Frameworks of International Accountability:
Competing Visions and Integral Opportunities

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Abstract

Accountability in international education has become a high-stakes endeavor. This article examines the values and metrics embedded in several curricular frameworks as they intersect global accountability systems. It encourages an integral vision of educational purposes for sustainability in accountability reform.

A call for greater accountability for educators can be grounded in changing political, economic and regulatory global contexts. A confluence of events and circumstances have emerged, leading to public policy in many developed countries that mandates more accountability for public school units and teachers in the form of standardized testing to measure student achievement. The use of standardized testing to measure educational goals is grounded in evolving ideas about schooling and accountability based in various forms of curriculum ideologies.

All international educational accountability systems must address two basic questions about curricula: *what is the purpose of education, and how should schools be held accountable for that education?* How one answers these questions depends on one's epistemological stance, and each stance posits claims to truth. To analyze international educational accountability, this article will attend to the question of how should schools be held accountable as it is embedded in the dominant values of the former question, what is the purpose of education?

This article will focus on the competing value structures of two divergent accountability systems—one grounded in social efficiency and scholar academic ideologies and the other grounded in learner centered and social reconstruction ideologies—as they affect countries' educational policies for educational accountability. Each accountability system is positioned in claims of truth concerning educational values and knowledge, and each system informs the measurements that are used to hold schools accountable. Choices of metrics in educational accountability are determined by the essential views of the purposes of education. While the social efficiency/scholar academic accountability framework has relied on standardized testing to demonstrate acceptable output measurements, the accountability framework relying on learner-centered and social reconstruction curricula, have valued other measurements as indicators of

idealized educational outputs. International accountability systems may have more sustainability by addressing the varied perspectives of ideologies in their efforts to hold schools accountable.

**Competing Curriculum Ideologies in
International Education Accountability**

There are varying perspectives of accountability in international educational accountability frameworks that are founded in contrasting ideas of curriculum ideologies. Curriculum theory has suggested a variety of foundational values used to understand educational goals and outputs. As defined by Schiro (2012), a curriculum ideology is a "collection of ideas, a comprehensive vision, a way of looking at things, or a worldview…" (p. 8). A curriculum ideology presents a set of truths about the values inherent in education and the spheres of influence that intersect with educational contexts. Schiro (2012) presented four curriculum ideologies that inform how one views the purpose of education and the measurements that should be used to gauge success in international educational accountability: the social efficiency, the scholar academic, the learner-centered, and the social reconstruction schemes of curriculum. For the purposes of this analysis, the social efficiency is collapsed with the scholar academic ideologies into one framework—the social efficiency/scholar academic framework. Additionally, the learner-centered ideology is merged with the social reconstruction ideology to analyze international educational accountability reforms. In the next section, the perspectives of the competing curricular ideologies are briefly addressed, focusing on the major educational values espoused by the framework and the measurements that validate the contrasting claims to truth.

Perspectives of the Social Efficiency/Scholar Academic Framework

Each of the curriculum ideologies affecting international accountability are derived from the values each framework holds true, and dominant values must be focused upon to answer the

questions posed in the introduction: what is the purpose of education, and how should its success

be measured? The first framework of international accountability—a combination of the social

efficiency and scholar academic ideologies—is presented in this section.

Social efficiency. First, the social efficiency ideology of curricula is steeped in varying

historical contexts, including social reform (Bracey, 2003), utilitarianism and economic

connections to education (Lessinger & Salowe, 200), the behavioral psychology of John B.

Watson, Edward Thorndike and B.F. Skinner, and scientific methodology (Bobbitt, 1924; Gagne,

1965). It has been known by various names, including the social behaviorist (Schubert, 1996)

and the behavioral (Posner, 1992). Both Zeichner (1993) and Kiebard (2004) used *social*

efficiency to label this ideology, as well. Proponents of the social efficiency ideology often

ground their views of the purposes and processes of education within behaviorism as suggested

in the works of various scholars, including Thorndike (1898), Watson (1919), Watson & Ragnor

(1920), and Skinner (1963,1974). In international public educational accountability guided by

the social efficiency model, there is an emphasis on accountability to the payers of education, the

taxpayers, as exemplified through the rise of the basic skills movement (Lessinger, 1970),

standards that reflect the public's view of content curricula (Anderson & International Institute

for Educational Planning, 2005), an emphasis on teacher and school effectiveness through data

based decisions (Fenstermacher, 2001; Jacobs, Gregory, Hoppey and Hoppey, 2009; Lessinger,

1970) along with public transparency of that data for rewards and sanctions. This last emphasis

reflects a growing market approach to the purposes of education.

As a primary principle of education and with a nod to the utilitarian purposes of

schooling, social efficiency educators hope to shape the behaviors of students to effectively

perform socially warranted outcomes as measured through a mix of administratively controlled

standardized content and outcomes for society's needs (Bobbitt, 1929). As in the scholar

academic curriculum tradition, the teacher transmits the accepted societal canon of content and

provides standard tasks for all learners. Amid the social efficiency curriculum, the teacher acts as

an efficient manager of the learning with an expectation of uniformity from learners (Schiro,

2012, p. 223). The social efficiency framework is grounded in the industrialism model that views

education as the production of knowledge and skills for predetermined purposes and markets

(Robinson & Aronica, 2009).

The purpose of evaluation in the social efficiency ideology is to establish certain

academic skills for accountability purposes. Assessments tend to be objective and criterion-

referenced (Schiro, 2012), such as the evolution of the modern day standards-based high-stakes

standardized testing modes used to demonstrate student achievement levels for purposes of

rewards and sanctions. Current-public data reporting mechanisms increase the sphere of

accountability to multiple parties: the learner, teachers, schools, and even nations.

Academic scholar. Modern international accountability systems enhance the social

efficiency ideology with the complementary framework of the scholar academic ideology. The

scholar academic ideology has also been known by various names in the past, such as the

traditional (Posner, 1995), the academic (Zeichner, 1993), and the knowledge-centered (Ellis,

2004). What is common to all framings and naming of the scholar academic framework of

curriculum is a focus on the liberal-arts notion of advancement of the academic discipline or the

content as the driving truth behind the purpose of education, which is a notion shared by

classicists (Plato, 1955; Anderson, 1961). Instruction in the scholar academic tradition tends to

be didactic in nature, and its purpose is to advance the accepted knowledge of the discipline —

those sets of content that may be referred to as the canon (Hirsch, 1989; Ravitch, 2011). Thus,

the teacher acts as the transmitter of knowledge and the student as the recipient of that transmission. Formal learning theory, or the scholarship of pedagogy, is non-existent or tends to be subsumed under the centrality of the actual discipline content (Schiro, 2012, p. 221). The scholar academic ideology suggests that the purpose of evaluation is to rank students, thus assuring accurate assessment of students' placement in the various disciplines based upon their performance. The student's responsibility in the scholar academic framework is to learn the subject matter as it has been taught by the discipline specialist. Assessments may be norm-referenced, objective measurements of content (Schiro, 2012, p. 239) but varying traditional forms of assessment may be used, such as the essay. Standardized testing of common curricula tends to be an acceptable endeavor to connect the social efficiency and scholar academic ideologies for modern day accountability models across the educational systems of the world.

Perspectives of Learner-Centered and Social Reconstruction Ideologies

In contrast to the social efficiency/scholar academic framework for accountability is the learner-centered/social reconstruction framework. Epistemological truths within this model of educational accountability in education are grounded in curricula based in learner-centeredness, progressivism, human developmentalism, humanism and critical pedagogy. The next section addresses the values and measures of the learner-centered/social reconstruction framework in educational accountability.

Learner-centered. Learner-centered curricular ideologies (Schiro, 2012) view student learning through the perspective of the learner, not the discipline content (scholar academic) or the needs of society (social efficiency). The main educational aim is the perspective of the child, herself (Parker, 1894, 1964.) Historical contexts for the learner-centered ideology include educators such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who wrote *Emile* in 1762 (republished in 1979), a

treatise on the idea that learning emerges from personal experience. The inventor of kindergarten, Friedrich Froebel, promoted playful and joyful expressions of learning. John Dewey (1938, 1994) inspired the Laboratory School at the University of Chicago and with it, progressive ideas of learning such as child-centered problem solving, project learning, and experiential and real-world based learning emerged. Leaner-centered terminology has been termed as humanist (McNeil, 1977), developmentalist (Zeichner, 1993), and progressive and learner-centered (Ellis, 2004).

Developmental pedagogies, such as Piaget's work (1954; 1997), are highly valued in this curricular ideology, as the learner is the central focus, rather than the content curriculum or the outcomes of learning. Personal meaning-making and constructivist notions of knowledge develop a viewpoint that teachers and students create a "synthesis of each individual's experience with the world" (Barth, 1972, p. 45). Additionally, humanist processes that emphasize individual learning for self-actualization can be found in this curriculum ideology. Carl Rogers' (1951) and Abraham Maslow's (1970) psychological ideas of therapy found their way into learner-centered instruction, and the learner's opinions and affect became an important component of a subjective notion of knowledge (Schiro, 2012) that stands in direct contrast to the social efficiency/scholar academic notions of knowledge production.

In that stages of growth and facilitating individual development are the acceptable outcomes of learning, the evaluation in the learner-centered framework focuses on diagnosing students to further growth (Schiro, 2012). As such, assessments tend to be subjective, informal, formative and diagnostic. Summative evaluation instruments, such as standardized tests, are eschewed in favor of ongoing, growth-oriented assessments that promote student learning during the instruction process, not just after the instruction is over.

Social reconstruction. A second curriculum ideology in this framework is social reconstruction (Schiro, 2012). Learners are viewed as active agents of their own learning and meaning can only occur when the learning is related to the learner's own experience. A central educational aim of social reconstruction curriculum is the growth of society into a "more just, satisfying, democratic, egalitarian, and humane society than the current one" (Schiro, 2012, p. 176) and as such, social justice is a dominant value. Perspectives of social reconstruction curriculum can be found in the critical pedagogies of various educators, including: Apple (1956, 1982); Giroux (1985, 1988, 1991, 1994); Giroux & Simon (1989); McLaren (1989, 1995); Shor & Freire (1987); Simon (1987, 1992). This ideology has been called critical reconstructionist by Schubert (1996), social reconstructionist by Zeichner (1993), and society-centered by Ellis (2004).

In the social reconstruction ideology, learning is viewed as primarily a social, rather than an individual, act that takes place in the classroom, and in the larger community (Brameld, 1950). The learning process is dialogical and includes some sort of direct experience with the world around the learner. Thus, the learner cannot be separated from interaction with the environment as meaning emerges within the interaction itself. Social reconstruction educators prefer discussion and actual experience as the mediators of learning. Teachers must be reflective of the forces shaping their own lives to help change the lives of their students (McLaren, 2007). Teachers consider the ways they are complicit with oppression and injustice in society in this curriculum ideology (Giroux, 2006). Knowledge creation may be seen as subjective and constructivist within this curriculum ideology in that knowledge does not exist outside of the learner's environment (Schiro, 2012). Social reconstruction curriculum prefers assessments that are informal, subjective, and used for diagnostic purposes. They may be individual in nature,

with respect to criterions and their purpose is to understand student progress with respect to ability (Schiro, 2012, p. 239).

While standardized tests for outputs are not completely repudiated as educational outputs, the learner-centered/social reconstruction framework of curricula accountability favors multiple methods for measuring accountability reform, including subjective forms of assessment. Commonly valued output measurements in this framework for educational accountability include: affective growth; learning to learn; self-discovery learning; self-paced learning; performance-based assessments; portfolios; subjective or phenomenological learning, such as reflections; individualized learning; learning contracts; immersed clinical placements; and service-learning.

The learner centered/social reconstruction framework still informs many educators and teacher educators world-wide, policy-makers in many nations have favored the curricular ideologies of the social efficiency/scholar academic framework for accountability. The metrics used to determine effectiveness in educational contexts have migrated to objective measures of learning as part of the focus on economic markets, utilitarianism and behaviorism. The next section will demonstrate how many developed nations have embraced standardized testing to measure student learning as an output that validates the truths of the social efficiency/scholar academic framework in the international context of international educational accountability.

A Reliance on the Social Efficiency and Scholar Academic Framework: The Rise of Standardized Testing Measurements

Standardized tests are the logical output measurement for common content standards in countries that find worth in the social efficiency/academic scholar values. With the emergence of large data sets measuring national or provincial and state curricula, the scholar academic ideology combined with social efficiency, creating a powerful partnership that celebrates the

elements of utilitarianism and behaviorism by employing standardized testing measurements that are cost effective and relatively fast to score for public accountability.

In a shining example of the influence of behaviorism in the social efficiency/scholar academic framework, standardized testing outputs used to measure student, teacher and school systems have proliferated in global educational settings. The International Academy of Education (IAE) recommended the values of this framework with the statement that "workable, defensible accountability systems are built upon aligned components—objectives, assessments, instruction, resources, and rewards or sanctions" (Anderson & International Institute for Educational Planning, 2005). Results-driven educational accountability systems have gained ground internationally, largely based on two of the foundational precepts of the social efficiency/academic scholar framework, common or national standards and high-stakes testing policies. Federal legislation, such as No Child Left Behind in the United States, and the Australian National Education Performance Monitoring Task Force, have established student achievement output accountability systems favoring standardized testing and with those systems, have increased public monitoring and reporting of assessments to the public (Anderson & International Institute for Educational Planning, 2005). The social efficiency/academic scholar framework in both of these principal countries revealed to the remainder of the world how large scale models based in efficiency, standardization and social transparency may be used to hold students, teachers and other educational units accountable for learning outputs.

Rosenvist (2010) investigated the use of summative assessments in the form of standardized testing for Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries. This organization contains 34 countries across the continents of Europe, Asia, Australia, and North and South America (OECD, n.d.). Rosenvist (2010) found that national

assessments are now given in Australia, Belgium (French Community), Denmark, France, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Japan, Luxembourg, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the Slovak Republic, Sweden and the United Kingdom (England). Other OECD countries give tests at a more local level, such as at the state or province level as in the cases of Canada, Germany and the United States. In the United States, that trend may be reversing as Common Core standards will be assessed in one or both of two new assessment consortia, the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) that together will assess forty-six states that have enlisted for the Common Core assessments (ASCD, 2011).

Countries using public reporting of national educational output data in their accountability systems include: Austria, Australia, Belgium (French Community and Flemish Community), Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, the Slovak Republic, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom (England and Scotland) and the United States. Countries that do not publish national test data do report to relevant stakeholders (Rosenvist, 2010).

To visualize the impact of standardized testing as a measurement output in global accountability reforms, the following table provides a sampling of OECD countries and the assessment type or the organization administering the assessment they use (Rosenvist, 2010). While it is not intended to provide a complete set of data on OECD countries' standardized tests, it does provide a graphical representation of the various summative assessment outputs that selected countries have mandated as part of their educational accountability systems.

Table 1
OECD Country Assessments and Standardized Testing Outputs

OECD Country	Summative Assessment/ Organization Administering the Assessment
Austria	Bildungsforschung, Innovation & Entwicklung (BIFIE)-Years 4 & 8, every 3rd year.
Australia	National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy-(NAPLAN)- Years 3, 5, 7 and 9.
Belgium (French Community)	Department of General Affairs, Research on Education and Joint Steering of the Education System-Years 3 & 5.
Canada	Pan-Canadian Assessment Program (PCAP)-complement provincial assessments
Denmark	Danish Agency for the Evaluation and Quality of Primary and Lower Secondary Education-Years 2, 3, 4, 6 and 8.
Iceland	Educational Testing Institute- Years 4, 7 and 10.
Italy	Italian National Institute for the Evaluation of the Education System (INVALSI) - Years 2 and 5 of primary school and in Years 1 and 3 of lower secondary school.
Netherlands	National Institute for Educational Measurement (CITO), Dutch National Examination Board (CEVO)
New Zealand	National Education Monitoring Project (NEMP)-Years 4 & 8
Sweden	The Swedish National Agency for Education- Years 3, 5 and 9
United Kingdom	End of Key Stage 1 (Years 1-2), 2 (Years 3-6) and 4 (Years 10-11) End of Key Stage 2- English, Math Science End of Key Stage 4- General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) or Equivalent
United States	No Child Left Behind- mandates state testing in reading, mathematics and science *Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act allows multiple performance measures and waivers provide flexibility (U.S. Department of Education, 2012) National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)-Yearly (Upcoming) Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC)

In the social efficiency/scholar framework, claims to truth in educational accountability are positioned in canons of commonly valued curricula and high-stakes testing. Grounded in the alliance of the social efficiency and scholar ideologies, standardized testing measurements have become common in current education milieus. Table 1 shows that standardized objective testing outputs are important metrics for accountability in a variety of countries' accountability systems that have adopted the values of the social efficiency/academic scholar framework.

In some national accountability systems, there is a more balanced mix of curriculum ideologies. Sweden's accountability system does mandate the use of compulsory school syllabi which contain national standards, a practice that falls within the social efficiency/academic scholar framework. However, other non-standardized assessments are also collected, including authentic assessments. Teacher-constructed assessments utilizing national assessment criteria are common in Sweden, following a model that places a high value on locally controlled accountability models (Peterson, 2004). In addition, Sweden supports curricula for students that "develop a sense of curiosity and the desire to learn, develop their own individual way of learning" (Peterson, 2004, p.2), an outcome goal grounded in learner-centered ideology. Finland has established a national curriculum, which is a practice within the scholar academic ideology. Their accountability system spotlights teaching and learning practices that promote a multiplicity of perspectives by "encouraging creative solutions within increasingly diverse social and human environments" to encourage diversity within schools (Sahlberg, 2009, p. 31); this is a value that may be viewed within social reconstruction. Thus, varying perspectives outside of the social efficiency/academic scholar framework have taken hold in some camps of international accountability. The next section addresses some of these viewpoints.

Competing Visions of International Educational Accountability

It should be noted that not all proponents of the scholar academic ideology of curriculum agree with standardized testing as the acceptable form of measurement for accountability purposes. One criticism of the test-driven accountability model concerns the framework's focus on some subjects at the cost of other content areas. Diane Ravitch (2011) suggested that No Child Left Behind test-based accountability in the United States prioritized "higher scores, without regard to whether students acquired any knowledge of history, science, literature, geography, the arts, and other subjects that were of important for accountability purposes" (p. 30). In Ravitch's epistemology, the liberal arts canon is disassociated with the high-stakes testing that seems to shadow the adoption of national or common standards for content. Ravitch is not the only scholar to criticize the social efficiency ideology of educational accountability and others have condemned the current state of international accountability. Regardless of the prominence of the global educational reform movement that values common standards and standardized testing, proponents of learner-centered and social reconstruction curricula have disapproved of the viral-like nature of modern international reform that promotes social efficiency and singular forms of measurement.

Another divergent position to the social efficiency/scholar academic model concentrates on the ways in which authority for accountability has been hijacked away from local entities and toward larger governing bodies, such as the federal governments or even state and provincial government. The opponents of the social efficiency/academic scholar framework argue that the natural consequence of relying on standardized testing for public accountability is the weakened democratic functioning of schooling. Meier (2000) suggested that moving authority over school decisions to outside bodies, "…undermines the capacity of schools to instruct by example in the

qualities of mind that schools in a democracy should be fostering in kids—responsibility for one's own ideas, tolerance for the ideas of others, and a capacity to negotiate differences" (p. 5). Meier's argument is a foundational argument for the learner centered/social reconstruction accountability framework—that a key output of schooling may not be measured singly by standardized tests in that one of the most valuable outputs of education is the furthering of democratic values. In this vision, locally controlled curricula, assessment and teaching strategies are superior to the industrial model of social efficiency and the content-oriented scholar academic framework that does not value the input of the learner or the importance of the environment in learning.

The increase in high stakes testing for public accountability in international contexts may be viewed within the frame of what Swedish scholar, Pasi Sahlberg, calls the Global Education Reform Movement (GERM). GERM, according to Sahlberg (2012), behaves like a virus in an epidemic (Sahlberg, 2012) and displays several symptoms, including the use of competition, school choice and accountability through standardized testing. The Finnish system of excellence in education is partially based upon local accountability policies that value teaching as a profession. Many of the assessments for student learning are teacher-made assessments, not the standardized tests of the social efficiency/scholar academic framework currently used by a multitude of nations. For example, by the fifth grade, "only descriptive and ongoing feedback are employed" (Salhberg, 2009, p. 26), rather than summative standardized tests in schools. The local accountability policy focus in Finland appears to be a result of a "decentralized culture of trust" for teachers at the local level (Salhberg, 2009, p. 27) that is in opposition to the bureaucratically controlled social efficiency/scholar academic framework. Although Finland does collect national standardized data for international comparisons—such as the Trends in

International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA)—its accountability system appears to be heavily influenced by learner-centered and social reconstruction curricula. Assessments are locally constructed and teachers have expanded authority over curricula and assessments.

A fourth opposing perspective suggests that single entities within educational units, whether it is one teacher or one educational school, cannot be held accountable for the outcomes of students because it is questionable whether causal responsibility can be established. There are numerous factors affecting student achievement outcomes, and educators are just one of those influences. The inability to directly correlate causality between teacher and student achievement is directly related to another concern with standardized testing—the reliability, validity and stability of the econometric models used to measure student achievement in the social efficiency/academic scholar framework.

Value-added modeling (VAM), a form of a projection growth measurement that has gained acceptance in several countries including the United States and Britain, uses the student's previous achievement levels from standardized tests to predict future learning levels of growth (Betebenner, 2009). While using the identical standardized tests employed for criterion-referencing against standards, value-added scores measure student growth over time rather than referencing students against standards. The student is compared against his or her own growth pattern and an expected level of achievement is projected. While many acknowledge that VAM scores are better measures than the criterion measurements used by many regulatory agencies for accountability, others have contended that the flaws in statistical modeling invalidate their use to hold educators accountable. The benefits and perils of value-added scores have been fervently debated in recent years (McCaffrey, Koretz, Lockwood, & Hamilton, 2004; RAND, 2004).

Other researchers have argued against using value-added models for measuring student

achievement for teacher evaluations based on issues of reliability and validity (Amrein-

Beardsley, 2008; Braun, 2005; Kupermintz, 2003; Lockwood, Louis & McCaffrey, 2002). These

criticisms of VAM's constitute a push-back on the notion of social efficiency for accountability.

Standardized tests are efficient and cost-saving compared to teacher-made assessments, but until

the results may be analyzed through statistical modeling that is consistently reliable, and results

have been proven to be uncoupled with the student's socio-economic status, the amount of

parental involvement in the student's education, the impact of team-teaching, the lack of

randomization in class placement of students, or other factors that impact academic achievement,

international proponents of the social efficiency/academic scholar framework are on the defense

about the metrics they use for outcomes.

Use of the TIMMS and PISA for accountability occurs globally and the national

reporting of scores becomes fodder for generating further accountability measures. Recently,

perspectives diminishing country to country comparisons, such as between Finland the United

States, have emerged. In a current study, scholars Carnoy & Rothstein (2013) disputed the

declared "unacceptable" scores of American students on the TIMSS. By re-reading the data of

the 2010 TIMSS and comparing the results to previous years, Carnoy and Rothstein found that

the achievement scores of American students between the most and least advantaged students is

smaller than in similar postindustrial countries and that:

> …while the reading achievement on PISA of the lowest-social-class students in the
>
> United States grew by more than 0.2 standard deviations from 2000 to 2009, it fell by an
>
> even larger amount in Finland. In math, U.S. students from the lowest social class also

gained substantially, while scores of comparable Finnish students declined. (Carnoy &

Rothstein, 2013, para 8)

Their analyses of the international tests suggested that policy-makers should be cautious

about using a single test for making decisions for all educational accountability settings. Nations

may be affected by contextual issues, such as varying poverty levels or fluctuating

concentrations of non-native language speakers, which constrain the worth of national

comparisons in favor of finding solutions to local issues of educational import.

The ongoing dominance of social efficiency and scholar academic ideologies on

international educational accountability for the future remains unknown as competing viewpoints

have emerged. A discussion regarding the relevance of considering multiple ideological

perspectives for international educational accountability completes this analysis of international

educational accountability reforms.

Integral Visions of Global Educational Accountability

Measurements arising from the social efficiency/scholar academic framework have

become prominent features in many international accountability systems. There have been

challenging perspectives voiced from both the learner-centered and social reconstruction

ideologies which highlighted the values excluded from the social efficiency/academic scholar

point of view. With these viewpoints come varied metrics for accountability.

It may be contended that what should be measured in accountability systems is what is

most essential in education. At a time when accountability systems have trended toward

objective metrics, some educators are left with the vague feeling that what is being measured

may not constitute the most imperative values of education. The public reporting metric of

standardized testing in countries such as the United States, Britain and Australia has tended to be

at the exclusion of other assessments of learning, discounting entire ideological frameworks of the purposes and measures of education in the process. Long-term sustainability in accountability systems may be challenging when educational purposes are systematically omitted from accountability frameworks. Complexity, the contextual nature of educational arenas and respect for discourse surrounding the varied perspectives of stakeholders are all foundational conditions for an integrated vision of educational accountability systems.

The values, purpose and measurements for each of the curriculum ideologies influencing education in general, and the international educational accountability movement specifically, may be viewed as conflicting and independent of each other. The aims of the social efficiency ideology—with its values based in efficient social responsiveness—and the learner-centered ideology—with its focus on individual development—appear to have little in common with each other. Yet approaches to curriculum may be more interconnected than their ideologies suggest, and it is important for educators who influence policy-makers to maintain a true praxis orientation—combining ideology with the reality of modern needs in society. A pragmatic, problem-solving orientation rather than a divisive political stance may advance an overall picture of an integral educational accountability system. A holistic mapping of the purposes and measures of education may prove more beneficial to students and society than a limited, atomistic version of singular educational goals. What knowledge is considered valid? In what ways is that knowledge produced? These are value-laden questions that may be pondered within the democratic practice of civil discourse. The voices of multiple stakeholders regarding the purposes and measures of education may be honored in the accountability debate.

Moreover, these are questions bound in a Cartesian split and their either/or dichotomy compel one version of truth over another, which is a false and constraining choice for

international educational accountability. Binary constructions of the purposes of education are hierarchical and exclusionary by their nature, and lead to certain manifestations of ideologies at the expense of others (Piro, 2011). Foundational truths that promote dualistic choices for accountability are rarely satisfying for universal stakeholders and are antithetical to the notion of democracy in accountability. Furthermore, they are unsustainable over time in that singular purposes only are met, as opposed to holistic and integral purposes and measures in education.

Each ideology of curriculum holds contrasting visions of the purpose of education, yet it may also be claimed that each assertion of truth is legitimate within that frame. For example, the acquisition of content is a valid representation of knowledge production, but the practical experience gained from internships and clinical placements are also authentic outcomes. Individual pacing and self-discovery are central notions of human potentiality and personal growth, but social interests in the outcomes of education and the resource allocation dilemmas that arise with serving public interests are legitimate as well. Top-down standardized curricula and testing reforms are efficient and may shepherd certain economic needs of the society, but they may also promote the corporate ideals of human resource management based in market and efficiency ideals versus collaborative and contextual decision-making focused on student-oriented teaching and learning choices.

Unfortunately, curricular ideologies tend to be presented as isolated and independent of each other, promoting a hierarchical rather than a holistic perspective. In actuality, international accountability efforts may seek to make connections across purposes, both individual and societal, and measurements, both objective and subjective. Compound expressions of purposes with multiple measures of performance are the more holistic and integral approach of regarding educational accountability. Viewing accountability in this mode requires a simple framing

adjustment from either/or to both/and. A both/and frame considers numerous educational purposes and measures in accountability reform, rather than the either/or choice of one curriculum ideology over another. Integral accountability in education requires more of a conceptual expansion of mind that embraces multiple educational purposes than a choice of a solitary framework of values and metrics.

Holding educators responsible for educational outputs is not a simplistic endeavor. Accountability for international education should be mired in complexity. Policy-making for an integral vision of global accountability requires intellectual honesty and flexibility in intention, the ability to hold opposing perspectives simultaneously, tenacity for long-term sustainability, a commitment to civil discourse and the courage to maintain these values.

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