVERGENCE AMONG SCHOOL BOARDS

Normative convergence in the implementation of RBM in Quebec by the SBs studied can be observed along two dimensions: SB managers' representations and the examples of “good practices” drawn upon to enact RBM.

The deployment of RBM in the SBs relies on cognitive and normative frameworks partly shared by high-level and mid-level managers. On the one hand, they agree with the arguments put forward by successive

Quebec governments justifying RBM: this policy would introduce consistency in the education system, supporting “success for all,” a key slogan in Quebec school policy since the 1990s and on which there is a consensus among almost all actors (Dembélé, Goulet, Lapointe, & Deniger, 2013; Maroy & Mathou, 2014; Maroy, Mathou, Vaillancourt, & Voisin, 2014; see Chap. 5). For a number of

those interviewed, RBM allows “everyone to contribute (to the SBs’ goals)” (Northern SB_E2_DG). It would allow for closer alignment and more precise common objectives for all SB personnel: “I think that it provides a framework for our action; we know what we are working on” (Western SB_E14_DGA). The fact of having to “account for” one’s results and “take responsibility” is seen as positive.

On the other hand, high-level and mid-level managers are aware of existing research on school effectiveness (Normand, 2006) and visible learning (Hattie, 2009) as a result of their training as school managers (D’Arrisso, 2013). They believe that a school or a teacher “can make a difference” in student learning, whether individually or collectively, regardless of family or social backgrounds. Drawing on this research, the SB managers interviewed then claim to be using RBM as a “lever” to “regulate” (orient) schools more effectively, notably to better monitor and improve the efficacy of local practices. Thus, in the Eastern SB, management agreements are a means of establishing a “correlation” between the decisions of schools (first, their management) and their effect on student achievement: according to the DG,² this would bring actors to ask themselves “How do the decisions taken (...) have a positive impact on student success?” (Eastern SB_E11_DG). In the Northern SB as well, RBM is not simply perceived as an administrative policy but rather as a policy that has (or should have) an influence on pedagogical practices and student services. Thus, their latest partnership agreement and strategic plan explicitly state that the instruments in place aim at “the regulation of pedagogical practices.”

This cognitive convergence can be explained, first by the existence of a professional milieu of school administrators in Quebec, whose initial training has been progressively institutionalized since the end of the 1960s (Brassard, 2000) and whose networks and professional associations regularly organize conferences and training sessions. During these encounters, various academic works or “good” practices in terms of management and “effective” teaching circulate among the members (e.g., the work of J. Hattie³ and direct instruction as a teaching practice; various forms of strategies of “pedagogical leadership” for school principals, or even for the role of intermediate administrators in policy implementation).⁴ Therefore, these networks are one of the vectors of the convergences observed, confirming, in this respect the hypothesis of Di Maggio and Powell (1983) according to which professions are one source of normative isomorphism.

Moreover, we could also argue that such a consensual approach to RBM among SB managers had been encouraged beforehand during the discussion of the legal texts in a committee of the Quebec National Assembly, in which SB representatives participated. This was a lengthy process, and their representatives’ suggested legal amendments were approved during successive hearings (Maroy & Mathou, 2014). In addition, the underlying orientations of these bills were supported both by the two dominant parties (the PQ and the PLQ), alternatively in government, and by SB administrators through the stance of their associations. Thus, despite the opposition of teachers’ unions and the more radical views of the political opposition, the debates progressively converged toward a “neo-statist” conception of New Public Management, which was satisfactory to a majority coalition of actors, to the detriment of a strictly neoliberal and market conception (see Chap. 5).

The instrumental and cognitive convergence of SB managers is also the result of the models they draw upon to orient the implementation of RBM. In three SBs out of four, the understanding and instrumentation of RBM were largely based on the importation and borrowing of the experience of Ontario, a Canadian province which has taken the reflexive accountability approach very far (Maroy & Voisin, 2014). Rather than systems of high-stakes incentives or sanctions, as in the USA, in this reflexive accountability system, the improvement of schools is expected both from the transparency based on the comparison of relative performances and from pedagogical and financial support measures and an obligation for teaching teams to improve their results, in case of relative underperformance (Anderson & Jaafar, 2006; Fullan, 2010; Leithwood, Fullan, & Watson, 2003).⁵

This Ontarian reference has circulated through a number of channels: visits to Ontario; the hiring of experts; and the organization of professional seminars. For example, in November 2010, ADIGECS (Association of Directors-General of School Boards) invited the Council of Catholic Schools of the Center-East of Ontario to present a paper in the context of its annual conference on tools and conditions favoring student success and better results: notably, the use of databases, team monitoring tools, and “lessons” from the school effectiveness research. Another example, the “new governance,” driven by the new DG of the Eastern School Board (between June 2010 and June 2011), was very largely inspired by the experience of an Ontarian Francophone school council, which had improved its ranking in terms of school results. A number of visits from the SB management, followed by the hiring of the former school council DG as an expert, prepared for and encouraged the implementation of RBM. In the Northern SB, a new type of support for “underperforming” schools (financially and pedagogically) was implemented in 2006, following a presentation on the Ontarian school board experience.

In terms of policy instruments employed, there too the convergence among SBs is striking. This touches on two dimensions: on the one hand, the instruments prescribed by the laws organizing RBM and, on the other hand, additional instruments (statistical or pedagogical monitoring instruments) not prescribed but greatly relied upon by the SBs, given that these instruments were put in place with the intention of regulating school (pedagogical) practices.

The large repertoire of instruments legally prescribed by RBM (“strategic plan”; “success plan”; “educational project”; “partnership agreements, management, and educational success agreements”; and accountability “reports”) was, thus, progressively implemented, with diverse modalities in each school board. More or less rapidly, each SB signed partnership agreements with the ministry and established management agreements with its schools while recognizing contextual contingencies (for instance, all schools did not sign immediately, due to resistance from teachers). Nonetheless, this implementation occurred in adapting the procedures prescribed by the ministry in order to simplify them (e.g., in the Southern and Eastern SB, by combining the contents of the success plan and that of the management agreement of the school, upon the request of school principals). It is also a matter of making them more acceptable to some reticent actors by reducing, for example, the number of targets to pursue for the schools (Eastern SB), or in extending the timeline for the achievement of goals (Western SB) or, more radically, by abandoning the notion of targets to simply require “measurable progress” (Northern SB).

The relative convergence here partially resulted from the coercive framework of the legal provisions and their monitoring by the ministry. The central administration of education directed the implementation of the measures of Bill 88 over a period of 2 years, a mission statement to that effect having been sent to SBs. They were later informed of the targets that they had to reach, a timetable was specified in the partnership agreements between the minister and the SBs, and implementation guides were produced.⁶ In that respect, it would have been difficult for the SBs to not comply at all, given that the adoption of the bill prescribing the measures was linked to their future, indeed, the very survival of these organizations (see Chap. 5). Furthermore, as we have seen, SB managers had agreed with RBM and its goals in principle, goals which, moreover, justified their willingness to intervene more directly than before in the practices of school principals and in schools themselves.

These intentions to monitor school performance and, subsequently, to encourage the regulation of practices in schools—inspired by the Ontarian model—explain the ensuing importance of both the statistical monitoring tools and the monitoring and support tools applied to pedagogic practices, established to varying degrees in each SB investigated, along with legal instruments: usage of quantitative indicators aligned with “the minister’s goals,” questionnaires on the satisfaction of actors (parents, students, teachers), publication of results from standardized external tests contributing to the evaluation of students’ performance, analysis of these academic results generated by the software Lumix and presentation to staff, and meetings of teams of teachers of a particular subject (in a school) or of managers at the SB level about the problems revealed by the data, sometimes organized according to the model of “professional learning communities.”⁷ The use of these tools and their linkage with a view to regulating pedagogic practices constitute another form of instrumental convergence of Quebec SBs. This data infrastructure is crucial in the enactment of the accountability system in Quebec⁸ (Sellar 2015), and we will go back to its various uses by SB (see here after 6.2.3) and by local schools (see Chap. 7).

Consequently, an additional source of Quebec instrumental isomorphism may be pinpointed here. Convergence stems from the role played by organizations and experts who are strongly entrenched in the Quebec school system and whose tools, ideas, and models circulate in various SBs. Here, we can refer to the essential role of the GRICS⁹ which develops a number of software for SBs, notably the software Lumix, to monitor students’ results. GRICS not only sells its software (present in all four SBs studied) but organizes the training of the staff using it, all while adapting it to the needs of each SB. In addition, individual academic entrepreneurs spread the “principles” of RBM in various schools and offer training or guides for SB staff, aiming to increase the effective usage of associated tools (agreements, targets, indicators, etc.) (Collerette, 2010; Mazouz, 2008) or the effective usage of professional learning communities (Leclerc, 2012).

In summary, in the four SBs studied, SB managers basically share a similar, if not identical, conception of the RBM policy. Their members are committed to the RBM goals and action theory, and they implement RBM tools, thinking that they can contribute to the “success of all students” and to the ministry’s objectives. Thus, the operationalization of RBM does not only signify the implementation of the plans and agreements foreseen in law but also involves the linkage of

statistical tools to monitor results with tools for professional support which must serve to “regulate pedagogical practices.” This concern is made evident in the fact that in three SBs out of four, management declares that, with RBM, “we talk about pedagogy more than ever before” (Southern SB_E2_DG).

These instrumental and normative convergences are a priori surprising in a system which, formally, seems more decentralized than the French system. However, this is understandable if one considers the different processes and mechanisms which contributed to a relative isomorphism of the SBs examined: normative mechanisms of socialization and of training in the networks and professional associations of school administrators; a borrowing from the Ontarian example; a circulation of tools and models for applying RBM conveyed by various experts; and finally, the coercive action by the central administration which documented and monitored the implementation of Bill 88. We find there several illustrations of the isomorphism mechanisms highlighted in the neo-institutionalist literature (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991).

6.2.2 FRANCE: NORMATIVE DIVERGENCE AND FORMAL INSTRUMENTAL CONVERGENCE

In France, in the three académies studied, the situation differs from that documented in the Quebec case. While, indeed, we observe a certain convergence in terms of the instruments adopted in the context of implementing the policy of steering by results, in reality, this only concerns their adoption. In contrast, their implementation remains characterized by a marked divergence among académies’ territories. In normative terms as well, divergence among académies prevails: there is no common representation of the steering by results policy in the rectorats studied.

When we observe the instruments of the policy of steering by results, we note that the rectorats and schools have, on the whole, conformed to the national policy, in adopting the prescribed instruments, procedures, and time frame. This convergence is in accordance with the “centralization” model (Hassenteufel, 2014), that is,

a vertical convergence imposed by the national level on the subnational level, and then by the intermediate level of the académies on the local level (schools). Indeed, it is undeniable that the policies of “steering by results” developed in the three académies studied are severely constrained by the bureaucratic regulation of relations between central services and deconcentrated services of the state, as well as between the state and the autonomous secondary schools. In the three académies, steering by results is, thus, supported by “managerial meetings” between the central administration and the rectorats, on the one hand, and between the rectorats and schools, on the other. In the three cases, questions related to the budget allocation and appropriations overrode other considerations.

Furthermore, at the intermediate level of the académies, the implementation of the LOLF imposes its administrative approach, calendar, computerized applications (Mélusine), and statistical categories (e.g., “radar charts,” see Chap. 1) on the three académies. Such radar charts are drawn upon at different levels, and their use is widespread in all three rectorats. These instruments of the steering by results policy have produced certain effects. The management

meetings have, for instance, contributed to improving the available statistical indicators, itself a significant effect.

But what about the capacity of these instruments to shape steering by results within French académies? It seems that it is weak. While the projects and contracts at the intermediate académies' level or school level do not seem to stray too far, at least formally, from the content of the discussions which take place in the context of these annual meetings, these meetings limit the scope of the steering by results policy which becomes of secondary importance. On the one hand, they sanction a very clear institutional decoupling between strategic considerations—developed in the context of contractualization—and budgetary choices which stem from financial and political logics and do not always match the former. Thus, we were able to document that the allocation of financial resources to académies and then to schools is essentially based on the number of students rather than on schools' performance. Besides, it gives rise to a statistical production concentrated on indicators focused on implementation, management, and allocation of means rather than a profound reflection on the production and analysis of results' indicators, which generally come down to what are generically labeled indicators of “success”: exam pass rates and the percentage of students repeating a class or being oriented toward vocational paths. Thus, at the level of académies, we observe a certain convergence in the adoption of instruments prescribed by performance-based accountability policy, but their implementation only indirectly serves the objectives of this policy. At this level, therefore, one could say that the instrumental convergence is merely formal.

At the level of schools, the instrumental divergence is most important when one examines their implementation. A number of instruments are available to organize steering by results in the lycées: school projects, performance contracts, SSBR,¹⁰

and evaluation. In the Eastern académie, these instruments are either absent (no performance contracts), are not well developed (evaluation), or are well thought out as regulatory tools for lycées (school projects are not communicated to the rectorat, or the SSBR is only familiar to a small number of actors who do not envisage it as a tool to transform accountability procedures). In the Southern académie, in contrast, instruments are more systematized. All secondary schools have performance contracts linked to their school project, the Dasen¹¹ are responsible for monitoring and evaluating them, and the SSBR is clearly linked to the content of projects and contracts and, for various reasons, increases the accountability of school principals to their administrative boards. Finally, the Western académie seems to constitute a special intermediate case where there are regulatory tools in profusion, but it appears difficult to determine their effectiveness.

This is particularly visible in the case of school projects and their dedicated applications (VCOA¹²). The application provides the possibility of tying the lines of the school project to one of the positions of the académie's project. It is also possible for the school to include “free” indicators, that is, indicators which would neither be included in the national database APAE¹³ nor produced by the research department of the Western académie's rectorat. However, very few school contracts have been signed to date, which shows that, even in a dynamic rectorat, such as the Western académie, the instruments for steering by results are not systematically implemented.

In normative terms, the divergence in the framing of the steering by results policy is also considerable from one regional academic council to another,¹⁴ despite their common foundation. Indeed, our interviewees often share their concerns and point out the limitations of steering by results but without going so far as to express disloyalty to the institution which deploys these instruments. When it exists, steering by results assumes different meanings in the command and control regulation of the rectorats. In the Eastern académie, it is an opportunity for a reactivation of better management of resources, in particular, personnel. Indeed, the investigation in this académie reveals that, for various reasons (the recurring poor performance of the académie, regular increases in the number of students, more acts of violence, and strong opposition from trade unions and political actors), it proves particularly difficult for the académie's authorities to define and stabilize regulation which goes further than the management of staff resources and which is not merely a response to the recurring emergencies and protests of all sorts that they are facing. Thus, the choices of regulation that may be observed over the period 2013-2015 often had the common feature of relegating the steering by results to second place, in favor of a proximity management system focused on educational issues. Moreover, these choices rarely survive changes in leadership of rectorat (Pons, 2015).

In the Southern académie, depending on the period, steering by results is either seen as a means of channeling the effects of a buoyant pedagogical environment (see, e.g., the systematization of performance contracts under recteur Debbasch between 2007 and 2012) or as a more discrete form of governance—it was formally put aside in the académie's project of the Rectrice Moulin-Civil at the time of the investigation—which then brings the situation back to subtle internal negotiating games among school administrators. In that context, the timing of the actions from the recteur's administrations and their strategic use of delay play a significant role in raising doubts about the funds effectively granted to schools following their management meeting. The purpose here is to encourage them to adopt a logic of accountability. In the Western académie, steering by results seems to be a significant component of the rectorat's communication strategies with respect to the modernist steering of a territory which is on the whole, rather privileged although heterogeneous. In our investigation, the discourse of the rectorat draws mainly on a vocabulary characterized by the semantic field of efficacy and management. Some rectorat's managers develop a fairly sophisticated analysis of processes to follow and measures to implement to foster more effective management. On the whole, they have largely accepted the idea that the steering and management processes must be systematized. It is also noteworthy that these actors make very similar comments concerning budgetary constraints they are facing. They emphasize the positive role that these constraints could play in the overhaul of the functioning of the Ministry of National Education in general and the modes of functioning and organization of services and schools in the Western académie. It is remarkable that each expresses a rather clear vision (and, moreover, one that is, in general terms, shared) of directions in which to go for more efficient management, a genuine steering of educational action in the Western académie, and, in the long run, a more precise adjustment of actions undertaken based on the observations of the existing state of affairs and on the basis of very limited resources. Finally, the actors interviewed share a representation of the

académie's functioning as a system in which each component contributes to the achievement of objectives set in the académie's project, as well as to good management.

This normative divergence in the implementation of performance-based accountability policy by the rectorats in France could be related to the manner in which steering by results has developed. Much governmental discourse has put forward this policy, in particular, between 2005 and 2012. Numerous official texts have recalled the imperative of steering by results (orientation law and circulars), and a number of policy instruments have been envisaged to support its development (projects, contracts, evaluations, and statistical indicators). Yet, in reality, the concrete and effective modalities of its implementation have remained ambiguous or implicit, and they are frequently described as stemming from the responsibility of the authorities of académies. In this respect, one could speak of a strategy to prevent dissensus early on. This strategy of institutionalization, indeed, permitted decision-makers to reject opposition from the trade unions on the subject at the national level and to somewhat minimize the success of the critiques, for example, that of the research institute of the FSU trade union.¹⁵ The latter saw in steering by results the school's submission to neoliberalism and to the social norm of capitalism. In contrast, governmental strategy focused on the possibility given to intermediate and local actors to construct ad hoc compromises in terms of steering in institutionalizing vagueness and uncertainty concerning the goals of instruments and their institutional consequences, for example, in terms of evaluation (Pons, 2010).

Consequently, in the French case of the implementation of performance-based accountability policy by rectorats and schools, we can conclude that there were a normative divergence and an instrumental convergence limited to the adoption of instruments prescribed by the central level (and not their implementation).

6.2.3 COMPARISON OF LOGICS OF MEDIATION

To conclude the description of the implementation of the performance-based accountability policy by French rectorats and Quebec SBs, the typology of logics of mediation developed by Malen (2006) is enlightening (See Table 6.1). In describing an organization's responses to a change in policy, it allows us to go beyond the description of degrees of convergence and divergence to a national level to compare and classify the mediation cases studied.

Table 6.1 *Typology of logics of mediation (according to Malen, 2006)*

	Dilution	Appropriation	Nullification	Amplification
France	Eastern académie	Southern académie	—	Western académie
Quebec	—	Southern and Western SB	—	Eastern and Northern SB

In three of the case studies, in the Southern académie, the Southern SB and the Western SB, we observe mediation by the rectorats and SB management which takes the logic of appropriation. For Malen, this type of mediation corresponds to situations where local actors “selectively and

strategically embraced policies from afar and then coupled them in ways that advance their local interests” (Malen, 2006, p. 98). These three intermediate entities clearly implement the national policy of performance-based accountability at their level and use the policy instruments supporting it.

Thus, in the two Quebec SBs, this implementation of the policy gives rise to a reinforcement of vertical hierarchical control in a school system which is traditionally decentralized at the intermediate level. It also gives rise to the implementation of other regulatory instruments for schools on the basis of a better knowledge of their strengths and weaknesses, along with regular monitoring and incentives to improve their pedagogical efficacy. In the Southern académie, the rectorat attempts to better link the development of a consistent set of policy tools with a tighter organization of relations between intermediate pedagogical managers and administrators. The goal is to reassert the priority that the administrative action must give to educational issues (and not bureaucratic ones) while imposing a common concern for performance on all stakeholders (Buisson-Fenet, 2015a).

In the three cases, this implementation of the national policy occurs as a function of two features which allow it to come close to Malen’s appropriation logic. On one hand, it proves to be selective and reflects the interests of intermediate educational authorities and the local contexts which they must confront, which are, moreover, often comparable (union opposition, competition from private schools, parents’ expectations, budgetary reductions, and so on). On the other hand, these three entities proceed to implement the policy progressively and incrementally.

Thus, the general management of the Southern SB takes some liberties in the writing of the initial management agreement with schools: it lowers the number of targets to attain and encourages dialogue and support rather than an insistence on strict and immediate conformity. Faced with union resistance, the DG of the Western SB gives school managers a room to maneuver. Rather than dictate the paths for pedagogical improvement as a function of indicators, he favors a margin of maneuver for managers in their usage and monitoring of indicators of results and in their usage of tools for pedagogical collaboration, such as professional learning communities (on open themes with teachers’ voluntary participation). Therefore, the two SBs develop an implementation logic which is progressive, incremental, and partially negotiated.

In the Southern académie, the investigation highlights an instrumentation of steering by results in a long-term view, beyond rectors’ turnover, which translates into the addition of new tools (such as the “dematerialized template file to support self-evaluation” and the annual management meetings) or the systematization of others (the generalization of contractualization at primary school level) (Buisson-Fenet, 2015a). Steering by results is finally understood by authorities in the regional academic councils as a “reasoned imperative” which cannot be reduced to an “obsession with numbers.” In fact, this orientation is interpreted with considerable

discretion (sober public communication by the rector, with a preference for organizational responses rather than symbolic ones), with stalling tactics to leave some uncertainties about certain decisions and a discourse around pedagogical considerations rather than performance to favor the internalization of certain approaches (Buisson-Fenet, 2015a).

The second dominant logic is that of amplification, according to which the intermediate authorities are not content merely to implement the reform; they also create the conditions for what they hope to be a lasting commitment of local actors to the latter, sometimes going further than foreseen at the national level. We observe such a logic at the level of Western académie's rectorat and in Eastern and Northern school boards. In Quebec, this amplification is visible in the high degree of instrumentation of RBM. These two SBs, indeed, are characterized by the deployment of tools beyond those foreseen in the legal texts: the systematization of comparisons of results (among schools, classes, and students); the regular monitoring of student results and teacher evaluation practices; correlated data on the school climate and absenteeism; etc. The amplification is also visible in the development of horizontal coordination among the SB services (between statistical specialists or services and pedagogical services, in particular) and in the occasional redefinition of certain component traits: thus, the Eastern SB, which had had poor results in the past, makes a focus on student success and a culture-vaunting performance the foundations of its new identity. The Northern SB clearly uses RBM to revise internal management procedures and improve knowledge of institutional environments.

Finally, in the Western académie, we witness what is essentially a “cognitive amplification” of the principles of performance-based accountability (through the management team's adherence to the policy and the development of devices established to enroll school principals), sustained by an “instrumental amplification” of these principles (with a focus on data, the production of original indicators, the development of procedures of systematization, the harmonization of practices, etc.) (Dupuy, 2015). The Western académie is, thus, clearly in the vanguard in taking into account concerns related to the steering of the regional territory. Nonetheless, when we examine the capacity of actors in the académie to implement the instruments of steering by results, this seems very limited and affected by the capacity of school principals to resist these new practices and representations. Therefore, at this stage, it seems that, while the Western académie is in the forefront in terms of steering, it is not with respect to the performance-based accountability.

The case of the rectorat of the Eastern académie is an example of a third type of mediation, one which takes the form of dilution. This refers to policy strategies which contribute to the erosion, indeed, the complete ineffectiveness, of an educational policy, through actors' various strategies—ranging from simple ignorance to overt resistance, through systematic defiance—all of which contribute to undermining its foundations. The structural difficulties evoked earlier, the priorities accorded by the authorities of the rectorats to a proximity management system focused on educational issues, the weak instrumentation of steering by results, or the attention accorded to the latter evident in the cautious approach put forward in the discourse

of interviewees are illustrations of a process of deconstruction of the national policy and a dilution of its effects in the case of the Eastern académie.

Finally, we note that none of our empirical cases correspond to mediation by nullification. This latter proceeds “on efforts to nullify or revoke policy” (Malen, 2006, p. 98) through legal or institutional means. This radical logic is most often the result of an escalation of conflicts that classic tools of regulation have not managed to contain.

6.3 VARIETIES OF PERFORMANCE-BASED ACCOUNTABILITY AND LOCAL EDUCATIONAL ORDERS

How can we explain these different mediation logics among French académies and Quebec school boards? What factors and conditions favor their appearance and orientation? Beyond that, how can we explain the varieties of performance-based accountability observed empirically? In this section, we propose to show that these accountability pragmatic logics may be understood as the product of a combination of four principal factors: the local context of the intermediate entity; managers' professional ethos; the specific problematization of the educational issues in the territory; and, finally, the prevailing configurations of relations among actors. We begin by presenting these different explanatory factors. Then, we examine the manner in which they combine to produce the three types of performance-based accountability which we have identified: bureaucratic management by results; reflexive management by results; and regulatory management by results.

6.3.1 FOUR MEDIATION FACTORS

The context of the intermediate entity, in particular, the pressures of competition and expectations of its institutional environment, constitutes the first factor conditioning the various logics of mediation, their sources and processes. This context is, thus, dependent on the school population and its quantitative and qualitative evolution. It is characterized by institutional expectations of supervisory authorities (the ministry) or parents, which vary depending on financial conjunctures or those of school competition. From these come various pressures with respect to academic performances, reputation, or organizational efficiency.

A second factor is the professional ethos of actors in the intermediate entity, in particular, that of upper management. Notably as a function of their socio-professional trajectory, actors contribute to constructing a series of normative definitions (of educational goals, good governance in education, certain actors' roles, etc.) which they internalize and incorporate in the form of dispositions, perception, action, and evaluation schemes. The latter condition their engagement (or non-engagement) in performance-based accountability, while not in a mechanical manner. The conceptions of performance-based accountability which emerge from the interviews are here particularly useful in considering this since they allow us to determine the type and degree of legitimacy that actors confer on this governance.

The third factor is the problematization of the educational issues in the organization studied. Here, this is a matter of understanding how school authorities define the principal stakes for the entity and how policy choices for regulation are made by the authorities in relation to their convictions and professional ethos but also the (institutional or competitive) context and the configurations of actors and multiple orientations or pragmatic logics (resistance, accommodation, appropriation, etc.) which characterize their action.

The fourth factor brings to the fore actors' configurations, primarily studied through their interests and power relations, as much as these can be determined from interviews or from public discourse (declarations, mobilization, communications, etc.).

As Fig. 6.1 illustrates, these four factors interact and shape specific local educational orders (Ben Ayed, 2009) which allow us to both explain and understand the forms and dynamics of the mediation in each intermediate entity studied. In other words, they allow us to explain the varieties of performance-based accountability observed in France and Quebec.

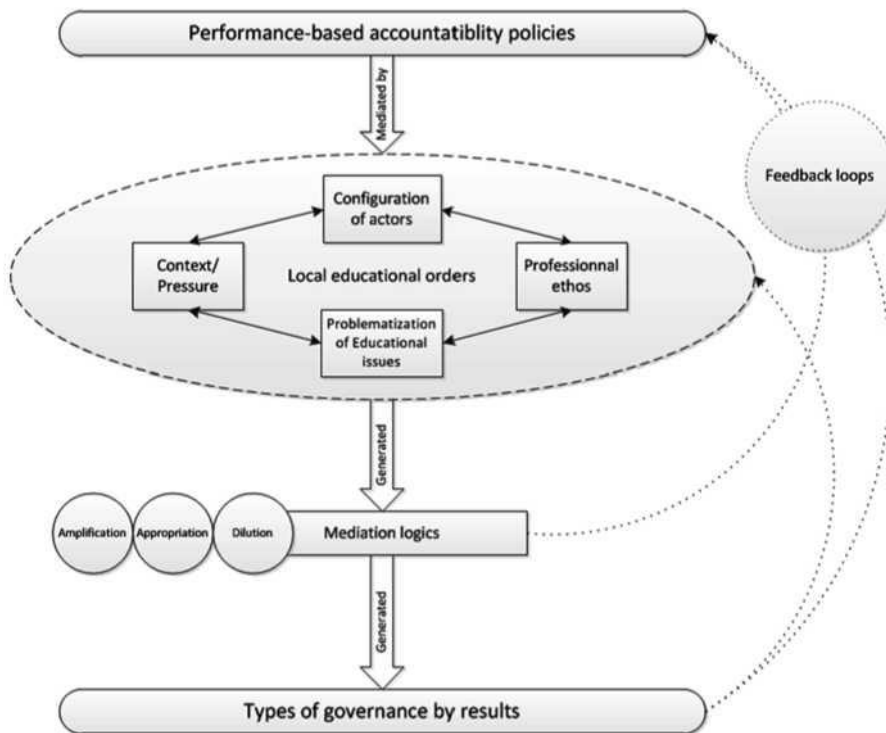


Fig. 6.1 Local educational orders and varieties of performance-based accountability

The composition of local educational orders produces three types of performance-based accountability distinguished in three aspects: (1) the weight of performance-based accountability and the combination of this coordination and regulation mechanism with other regulation logics, for example, bureaucratic, professional, or charismatic (Maroy, 2006; van Zanten, 2008); (2) the variable development of an instrumentation permitting the production of new knowledge concerning the performance or pedagogical action of professionals within schools; and (3) finally, the degree of intervention of intermediate authorities in schools' and teachers' autonomy, in other words, their determination to exercise control over local practices or, on the contrary, their pragmatic respect of the decoupling of the latter and managerial and political orientations.

Mediation through dilution of the national policy is, thus, associated with a bureaucratic management of performance-based accountability, based on a bureaucratic regulation of schools, combined with a proximity management system which ensures that educational teams' sphere of autonomy is respected. The appropriation of this same policy takes the form of a reflexive governance by results, which offers an incentive to improve practices based on new knowledge, but the effects of which vary from school to school. This leads to a management of pedagogy based on incentives, which is characterized by its low-intensity improvements. Finally, the amplification logic

takes the form of regulatory governance using tools based on knowledge and regulation of local pedagogical practices which favor a very intense management of pedagogy in Quebec. Table 6.2 schematizes these varieties of governance by results that we have observed.

Table 6.2 *Types of governance as a function of school boards' and académies' mediation logics*

Mediation logics/ dimensions of governance	Dilution	Appropriation	Amplification
Type of performance- based accountability	Bureaucratic management by results	Reflexive management by results	Tool-based management system and close monitoring
Instruments to produce knowledge about results	Weak	Strong (results)	Strong (results and teachers' practices)
Teachers' sphere of autonomy	Decoupling and protection of teachers' sphere of autonomy	Weak management of pedagogy	Intensive management of pedagogy
		Change of teachers' practices based on dialogue/consultation and incentives	Tendency to proactively redefine teachers' sphere of autonomy

6.3.2 BUREAUCRATIC MANAGEMENT BY RESULTS

Let us begin with the only identified case of bureaucratic management by results at work in the Eastern académie in France. This relatively recent académie faces a wide range of difficulties: academic results consistently below the national average; a polarized territory sometimes encompassing areas with great social difficulties; repeated acts of violence in schools giving rise to intense reactions and demonstrations, very often covered by the media, on the part of actors in schools; high staff turnover; considerable alarmist discourse from various observers, etc. We can add to this the presence of powerful countervailing forces, from professional associations (teachers' unions and heads of schools), pedagogical movements, and political actors but also the hesitations from the state when regulating this territory. Indeed, since its creation in 1971, the policies in this académie have always alternated between periods of patient stabilization of the local education order (1971-1988 and 1991-1998) and situations of high strategic excitement giving rise to a multiplication of more or less coordinated and lasting initiatives (1988-1990 and 2007-2009) and phases of brutal politicization at times of crisis (1998-2002 and 2003-2007).

In this context, the problematization of the main educational issue in this académie, since 2009 in particular, has been the “normalization” of the latter. This process of normalization has occurred through various channels: bridging the gap with national averages in terms of indicators (not only of results); restoring so-called “ordinary legislation” procedures; removing passion and politics from the sensitive debate within the académie on the question of personnel resources; or working on the definition of an identity for the académie (e.g., “the académie school”).¹⁶ Each rector deploys his or her own strategies of normalization.¹⁷

This problematization of the educational issues at the time of the fieldwork favored a bottom-up proximity management system which focused on educational issues and which had to remobilize people and invite them to coordinate their activities in original ways. In parallel, the instrumentation of the steering by results stayed very uneven from a tool to another, very focused on management indicators (radar charts) and heavily dependent on individual initiatives, giving rise to a strategic reflection within an extremely restricted circle of top managers within the rectorat. Finally, despite some very recent initiatives regarding priority education, the authorities from the académie have seldom called upon external cognitive expertise (in terms of research, private experts or national evaluators).

These characteristics of the académie, this framing of its policy, and these choices of governance explain some of the conceptions of steering by results expressed by actors when interviewed. They recognize that it can improve available information and sometimes, thanks to some instruments, the coordination within complex organizations. Yet they have also strongly internalized its negative effects and its practical limitations (how can results mobilize exhausted actors in an académie which is always poorly ranked?). Moreover, consistent with the necessary focus in the académie on the rationalization of the use of available inputs, they have a tendency to concentrate their attention on the primary chain of production of public action (linking means and achievements) rather than on the secondary one (linking achievements and results) (Duran, 2010). The ethos they display could be considered “neo-traditionalist” in that it grants priority to a traditional regulation of the school system favoring a logic centered around available resources but through new instruments and new forms of coordination of public action.

6.3.3 REFLEXIVE GOVERNANCE BY RESULTS

The cases of appropriation (Southern SB, Western SB, and Southern académie) present a number of commonalities, despite their belonging to different school systems. Indeed, in the three cases, the main problematization of educational issues focuses on the need to reinforce or to revitalize the action of the intermediate authorities. This revitalization became necessary due to a certain number of basically similar external pressures: demographic issues; competition from private education; budgetary cuts; and union resistance to the implementation of performance-based accountability. Nonetheless, they take on distinct forms in each context. In the Southern académie, the issue is maintaining a vertical and state-national control in a context characterized by the activism of local and regional authorities, i.e., the “pedagogical biotope”¹⁸ of the Southern académie’s capital and the local dynamism of some school principals, who may be trade union representatives at the national or académie’s level. Since the 1990s, in fact, there has been a succession of so-called

“political” recteurs at the head of this académie, who have not hesitated to take charge of matters which the media could quickly seize upon. Furthermore, the context in the Southern académie is distinctive in its capacity to structure the connection between research and pedagogical action.¹⁹ The commitment of a number of local personalities, well-known nationally, also contributed to establishing the académie as a platform for educational policies throughout the 1990s.²⁰ In addition to this engagement of certain personalities with public responsibilities and debates on education, it is worth mentioning a local presence of nationally important institutions which the process of decentralization was able to shift from Paris to the Southern académie’s capital (the case of the Institut National de Recherche Pédagogique [the National Institute of Pedagogical Research], which became the Institut français d’éducation (IFÉ [the French Educational Institute])).

In Quebec SBs, this imperative also proceeds from a concern about the legitimization of the action of the intermediate authority which is harmed both from on high by media and political debates on their *raison d’être* (see Chap. 5) and from below by some school principals and teachers’ unions. This legitimacy stems from its capacity to show that it is not merely a bureaucratic body but genuinely a useful organization, a vector in the service of “success for all students,” which might actually be achieved with RBM. The Southern SB combines demographic growth in elementary schools and the loss of students to the private sector at secondary school level. Moreover, while the SB encompasses middle-class neighborhoods, its performance is average for Quebec public schools, and the issue of improving students’ performance is formulated both as a means of meeting ministerial expectations, developing as a strategy to respond to the local competition of private schools, and as a way of “mobilizing the teams” working on pedagogy. The new upper management wants to present another side of its administration, more participatory and collaborative, reactive, and professional in terms of pedagogy. In the Western SB, a little smaller and somewhat disadvantaged compared to the Southern SB, with similar performance but facing less dramatic competition from the private sector and more pronounced union opposition, the watchwords are comparable, upper management insisting on the necessity, after years of bureaucratic functioning behind closed doors, of changing the administrative culture (which needed to become much more directly and explicitly oriented toward student success), of being proactive, and of improving relations between the administration and the Council of Commissioners to be accountable publicly and, thus, to channel parents’ individualism.

This particular problematization of educational issues is based on a professional ethos which we could characterize as “sober organizational modernism.” Indeed, in the three entities, the actors interviewed seem to have internalized the idea of a necessary performance-based accountability. The executives and senior management of the Southern SB often share a belief in the “school effect” and consider that the usage of contractual agreements and statistical data contributes to student success.²¹ The DG was described and known as a “pedagogical driving force,” eager to collaborate with university pedagogical research projects but also open to dialogue with union organizations and school principals, skilled at an approach aiming to progressively involve both principals and teachers in the process. The DG of the Western SB is also convinced of the relevance of RBM and enthusiastic about involving both principals and school teaching teams to work on improving their pedagogical efficacy. Those interviewed in the Southern académie (notably the principals) are eager

to position their action vis-à-vis certain indicators and to improve their results. Thus, they all accept this governance as legitimate, both in practical terms and cognitively.

Nonetheless, in the three cases, the configuration of actors reveals the diversity, in fact, the conflicting nature, of actors' visions and interests regarding governance by results. In the Southern académie, the investigation shows the relatively inexpressible nature of a steering which, however, is emerging, which suggests that the legitimacy of steering by results cannot be taken for granted and that this organizational modernism should remain sober and discreet. Certainly the fieldwork in the lycées reveals the institutionalization of management explicitly built on the question of performances, their assessment measurements, and the conditions for their improvement. Certainly also documents collected from the académies show the rise of contractualization since 2008, even in the absence of an académie's project, and, since 2012, we can even observe an integration of different instruments, bolstered by the reform of the budgetary and accounting framework (LOLF) for which the académie's statistical office organized a series of training sessions to which school principals, along with their bursars, were invited. However, the interviews contained nuanced turns of phrase and cautious clarifications, indeed, self-critical justifications. The political will has an ambivalent effect on the management imperative. On the one hand, the former serves the interests of the latter by justifying the development of managerial tools, especially at a time of budgetary cutbacks. On the other hand, this political will provides arguments to counterbalance the managerial ideology by insisting on certain values and principles, such as equal opportunity: thus, in one school investigated, for instance, the rate of failure in the 1st year of high school has become "an obsession of DASEN" (Interview n°9), but this is to better "provide support for the educational pathways encouraging ambition and the pursuit of studies and in reducing school and social selectivity at the lycée" (Objective 2 of this school contract). This "consensual" implementation of steering by results also refers to the desire to overcome the competitive tendencies of schools, with an incentive to encourage cooperative behavior and shared pedagogical support: management and performance meetings are organized for a group of schools, regularly gathered together at the French local educational level of the "bassin," and various inspection bodies were called up to participate to provide their "pedagogical expertise."

In the Quebec context, the configuration of actors from the Southern SB and the Western SB is characterized by resistance on the part of teachers' unions and some school principals but also by internal divisions within the central services of each of the SBs. Thus, there is a gap between the normative orientations of modernist upper management—convinced of an objective, statistical approach to improve the performance of schools and of the SB—and some school principals and teachers' unions who are less convinced, in fact, opposed to this "accounting approach" of education. In the Western SB, an excessively "transformational" vision of RBM on the part of management was, therefore, blocked by this opposition. In addition, unlike SBs adopting an amplification logic, the central services were far from cohesive. There are cognitive and normative divergences among actors or services, which limit their coordination, as illustrated by the fact that the educational services of the Southern SB do not consider statistical analysis essential in order to learn about schools' principal problems and orient their interventions in schools. In the Western SB,

educational services are not drawn upon by upper management in the development of management agreements, although they have long produced statistics on schools' academic performances.

In the three cases, given the configuration of actors present, the implementation of performance-based accountability goes along with a given preference for a strategy based on incremental and negotiated change to adjust the local modalities for reform. It is accompanied by an attempt, with varying degrees of success, to construct a common understanding of the reform direction rather than to apply a rapid and forced conformity.

This preference can be seen in the stated priorities put forward by the Southern académie's authorities (a concern with consistency, continuity, instrumental equipment, the dispassionate organizational response to problems exposed in the media, etc.). Clearly, unlike Eastern académie, the Southern académie's interpretation of the managerial renewal of instruments of school public action in education does not reduce its scope or hollow out its orientations. On the contrary, it intensifies them in some ways, to the extent that it attempts to link the process of instrumental integration with a more tightly knit organization of relations between intermediate pedagogical and administrative managers so as to put the administrative line at the service of the pedagogical line, while strongly emphasizing the concern with performance to the pedagogical actors.

This is also perceptible in the weight of the negotiation and of the search for compromise in the Southern SB and Western SB. In these two cases, the director-DG chose a strategy of progressive incremental change, with a tendency to grant concessions to defuse the most virulent opposition. Thus, the management of the Southern SB made a significant effort to enroll school principals in establishing "opportunities for discussion and dialogue," in setting up a participatory mechanism to develop the second strategic plan (bringing together school principals), as well as strategies of negotiation, selection, or softening of ministerial prescriptions to defuse local opposition: negotiation of "realistic" targets with the ministry, allowing school principals' latitude in their choices of one or two targets in the initial years, and an integration of "success plan" tools with the "management and school success agreement" in the same computerized instrument to limit the administrative work required. Similarly, in the Western SB, "modest" targets could be negotiated with the ministry; moreover, the DG had to consider local opposition and grant greater autonomy to local schools and teams in the implementation of certain statistical monitoring tools (left in the hands of managers/school principals) or in the application of tools for pedagogical collaboration. Thus, in the Western SB, the "professional learning communities" are voluntary and focus on freely chosen themes, without analysis of school and teacher performance data beforehand (contrary to what occurs in the context of an amplification approach logic in the Eastern SB). However, this is not inconsistent with the mobilization of spaces for collaboration which function is also to enroll actors and make them build a common understanding of educational issues (communities of professional learning at the level of teachers in the Western SB and "cooperation tables" for school principals in the Southern SB).

In these three entities, reflexive governance by results is at work through the action of each of the intermediate entities which apply fundamental aspects of performance-based accountability policy defined at the national level, the most important being the contractualization (between the

central ministry and the inter- mediate entity and between the latter and the schools) and an attempt to systematically articulate the instruments in specific repertoires.

This implementation also leads intermediate authorities to generate data, knowl- edge, and studies (with Lumix playing a key role in Southern and Western SB) or to encourage their production by external actors, such as private experts or researchers (partnerships with universities in Québec, a tradition of research action in the Southern académie and the role of the French Institute of Education). In the Southern académie, this movement is accompanied by the mobilization of a discourse ori- ented toward a stronger “educationalization” of the steering by result policy or in other words a stronger focus on pedagogical and educational issues. This education- alization is visible, for instance, in the repeated call for expert support from inspec- tors of all grades; in addition, it is present in the development of the continuing education mission at the heart of Espé²²—in particular, with the recruitment of training teachers for the académies in the “professionalization hub” established at the start of the school year in 2014. This educationalization of the managerial turn is moreover likely to be renewed, since innovation, largely absent from the orienta- tions of rectorats, although the environment in the Southern académie proved espe- cially promising in this sense, has become an essential element in the work of “scrutinization” of the central administration.

6.3.4 REGULATORY RESULTS-BASED GOVERNANCE

Finally, the three cases of amplification (Eastern SB, Northern SB, and Western académie) also present a number of common features. As in the preceding case, there are some comparable external pressures—demographic problems (a growth in the number of students in primary school but a drop in secondary school enrolment in the three SBs, results poorer than expected,²³ budgetary pressures, union opposi- tion, and competition from private education). Furthermore, in Quebec, added to these pressures are those linked to their contested legitimacy as a meso-level gover- nance body and the legal obligation to establish partnership agreements. All of these contextual elements lead intermediate authorities not only to reorient their action but also to clearly display their managerial dynamism in a difficult or competitive context.

Thus, the Eastern SB, labeled as a school board that could “do better,” was con- fronted with strong union opposition but also a “lenient” culture and the consider- able de facto autonomy of its schools. Its new director general, appointed in 2010 with the agreement of the Council of Commissioners, gambled politically on restor- ing citizens’ confidence and the SB’s legitimacy by initiating a complete overhaul of the SB’s governance. Modeled on the experience of an Ontarian school board, a charter of “new governance” redefines the functioning and identity of the SB: stu- dent success, managerial dynamism and consistency, collaboration, and respect for differences were the key words displayed. This led to a forceful strategy of organi- zational coordination, development, and integration of various tools (statistical and pedagogical) aiming to operationalize the management agreements associated with RBM. All of this was accompanied by a formal supervision of school principals (around the development of their agreements or the rendering of accounts on their progress in reaching their objectives), along with training and support strategies to involve them in the reform.

The Northern SB, for its part, in addition to some transversal contextual elements already mentioned, experienced strong tensions with its school principals who accord scant legitimacy to the intermediate level of governance²⁴ and with the strong sense of individualism on the part of the parents with relatively high socioeconomic status who are attracted to the rival private sector despite the good results of this relatively privileged SB. The Northern SB then established a policy of strong decentralization to the benefit of schools allowing principals to develop locally based management practices (of financial and pedagogical resources, notably the service offered by pedagogical counselors). The orientation of the policy is still of primary concern and is closely supervised, both through the use of statistical instruments allowing for surveillance from a distance, and with a hierarchical and professional accompaniment of school principals by central educational services. The SB also established external communication displaying its dynamism, notably to limit the loss of students to the private sector.

In the Western académie, in a territory where various interest groups (Catholic associations, major industrial groups, large schools), political forces (in particular, within the right-wing party in government), and principals of historically prestigious schools are powerful, the rectorat must display its organizational modernism and its capacities to anticipate. For example, we see this in the number of partnerships created by the rectorat, the tradition of professional reflection on new technologies developed in the académie, or, very simply, the intense loyalty of the latter to the national policy (visible on a number of occasions on subjects such as the school map²⁵ reform, the 3-year vocational baccalaureate, or the reform of the lycée) making this académie a “good student” of the educational policy. Also, upper management there insists on the need to get all personnel on board, to improve coordination among the actors, while still according more power to local entities. In the Western académie, the actors interviewed, belonging to a network of reformers recruited by a charismatic recteur who remained in his position at the académie for a long time, seem fully converted to steering by results and, on a number of occasions, express their concern about efficient public management. These managerial preferences led to a reorganization of administrative services within the rectorat of the Western académie, based on the institutionalization of a number of meetings and committees of various categories of personnel. In parallel, we also observe the existence of enrolment mechanisms of school principals and their teams. A number of management members of the rectorat stress the objective of a “common culture” shared by the school principals. These tools take the form of consultative committees and regular meetings to transmit and communicate the recteur’s policy to the school principals or their representatives.

However, this problematization and this ethos combine differently for each configuration of actors. Consequently, the process of institutionalization of governance assumes a variety of forms, depending on the particular case. Thus, the amplification logic proceeds from an incremental institutionalization in the Western académie and the Northern SB where, over time, it is part of a succession of measures permitting actors to progressively familiarize themselves with the new priorities in effect. For example, in the Western académie, the recteur, Alain Boissinot, driven by a deep concern about orientation of the académie’s policy, remained for 9 years at the head of the académie (2004-2013). Similarly, the Northern SB incorporated certain Ontarian accountability practices—based on the comparison of school results and pedagogical support for schools

considered problematic— as early as 2006, before Bill 88. During this period, the SB already started to experiment with tighter coupling of the use of statistical data, on the one hand, and the pedagogical support provided by educational services to develop and mobilize schools' teaching teams, on the other. The imposition of targets in conjunction with Bill 88 did not prevent its progressive implementation as a negotiated process: greater decentralization of power toward the schools and flexibility in terms of the time horizon of the initial management agreements to deal with defuse existing tensions between school principals and SB's central headquarters, above all, the abandonment of targets in favor of a quest for “measurable progress” to disarm the teachers' union's opposition to the initial agreements.

In contrast, in the Eastern SB, the implementation of RBM coincided with a relative rupture which occurred on the occasion of the arrival of a new director general and the adoption of the “new governance” charter. This turning point affected relations and the configuration of actors: the new governance redefined relations and the division of labor, which had been judged to be too vague, between political actors (Council of Commissioners) and the administrative ones, the central office of the SB preventing the former from attending to daily logistics, and assigning it the role of orientation and evaluation of the SB's strategy. Furthermore, the new DG selected a fresh upper management team who shared his vision of governance (in line with the principles of RBM and the New Public Management approach). Finally, a very top-down strategy was put in place to communicate the new SB culture to actors at all echelons: a dissemination of various organizational rituals, reminding all that student success was the priority; the establishment of the monitoring of performances through the obligatory use of data; the implementation of monitoring and accountability mechanisms for school principals; and the imposition of local tools for reflection and pedagogical improvement (professional learning communities) for schools that failed to reach their targets. This strategy for significant and relatively rapid change, expanding on the approach amplifying the logic of Bill 88, certainly failed to diffuse either pre-existing tensions with the teachers' union or those within the SB itself.²⁶

In these three intermediate entities, the performance-based accountability enacted could be characterized as regulatory in terms of local practices, based both on statistical tools and a close local supervision of pedagogic practices, steered by the inter- mediate authority. This type of regulatory governance has three major features.

First, this governance was well-equipped in terms of instruments at its disposal, often going beyond that foreseen in the national policy. In the Eastern SB, for example, the implementation of RBM involved the deployment of an extended and diversified range of statistical tools and indicators, on which professional development support measures for teachers and principals could be based. These diverse tools are well coordinated and steered by the central offices of the SBs, with a very hierarchical orientation, reinforced by the expertise of pedagogical counselors who intervene in the professional development of principals and teachers. At the Northern SB, the same logic is at work, but with greater autonomy for local schools, counterbalanced at the SB central offices by various places and mechanisms to enroll and supervise school principals (such as “consultative tables”) and distance monitoring through the use of databases. The same is true of the rectorat of

the Western académie, whose statistical service is particularly dynamic (to the point of sometimes training members of other académies' statistical services) and developed its own applications, such as the VCOA tool for performance contracts.

Secondly, the tools and instruments at work were systematized. This contributed to enhancing the vertical and horizontal coordination between the intermediate authority and the schools, on the one hand, and the core of the intermediate authority, on the other. Indeed, we witness a pronounced “instrumental linkage” between different tools (statistical evaluations, contracts, plans, and rendering of accounts). Furthermore, in the case of the two SBs, a greater meshing of management mechanisms and hierarchical control mechanisms reinforced greater school accountability for their results and the pressure to “improve.” In contrast, other tools or legal prescriptions were displayed to strengthen external legitimacy, rather than from a genuine democratic practice of accountability (e.g., the annual report to the educational community, to elected officials of participatory bodies, or to parents in general). The Western académie case confirms this observation. The académie's orientation, according to all the actors interviewed, is based on “steering tools” produced by the statistical office of the rectorat.²⁷ Since the arrival of its current director in 2007, the production of indicators, describing not only schools but also students' paths, has been intense. Thus, this statistical office has produced a typology of schools of the académie which includes the training provided but also students' socioeconomic profile. Yet, in reality, these indicators have essentially descriptive objectives, and one could note that no clear link was established between the “results” and the means available to schools.

Thirdly, this institutionalization sometimes takes liberties with the national framework. This is the case, for example, when SBs simplify the usage of certain tools—in the Eastern SB, the management agreement was merged with the success plan, and the Northern SB took a certain distance from the targets to be attained as defined by the central ministry—or when the recteur decided on a specific organization (like the delegation of a significant number of prerogatives to the académie's Director of Services for National Education (Dasen), see Chap. 2).

6.4 THE EFFECTS OF VARIETIES OF PERFORMANCE-BASED ACCOUNTABILITY

In this final section, we explore the effects of the varieties of performance-based accountability that we have observed in France and in Quebec. In Quebec, the principal effect is the introduction of a new form of pedagogical management. In France, it is a matter of an evolution, perhaps even a reversal, of the usual relations between the central services and deconcentrated services.

6.4.1 NEW PEDAGOGICAL MANAGEMENT IN QUEBEC

In Quebec, as we saw earlier, the mechanisms which produce isomorphisms are significant and give rise to a number of forms of convergence among the SBs, even if the latter also display secondary differences in terms of the mediation of policies. Therefore, it is necessary to consider both these convergences and these mediations in determining the policy effects of the implementation of RBM in Quebec.

The managers of all SBs studied are implementing RBM and its instruments, using it as a “lever” to better “regulate” schools, to monitor and “manage” the efficacy of local pedagogical practices, resulting, if need be, in the application of measures or practices to oversee, indeed, influence or change, directly or indirectly, teachers’ pedagogical practices in the classroom.²⁸ SBs’ management has pursued this implementation of a monitoring of pedagogical practices (and, if needs be, of a change) in developing strategies and drawing upon tools, not strictly limited to legal planning, contractualization and accountability tools prescribed by law. In a variable fashion, according to the mediation approach to the national policy, they have sought to intensify the vertical regulation of school principals by SB central offices, to systematize the different tools (contracts, plans, and monitoring indicators) but also to coordinate statistical monitoring tools and professional support instruments of school teams.

Therefore, in a proactive fashion, based on RBM, all the SBs studied seek to broaden the scope and the forms and tools of school management (Maroy, Brassard, Mathou, Vaillancourt, & Voisin, 2015). On the one hand, they are attempting to influence the “heart of the school,” to return to the use of an image evoked by a school principal, that is, the pedagogical work done in and around classes, as well as its results. On the other hand, the management of pedagogy has taken new forms and is based on a more extensive array of management tools, as well as of new cognitive and normative categories of evaluation and orientation of pedagogical action.

“By analogy with ‘New Public Management’ which tends (discursively and practically) to distinguish itself from ‘public administration,’ here we can speak of new school management or of a new form of pedagogical management, the ambition and range of which claim to go beyond that of school administration or pedagogical management, as it is usually understood” (Maroy et al., 2015, p. 7).

Nonetheless, the approaches put in place by SBs for this new pedagogical management differ. SBs contribute to this institutionalization of pedagogical management to varying extents, depending on mediating factors at work at the local educational echelon. On the one hand, the appropriation logic generates a more reflexive governance, based more on incentives and voluntary compliance, the impact of which is more variable, depending on the school (see Chap. 7). On the other, we witness a more regulatory governance of school management, intruding further into the area of teachers’ autonomy (the amplification logic). Clearly, SBs differ in their approach to local mediation of RBM, which translates into a variance in the intensity of the means established to influence and remotely manage at a distance the issues and pedagogical practices within schools.

6.4.2 FRANCE: CENTER-PERIPHERY RELATIONS UPSIDE DOWN?

This chapter has empirically documented the failure of an approach centered on formal regulatory institutions of the education system to account for the implementation of the policy of steering by results in France. Indeed, it has shown the dramatic divergence among the situations in académies under examination, both in normative terms and in terms of instruments at work. Yet the chapter has also revealed that this twofold divergence stems from the local educational orders and, thus, that intermediate actors, the rectorats, actively contribute to developing the policies of management by results during their implementation. In that respect, the rectorats mediate the

national policy differently, as we have seen, and the manner in which they do so, by diluting it, appropriating it, or amplifying it, contributes to defining the policy's characteristics in each académie studied. Thus, the rectorats are certainly actors developing educational policies. Here, we are far removed from the idealized image of the French education system, according to which the policies of the académies would merely be applications of a single, uniform national policy.

In the Eastern académie, the policy of the rectorat is based on a triptych associating management meetings, ad hoc device setting, and the continuous reassertion of the policy by its leaders who are bound to embody it during their numerous displacements throughout the entire territory of this vast académie. In the Southern académie, it seems to be three-pronged: the first element is the politicization of school issues (examples include the headscarf and questions of secularism under Recteur Morvan or, in contrast, the strong promotion of the left-wing policy program called the "Refondation" under Rectrice Moulin-Civil); the second comes back to the perpetual diversity of pedagogical initiatives, both stemming from

particular institutions and from regional collectivities in partnership with the decentralized relevant bodies of Education nationale; and, finally, the third refers to the contractualization, which is increasing that much more rapidly given that it is supported at the local level by a union of mobilized school principals from secondary education. In the Western académie, the policy of the rectorat seems to be based on a detailed knowledge of schools and on an institutional communication stressing the new modes of steering which are implemented in the académie, two aspects which sometimes tend to mask classic top-down regulation.

Consequently, the central services are not governing at a distance. The deconcentrated authorities play a major role in the implementation of the educational policy, here more specifically concerning steering by results. Yet, this implementation does not go so far as shaping true constitutive policies from the académies (Buisson- Fenet, 2015b, p. 120) in the sense that they are strongly linked to the context and to the environment in which they are deployed: the "maelstrom of the gigantic Eastern académie, problematic, politicized and receiving a great deal of media attention; the pedagogical effervescence and parallel regulations to be channeled in the Southern académie; and the presence of powerful interest groups in the Western académie.

Thus, a structural reorientation is in progress in the French case. On the one hand, it consists precisely of a refocusing of public intervention in primary and secondary education—the recteur, officially chancellor of universities, sees the universities getting away from him/her to the extent that they are asserting their autonomy more. On the other hand, it involves an affirmation that the sphere of influence of the educating state is the core of educational processes, the regional and local authorities providing not only premises and catering, but also computer equipment for schools, extracurricular activities, social welfare of students and, henceforth, advice and guidance, which has become a "regional public service" (Dupuy, 2017). Furthermore, this structural reorientation is paradoxical since, at a time when the capacity of the central state to steer deconcentrated services is supposed to increase and become more strategic with steering by results, on the contrary, the central services are very largely dependent on rectorats and schools for the implementation of this policy. With this policy, an aspect of transformations related to the French budgetary framework,

relations between the central services and the deconcentrated services seem to have evolved to the advantage of the latter.

6.5 CONCLUSION

To conclude, it is still important to emphasize that the two relatively similar performance-based accountability policies, formulated around the same time, inspired by transnational doctrines (New Public Management and (new) accountability) certainly heterogeneous but with a number of common founding principles,

with limited variations and grounded in almost identical policy instruments (project/plan, contract/agreement, and evaluation), could lead to highly contrasting, indeed opposite, policy processes (convergence around a new pedagogical management in one case and a differentiation of state policies in academies in the other) when implemented in different educational regions and contrasting school systems.

Quite obviously, this conclusion severely undercuts the vision that the defenders of these policies want to present, that is, that of constitutive policies that can be shifted from one context to another, producing powerful harmonization effects. The mediations are numerous, notably at the intermediate echelon which was the focus in this chapter. Our theoretical approach allowed us to take account of these mediations, the similarities and differences of intermediate entities in two systems, often relying on the typological method and attempting to avoid presenting our data from a purely national perspective. The following chapter provides further details on these mediations at the local level, in analyzing the implementation of various instruments in the schools and the problems resulting from this implementation.

NOTES

¹ Indeed, in their study of the degree of convergence of European environmental policies between 1970 and 2000, Katharina Holzinger and Christoph Knill Holzinger and Knill (2005) distinguish between “sigma convergence,” with an analysis concentrating on variations between countries—thus, they measure the degree of similarity in policies between countries that are “peers,” which share certain common characteristics—and “delta convergence” which designates the direction in which these policies converge, the study of which examines the gaps between a national policy and the available public policy options in a given period.

² Director general (directeur general in French). We will also use the acronym DGA (directeur general adjoint) to designate the deputy DG.

³ Significantly, the works of John Hattie (2009) were translated into French in 2017 for Presses de l’Université du Québec (Hattie, 2017).

⁴ This is especially the case for the meetings of the Association des Directeurs généraux des Commissions scolaires (ADIGEC [the Association of School Board Directors-General]) which invites researchers to their annual conferences to present research on “good governance,” leadership, and “winning” or “effective” management or teaching practices. (See <http://adigeqs.qc.ca/congres/>.) In addition, various forms of

continuous training or professional development of schoolboard administrators or school managers are offered by the universities (see Brassard et al. 2013, for an example).

⁵ Since 1995, Ontario has developed policies which resulted in a system of accountability aiming to improve results without direct sanctions and seeking to foster team organizational learning (Anderson & Jaafar, 2006; Fullan, 2010; Levin, 2010). Indeed, the policies of the Conservative government (1995–2002) brought about a centralization of the system (a centralization of the curriculum, the development of a centralized evaluation, and the creation of an Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQA)) and a loss of autonomy of “school councils” (a loss of the power to raise taxes, a merger of councils, alignment of the curriculum, and greater control over expenses). In addition, teachers were seen as more controlled by the creation of a professional order, imposed from on high. In a conflictual climate, the first Liberal government of McGuinty (2003–2007) then sought to appease the various stakeholders and parties and create consensus, in developing a policy of “positive” accountability, based on greater support (pedagogical and financial) for schools, rather than sanctions (Leithwood et al., 2003). Nevertheless, it does not eliminate curriculum standards, the objectives of improving performance, and the OQRE. It is a matter of encouraging improvement in the targeted areas (numeracy and literacy) by supporting the professional development of teams, with the spread of “good practices” and research results. Nonetheless, the direct intervention of the government and school districts can occur when, in the medium term, schools or districts do not improve their performances, despite the support offered in pedagogical and financial terms. In their typology, Maroy and Voisin (2014) characterize this system as “responsibilization and reflexive accountability” with moderate stakes and strong alignment among accountability tools.

⁶ Quebec’s Ministry of Education (QME) (2009). *La convention de partenariat, outil d’un nouveau mode de gouvernance: guide d’implantation* [The Partnership Agreement, Tool of a New Mode of Governance: Implementation Guide]. Quebec: Government of Quebec.

⁷ The notion of a professional learning community is derived from the work of Lave and Wenger on communities of practice (Lave and Wenger (1991)). Advanced by the school improvement movement, from the outset, they aim to create professional learning which draws directly from teachers’ classroom experience while decompartmentalizing this experience (with respect to both the relationship with colleagues and that with other forms of knowledge). This practice of “professional development” evolved in North America, specifically, in Ontario, in connection with a statistical monitoring of schools. More recently, in Quebec, Martine Leclerc (2012) developed a “guide” widely distributed to school principals to help them construct and use such a tool, to improve weak performances.

⁸ This kind of data infrastructure does not seem as much crucial in France. Of course, the ministry of education provides several data infrastructures and algorithms. There is also a recent literature in French policy analysis addressing this topic in other policy sectors (e.g., Nonjon & Marrel, 2015). Nevertheless, in fine, the effective implementation of the steering by results policy in education little depends on this kind of data infrastructure in this country as illustrated in Chap. 7, even in the case of the secondary schools’ value-added indicators which are traditionally widely disseminated and frequently commented in the media.

⁹ The Société de Gestion du réseau informatique des commissions scolaires (GRICS [Society to Manage School Boards’ Computer Network]) is a private, nonprofit organization, administered by the managers of different school boards since 1985. Its goal is to offer school boards (as well as other clients) services and support in the domain of information technologies. From this perspective, GRICS develops and administers various tools for data collection and data processing analysis for school boards, such as the software Lumix or GPI. GPI (an integrated management software for schools) allows for the computerization of a collection of data on the school, used by various actors from schools and school boards: for example, the management of the student

file, student absences, student evaluation and learning, constructing a student timetable, etc. These data may be formatted, framed, and analyzed by Lumix which is an Excel software, programmed and reprogrammable for that purpose.

¹⁰ The secondary schools' budget reform ("réforme du cadre budgétaire et comptable" in French) designates a reform of the budget structure of secondary education the aim of which is to improve transparency and intelligibility of schools' budgetary choices in order to favor their accountability.

¹¹ Directeur académique des services de l'Éducation nationale (Académie's Director of Services for National Education, see Chap. 2).

¹² "Visualisation des contrats d'objectifs académiques (Visualization of the académie's performance contracts)." This application, created by the Western académie's rectorat, is a tool to formalize school projects, in which principals must introduce their project. This application comes with the modeling of the stages that a school project follows, from its inception to its final adoption, including the phase of discussion with the authorities of the rectorat. Behind this application was the recognition of the very great diversity in the format of school projects and, in particular, the fact that not all were necessarily based on the académie's project. During interviews, the responsible individuals from the rectorat indicate that, on a number of occasions, the introduction of the VCOA application is also the time for the rectorat's managers to "harmonize their practices" and organize departmental services to handle the school contracts systematically.

¹³ The base entitled "Aide au Pilotage et à l'Auto-évaluation des Établissements (Help in Steering and Self-Evaluation of Schools)" was created in 2011, based on secondary schools' former performance indicators. It brings together, in the form of summary or more detailed tables, four types of indicators that education professionals may consult online via restricted access: indicators allowing for the identification of the school and indicators characterizing the school population (social background and numbers), the personnel and means available, and, finally, the school's performance (the students' performance, orientation, and examination results).

¹⁴ While it is difficult to conclude in the existence of a mimetic mechanism, nevertheless, we notice that certain regional academic councils serve as examples in the ministerial rhetoric and can be drawn upon for experimentation. This is the case, for example, of the regional academic council of Bordeaux for the RCBC

¹⁵ Fédération syndicale unitaire (Unitary Union Federation).

¹⁶ The idea of this slogan that we found in several institutional documents is to stress that working in this académie is a highly formative experience for professionals. To some extent, it is an interesting way to talk positively of the difficulties of this académie and to reverse the stigmata: there are problems, but these problems teach professionals; the académie is not attractive and loses every year many teachers, but it has finally its implicit function within the system to train massively new generations of teachers and so on.

¹⁷ In the course of the New Age project, three different recteurs managed this académie, and they each implemented distinct strategies of normalization. William Marois (2009–2013) followed a method which he had already been able to put to work in other académies. He relied on the intermediate officers (principals and territorial inspectors) to relay and legitimize his policy, with a classic top-down administrative approach. He favored public communication, aiming at constantly dedramatizing the events at issue and stressing pedagogical (rather than budgetary) questions. Finally, he relied a great deal on consensus-based measures to legitimize his general policy. Florence Robine (2013–2014), for her part, instead relied on her charisma and on a proximity management system focused on educational issues, while Béatrice Gille (in the role since May 7, 2014) seems to be putting greater emphasis on the systematization of procedures.

¹⁸ We talk about “pedagogical biotope” because, as mentioned below, one of the defining features of the Southern académie is its important concentration of organizations thinking about educational issue.

¹⁹ One of the first French chairs in the science of education was created in 1884 in the “Faculté de Lettres,” which became the “Institut de Psychologie, Sociologie et Sciences de l’Education” (IPSE) in 1968. It was then attached to Philippe Meirieu’s department of pedagogy in 1988 and became the “Institut des Sciences Pratiques d’Education et de Formation” (ISPEF) in 1994.

²⁰ Aside from Philippe Meirieu, editor in chief of *Cahiers pédagogiques* (Pedagogical Workbooks) of the “Cercle de Recherche et d’Action pédagogique” (CRAP [Circle of Research and Pedagogical Action]), we can refer to Alain Bouvier, recteur of the académie of Clermont-Ferrand, member of the “Haut conseil de l’éducation” (Higher Educational Council), director of the “Institut de recherche sur l’enseignement des mathématiques” (IREM [Institute for Research on Teaching Mathematics]), of the “Mission académique de formation pour l’Education Nationale” (MAFPEN [Académie’s Training Mission for National Education]) of the Southern académie, and director of the IUFM before P. Meirieu.

²¹ Symptomatically, the person responsible for statistical analyzes has the title of “direction adjointe à la réussite éducative (associate director of educational success).”

²² The Ecoles supérieures du professorat et de l’éducation (Espé [Higher Institutes of the Teaching Profession and Education]) in 2013 replaced the former Instituts de formation des maîtres (IUFM [Teacher Training Institutions]) created in 1989. They assumed their mission to train future teachers and principal educational counselors. Belonging to a university, their interventions cover the territory at the level of the academies. They also take charge of some of the training at the level of academies and, depending on each school’s project, the training of other educational professionals.

²³ The performance of the Northern SB in 2009/2010 was rather superior to that of the Quebec public school system (e.g., in terms of the graduation rate, dropouts, and mastery of the French language) and slightly inferior or equivalent to that of the Eastern SB (depending on the year). Nonetheless, the targets set by the ministry for these two school boards were categorized according to the ministry’s fairly high, or indeed even unattainable and quite unrealistic, targets, according to some of our interviewees (from the Northern SB, in particular).

²⁴ They noted their support for an association explicitly challenging the functioning of schoolboards during the debate on Bill 88 (see Chap. 5).

²⁵ In France children are assigned to schools by place of residence.

²⁶ After our period of investigating the school board, in fact, we learned that the president of the Council of Commissioners had not been reelected in the school elections and that, subsequently, the new council did not reconfirm its confidence in the DG. The latter was then suspended and replaced by a deputy directeur (DGA).

²⁷ The DAPEP (Délégation académique à la prospective et à l’évaluation des performances [Académie’s Department for Forecasting and Evaluation of Performances]).

²⁸ The pedagogical practices concerned must be considered in the larger sense: pedagogical coordination between grades and among teachers of the same discipline; supervision of the relationship to teachers’ programs; organization and management of (students with) “learning difficulties;” and consistency and orientation of evaluation practices (among teachers, between internal and external evaluation, and between years of study).

²⁹ A quote from the chief of staff of the recteur’s cabinet when interviewed.

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