

**SPECIAL ISSUE**  
**Anti-Standardization and Testing Opt-Out Movements in Education:  
Resistance, Disputes and Transformation**

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**Anti-Standardization and Testing Opt-Out Movements in  
Education: Resistance, Disputes and Transformation**

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**Abstract:** Testing, scoring comparison and accountability policies have become a ubiquitous part of schooling across most countries in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The persistence of these hyper-surveillance measures has occurred in spite of an accumulative and increasing amount of evidence that illustrates negative effects of these kinds of policies. Meanwhile, diverse school actors have grown increasingly skeptical of how tests are being used, leading various groups to

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mobilize and resist such trends in education. This special issue looks at these resistance movements to school accountability measures across the world, gathering experiences of resistance from movements in countries in South America, Europe, North America, and Asia. This paper provides theoretical tools for analyzing resistance and presents an overview of these movements, highlighting common trends and variations referring to their goals, political strategies and outcomes.

**Key words:** accountability; testing; opt-out movements; social movements; resistance

### **Movimientos antiestandarización en educación: Resistencia, disputas y transformación**

**Resumen:** Evaluar, ranquear y exigir rendición de cuentas por resultados en pruebas estandarizadas se ha convertido en una parte omnipresente de la educación en la mayoría de los países en el siglo XXI. La persistencia de esta hipervigilancia se da a pesar de una creciente acumulación de evidencia respecto a los efectos nocivos de este tipo de políticas. Mientras tanto, diversos actores de las comunidades educativas se han vuelto cada vez más escépticos sobre los supuestos beneficios de estas medidas, lo que ha llevado a varios grupos a movilizarse y resistir tales tendencias. Este número especial analiza estos movimientos de resistencia, recopilando experiencias en países de América del Sur, Europa, América del Norte y Asia. Este artículo proporciona herramientas teóricas para analizar la resistencia y presenta una visión general de estos movimientos, destacando tendencias comunes y variaciones en relación con sus objetivos, estrategias políticas y resultados.

**Palabras claves:** rendición de cuentas; evaluación; movimientos anti-estandarización; movimientos sociales; resistencia

### **Anti-padronização e movimentos de opt-out na educação: Resistência, disputas e transformação**

**Resumo:** As políticas de teste, comparação de pontuação e responsabilização tornaram-se uma parte onipresente da escolaridade na maioria dos países no século XXI. A persistência dessas medidas de hipervigilância ocorreu apesar de uma quantidade cada vez maior de evidências que ilustram os efeitos negativos desse tipo de política. Enquanto isso, diversos atores escolares tornaram-se cada vez mais céticos sobre como os testes estão sendo usados, levando vários grupos a mobilizar e resistir a essas tendências na educação. Esta edição especial analisa esses movimentos de resistência às medidas de responsabilização escolar no mundo, reunindo experiências de resistência de movimentos em países da América do Sul, Europa, América do Norte e Ásia. Este artigo fornece ferramentas teóricas para analisar a resistência e apresenta uma visão geral desses movimentos, destacando tendências e variações comuns referentes a seus objetivos, estratégias políticas e resultados.

**Palavras-chave:** responsabilização; teste; movimentos de opt-out; movimentos sociais; resistência

## Anti-Standardization and Testing Opt-Out Movements in Education: Resistance, Disputes and Transformation

Standardization, testing and accountability policies are one of the most widespread strategies in school systems around the world (Verger et al., 2019). This has occurred despite the scant evidence that shows positive effects on student learning, in addition to a vast accumulation of studies that have widely documented (across national contexts) the negative effects on daily teaching practices, teacher professionalization and school community well-being (see, for instance, Au, 2011; Bradbury & Roberts-Holmes, 2017; Falabella, 2014; Holloway, 2019; Verger & Parcerisa, 2017).

In spite of this evidence, test-based accountability continues to be a prevailing form of quality control. They have been *seductive* policies, as Falabella (2020) argues, practiced by governments of the right and left, conservatives, liberals and democrats, which offer multiple benefits, such as ‘quality’, ‘equity’, ‘transparency’, ‘freedom’, ‘human capital’. However, as Foucault reminds us, “where there is power, there is resistance” (1979, p. 95). Along with this *seduction*, there have been criticisms and disputes on the part of teachers, students and families (Ball & Olmedo, 2013; Montero et al., 2018; Ravitch et al., 2014).

Hence, to different degrees, the pressure caused by standardized tests has grown intolerable to some, giving rise to various forms of opposition. Groups of parents, professional organizations and teachers’ unions have channeled their discontent with the intention of combating the negative impact of these policies (Brogan, 2014; Campos-Martínez & Guerrero, 2016; Clayton et al., 2019; Guajardo, 2012). In the US, for example, a group of New York-based parents initiated the Opt-Out Movement, which has grown in number and force over the past several years (Hursh et al., 2020; Pizmony-Levy & Green Saraisky, 2016). In Chile, students and teachers have banded together to resist high-stakes testing and other forms of neoliberal control of the education sector (Parcerisa & Villalobos, 2020). In the United Kingdom, the More than a Score (MTAS) campaign has organized around the effort to reduce the testing of early years students (Moss, this issue)

This special issue brings together papers that help us examine anti-standardization and testing opt-out movements in different places around the world, aiming to produce knowledge about the actors involved; their discourses, perspectives and objectives; the organizations’ main strategies and modes of action; the achievements obtained; and, more globally, an examination of collective resistance and transformation. In this introductory paper we first develop a theoretical framework about resistance, and then we offer an overview of the papers.

### Theoretical Tools for Understanding Resistance

Resistance does not have one shape, format or definition; it develops in fluid manners and through varied forms of opposition. Thus, the *interpretation* of resistance should also be open to such fluidity, allowing for negotiation and renegotiation over what constitutes as resistance. Working from this perspective, we use this introductory article to map some of the ways that resistance has been theorized within the literature. This is not meant to be an exhaustive typology, but an overview of how scholars have conceptualized resistance and its many complex features and dimensions.

Our aim here is to develop a lens for considering how various stakeholders have responded to the current moment of hyper-accountability and testing within schools, which has been extensively critiqued from a variety of perspectives and contexts. We also hope that it provides a set of analytical tools for considering how resistance is employed in many ways and to many different ends. As Anderson and Cohen (2015) argue, resistance is something that must be understood as contextual and contingent upon the conditions of a particular time. In other words, resistance might

look different at different moments, as well as in different places, and to different groups of people with diverse circumstances, agendas and goals. Therefore, we must be mindful to these nuances when trying to theorize resistance, and avoid minimizing moves that manifest differently from our own expectations or understandings. At the same time, we must avoid any urge to police the field or dismiss forms of resistance that do not sit easily within already-defined categories of resistance.

In the book *History of Sexuality Vol 1*, Foucault (1979) developed his first ideas around power and resistance. To his mind (at that time), power cannot exist without resistance—power and resistance are everywhere; resistance is not in opposition to power, but a part of the same discourse that constitutes power. They are produced through the same conditions, and cannot exist independently of the other. Foucault (1982) later reworked his theorization of resistance, where he grew to reject the idea of resistance as denoting too much of a rigid binary between power and resistance. He saw this as problematic given that discourse, power and subjectivity are all of the same ‘regime of truth’ and therefore never extricable from one another. If these could not be separated, then neither could power and resistance, as subjects could never sit outside of a particular power relationship. Rather, he theorized that *subjects of* power relations, and any acts of resistance are made possible through the same set of conditions of a particular time and place. The following extended quotation nicely captures his position:

Domination is in fact a general structure of power whose ramifications and consequences can sometimes be found descending to the most recalcitrant fibers of society... It can certainly happen that the fact of domination may only be the transcription of a mechanism of power resulting from confrontation and its consequences (a political structure stemming from invasion); it may also be that a relationship of struggle between two adversaries is the result of power relations with the conflicts and cleavages which ensue. But what makes the domination of a group, a caste, or a class, together with the resistance and revolts which that domination comes up against, a central phenomenon in the history of societies is that they manifest in a massive and universalizing form, at the level of the whole social body, the locking together of power relations with relations of strategy and the results proceeding from their interaction. (Foucault, 1982, p. 795)

Thus, he re-oriented his thinking towards that of ‘counter-conduct’, which resonated with his work on governmentality, or the ‘conduct of conduct’ (Foucault, 1997). Here, he viewed the micro actions, or the everyday practices where subjects reject the norms or ways of being that have been accepted as ‘good’ or ‘true’ of a particular context. He referred to these acts as counter-conduct.

In relation to current conditions, resistance to neoliberalism and accountability is deeply complex, taking different forms and aims depending on the context. When trying to identify different types of resistance, one challenge is that many of those who might engage in ‘micro-political’ forms of opposition do not always identify themselves as resisters. In other words, there are covert forms of opposition that do not easily map onto traditional categories of ‘collective’ forms of resistance. These include, for example, the more mundane behaviors that individuals engage in that might thwart a particular policy.

Blackmore (2004), for example, talks about the emotional work that school leaders do to mitigate the pressure, fears and anxieties that accountability policies have on their teachers. She describes these as covert acts of resistance: “performative work was undertaken at a superficial level while principals sought to simultaneously defend their educational principles. This often impacted on principal’s relationships with teachers, where they felt they could no longer be honest because it

would make visible the subterfuge” (Blackmore, 2004, p. 450). Perryman, Ball Maguire and Braun (2011) develop the concept of ‘policy evasion’ (instead of policy resistance) to capture the everyday decisions school principals made regarding which policies to enact and which ones to ignore. They argue this is what ‘resistance’ looks like in the highly performative environments within which principals and teachers work.

Drawing on post-colonial theorist, Bhabha (1994), Fuller (2019) argues that the headteachers she interviewed in her research engage in various forms counter-conduct, including acts of “ambivalence or semblance of compliance, whether unwilling or strategic (Moore et al., 2002; Shain & Gleeson, 1999)... [as well as] game playing, selectivity, masquerade and reinvention” (p. 41). What Fuller and others have shown is that resistance to neoliberalism, accountability and performativity ranges from complex, careful maneuvers, as well as more overt signals of resistances (e.g., through union work, publicly denigrating policy, etc., see McCartin et al., 2020; Fuller, 2019).

More overt and visible forms of resistance, such as walk-outs, strikes and protests, have also been a feature of the current moment. In the US, for example, collective responses have included the #RedforEd movement that involved teachers across the country striking in the name of poor wages, excessive and damaging accountability measures, and other austerity policies. Similar protests have transpired in places like Chile, where teachers and students have collectively resisted neoliberal schooling policies (see Parcerisa & Villalobos, 2020) and, more recently, in Australia where teachers have participated in strikes after COVID-19 exacerbated their grievances over poor working conditions and unsatisfactory compensation (Daniel, 2021). We will discuss these movements in more detail below, but, theoretically, the literature has dealt with these forms of resistance in very different ways than the more covert forms of resistance.

## Testing, Hyper-Accountability and Counter-Movements Around the World

Educational reforms based on standards and testing have become an essential part of the regulatory restructuring of schooling, based on the premise that setting high standards and establishing measurable goals could improve individual outcomes in education. Pasi Sahlberg (2016) refers to this process as GERM - the Global Education Reform Movement. He argues that since the 1980s a set of market-based policy technologies have increasingly become adopted as an orthodoxy of educational reform. Amongst the globally common features of GERM identified by Sahlberg, two are particularly relevant to the focus of this special issue: a) the *standardization* of education, which involves both a focus on outcomes—i.e., student learning and school performance, and centrally prescribed curricula, and b) *test-based accountability policies* for schools, or the tying of school performance – especially raising student achievement – to processes of accrediting, promoting, inspecting, and, ultimately, rewarding or disciplining schools, heads and teachers.

This assemblage of school performance metrics, rewards and punishments results in an ‘intensified market environment’ (Santori, 2018), characterized by a dense articulation of centrally prescribed performance standards, rigid rating systems, and symbolic and material consequences associated to underperformance. In this manner, test-based accountability is part of a neoliberal assemblage, a ‘migratory technology of government that interacts with situated sets of elements and circumstances’, using Ong’s words (2007, p. 5).

On a global scale, international and regional assessment of learning outcomes such as PISA, TIMSS and PIRLS have shifted attention from historically well-regarded systems (such as UK and Germany), to test-based reference, as evidenced by the emergence of Finland, Shanghai, Hong Kong, South Korea, Singapore and Japan as ‘new reference societies’ (Sellar & Lingard, 2013). At a national level, the U.S., Chile and England are examples of what Barker (2010) calls ‘hyper-

accountability?. These modes of test-based accountability produce systems whereby the ‘quality’ of the school is narrowly defined by numbers, and ‘improvement’ is defined as increasing these numbers, rather than improving practice and fostering holistic learning environments. Over the past four decades, scholars around the world have repeatedly denounced the pervasive effects of market-oriented policies in education (Apple, 2006; Ball, 2003; Lissovoy & McLaren, 2003).

### Articles in this Special Issue

This special issue comprises seven experiences of resistance to neoliberal accountability measures from movements linked to schools, parents, teachers, academics and community members in South America, Europe, North America, and Asia (see Table 1). The resistance movements that we present in this issue share common roots as they are reactions to the global advance of hyper-accountability and testing. However, marked by their specific social contexts, the movements differ in their purposes, rationales, political strategies, operations, and outcomes. To organize the myriad experiences emerging in each context, we propose three criteria to introduce the different case studies compiled in this issue. First, we describe the depth and centrality of their critique of neoliberalism’s influence in the shape of the educational system and its relation to standardized tests, which range from almost no criticism to putting resistance to neoliberalism at the center of its action. Second, we look at the strategies used by these movements to engage their members into action, which range from writing newspaper columns to organizing massive boycotts against the tests. Third, we look at the alliances that sustain these struggles, their scope, and extent, ranging from single actors to extensive articulations where diverse groups in the educational system (students, parents, education assistants) coordinate to pursue common goals.

**Table 1**  
*Anti-Standardization and Testing Opt-out Movements*

Country	Name	Starting year	Aim	Actors & alliances	Featured Strategies	Outcomes and policy changes
Chile	Alto al Simce (Stop Simce) / Dissident teachers’ movement	2013	Transform market & accountability policies	Academics, teachers, school and higher education students	Social media Opt-eds Teachers’ strike	Reduction in the number of exams, end of school rankings, moderation on teachers’ assessment
Brazil	Inter-Forum Movement of Early Childhood Education in Brazil (MIEIB)	2011	Stop the advance of neoliberal policies in early child education	Teachers, parents, social movements members	Petition letters Manifestos Seminars Videos	Working Group (WG) for Assessment of Early Childhood Education
England	More than a Score	2016	To change policy regarding the excessive testing of	Parents, professional organizations, academics	Petition letters Conferences Videos Social Media	Raised awareness of the damaging effects of SATs and Reception Baseline Assessment.

Country	Name	Starting year	Aim	Actors & alliances	Featured Strategies	Outcomes and policy changes
			early years students			Toolkit for those interested in participating in the campaign; Commissioned and disseminated expert reports
Israel	Unnamed	2019	Changes in the national assessment policies	Parents and teachers	Boycott children's tests File a labor dispute Social media Newspapers articles	Creation of a special committee. Increased power and influence of parent's association in government policies
Spain - Catalonia	Escuelas Insumisas (Dissident Schools)	2013	Halt the advance of reforms that could facilitate privatization and neoliberal reforms	Parents and academics	Guide for conscientious objection Boycott Lectures, seminars, blogs.	Promotes a critical reflection on multiple practices and working conditions in schools that threaten educational practice.
Norway	<i>Foreldreopprøret</i> (The Parental Uprising)	2015	Stop the use of standardized testing in schools for accountability purposes	Parents, teachers and concerned citizens	Social media Participation on political debates during presidential elections	Stop the use of tests for accountability purposes Tests are made voluntary to schools Change n number of students per classroom
USA - NY	United Opt-Out	2011	End high stakes tests and accountability policies	Parents and teachers	Social media Opt-out of testing Electing political representatives at the local level	Tests became optional and parents' authorization to participate in the assessment is required

Source: authors' own elaboration

Despite what could be an intuitive assumption based on the role that neoliberal reforms linked to hyper-accountability and testing played in the emergence of these movements, they do not necessarily follow a progressive ideological platform or identify as anti-neoliberal struggles. Indeed,

people who do not necessarily share common political visions coexist within these resistance movements. In countries such as the United States, Norway, and Israel, the membership of these movements is transversal across political party lines. One aspect that unites the parents (and citizens in the case of Norway) with different political positions is their concern regarding the detrimental effects of testing on their children's wellbeing and school experiences.

Casalaspi (2022), in his paper “Equality, Inclusion, and the Opt Out Movement: Who Chooses to Opt Out?” introduces us to the Opt-out movement in the United States, which is an exemplary case as it produced articulations that challenge standardization policies without necessarily questioning the neoliberal drive that sustains them. These transversal articulations occur because progressives and conservative parents find themselves working together with different aims. Progressives, commonly represented by educators, teachers’ associations, and parents of color, seek to halt the advance of privatizing reforms that threaten public education. Conservatives, widely represented by white parents from suburban areas, aim to limit the state’s influence in their children’s education. Like other countries that have experienced similar increases in testing pressures, Moss (2022), in her paper “Researching the Prospects for Change that COVID Disruption Has Brought to High Stakes Testing and Accountability Systems” uses survey and interview data to portray how COVID’s surge in England has challenged the normal function of performance-based accountability. Further testing pressures have been met with growing scepticism from parents and other public actors (e.g., teacher groups, politicians). One of the groups that has positioned itself as a key player, particularly in their push back against early years’ testing, is the [More than a Score \(MTAS\) campaign](#). More Than a Score is a coalition of organisations and individuals connected to early years and primary education including parents’ groups, academics, trade unions and subject associations. As stated on their website, this diverse group of organisations is united under the call ‘to change the way primary school children are assessed and the way schools are held accountable through high-pressure statutory tests’. Over the course of the MTAS campaign, they have added to their repertoire of strategies, including the use of professionally produced videos, social media presence, and mass emailing.

Chile, Catalonia (Spain), and Brazil provide a counterpoint as in all these cases, an anti-neoliberal critique articulates the movements’ demands. In Chile, together with a massive students’ movement protesting against an extended marketized model of education, academics, teachers, and students organized a [campaign](#) demanding the end of high-stakes testing policies. Additionally, as Sisto et al. (2022) in their paper “*The Rebellion of the Bases against the Standardization of Pedagogical Work. The Case of the Mobilization against the Teaching Career Law in Chile*,” shows, a different axis of these resistance movement emerged following this blueprint when in 2015 a fraction of teachers’ union members led a movement that concluded in a massive mobilization that paralyzed the educational system for 57 days, against reforms targeting teachers’ careers by using standard-based measures to shape their rank, salaries, and professional development opportunities. Catalonia, presented by Parcerista et al. (2022) in their paper “Why Do Opt-Out Movements Succeed (or Fail) in Low-Stakes Accountability Systems? A Case Study of the Network of Dissident Schools in Catalonia,” is noteworthy because the educational stakeholders faced a soft accountability reform. Their resistance goes beyond the immediate consequences, which were minimum, but because of its significant picture alignment with neoliberal reforms implemented previously and their expansion threat through the educational system. Similarly, Lima et al (2022) in their paper “Disputes around Assessments in Early Childhood Education in Brazil,” describe danger that the actors involved in the early childhood forum anticipated behind reforms that aimed to standardize early childhood learning and implement statutory tests to measure it. They saw in these reforms an advance of neoliberalism in education and organized their resistance to stop it.



The movements presented in this issue employed diverse strategies to place pressure on administrators and dispute the meaning of tests and standardization in students' educational processes. These movements highlight the role that social networks played in amplifying their voices and gaining support and sympathy beyond the personal networks of their members. Furthermore, much of the successful expansion of these movements are due to social networks and the community emerging around them. But the use of social networks is only one of the strategies of resistance successfully employed by the movements portrayed in this special issue. The resistance to standardization also should include communicating the adverse effects of testing and neoliberal policies in schools through different means. Furthermore, it includes actively opposing (boycotting) the administration of tests, thereby limiting the tests' negative consequences on the welfare of students.

A strategy used across the different movements is the generation of content to problematize the tests and, on some occasions, the neoliberal policies that support them. This strategy manifests as op-eds and letters to editors (Chile, USA, Norway, Israel), manifestos (Brazil), guides for conscientious objection or the boycott of testing (Catalonia, Chile, USA), and blogs or websites (Catalonia, England and USA). Most of them seek to communicate their ideas widely, often in a language accessible for a non-specialized audience. To persuade and engage different audiences in places such as Brazil, Catalonia, and Chile, movements against standardization implemented roundtables and forums with social actors and evaluation experts to critically analyze the use of tests to push teachers and schools to improve. In Brazil and Chile, the role played by academics in supporting these movements is active. In Brazil, academics could sustain collaborative relationships with parent movements, education workers, and other essential stakeholders. This relationship came into play as a coordinated response to policy change and the ability to halt, at least temporarily, its advance. In Chile, teacher leaders and what the authors define "critical academia" collaborate and provide feedback to each other. This, in the context of resistance to a teaching career proposal based on business visions, brings together political and technical arguments that gain common sense and attract a large number of participants, and manages to attenuate its implementation.

In the US, Israel, and Norway, members of these movements reached out to system administrators. Their response did not provide any room for changes and was characterized by a lack of listening and the unilateral imposition of measures. This unresponsiveness commonly exacerbated parents' concerns and pushed them into two kinds of actions, opt-out and political influence actions. Opting-out testing demonstrates force, and it's a vehicle to reach the system's attention. Underlying this strategy aims to shape school policies and influence their children's experiences actively. Opting out has become one of the most effective strategies to draw the attention of the authorities and put the issue quickly on the agenda. On some occasions, as in the case of the USA, this occurs in a massive and organized way. While in places like Israel, as Sabag and Feninger (2022) describe in their article "Parents' Resistance to Standardized Testing in a Highly Centralized System: The Emergence of an Opt-Out Movement in Israel," the mere threat of boycott forces the authorities to reconsider their decisions. In the US, Norway, and Israel, movements also have articulated their struggle to the careers of political leaders or senior school system administrators. Skedsmo & Camphuijsen (2022) in their paper "The Battle for Whole-Child Approaches: Examining the Motivations, Strategies and Successes of a Parents' Resistance Movement Against a Performance Regime in a Local Norwegian School System," shows how participation in political campaigns to prepare and elect system administrators who share the movement's view and politics regarding testing and other procedures was a strategy in the advancement of the movement. Supporting campaigns and endorsing candidates who share

common concerns about the detrimental effects of tests or pursue progressive agendas against educational privatization, allow these movements to aspire to more long-term policy measures.

A third characteristic shared by the different movements presented in this special issue is the breadth of the different experiences, the number of actors behind them, and the coordination among them. In the US and Israel, alliances between parents and teachers have occurred organically throughout the movement. Teachers' unions and parents' associations coordinated their actions to pressure decision-makers and accumulate strength together. In Catalonia and Chile, the articulation with academics has legitimized the movements' demands presenting them as technical measures backed by science. Also, it counters some of the premises that promote the installment of standardized tests. One of the messages conveyed within this articulation is that testing is not a tool for justice; on the contrary, it increases injustice and inequality while negatively affecting students' school experience.

Brazil is atypical as the movement articulated a range of educational actors, academics, social organizations, parents, teachers, and others. All of them are interested in shaping educational policy and gathering around early childhood. The forum is an organization created before the specific movement against neoliberal standardization to inform the constitutional dialogue in the late 1980s. The forum of social organizations' task supports the development of educational policies targeting early childhood education. It has functioned continuously for decades and has been influential in developing and implementing educational policies. When politicians in the State do not consider the forums, its members mobilize, placing pressure over the reformers. This concerted action has been able to stop the advancement of standardization logic even before the government could use it to justify high-stakes tests and other neoliberal measures.

All of these strategies and configurations have achieved different outcomes. Overwhelmingly, the gains of these struggles relate to the rollback of standardized tests, suspending them, ensuring that they are no longer mandatory or taken voluntarily. A second gain, whose effectiveness is not always complete, consists in the creation of roundtables, political committees, working groups, or task forces, which can become a form of demobilization or cooling of the movement demands. The participation of these movements in these organizations is made concrete through the leaders, or members of these movements, invitation to the government-sponsored groups, which may or may not lead to more profound transformations. And third, there is a growing sense of discomfort and concern around the expansion of test-based accountability; voices of dissent have gained visibility over the years, and its legitimacy is under public scrutiny. The studied movements have publicly questioned the benefit of massive testing policies, and their ideas have permeated on the media, school communities, and local authorities. This critical understanding of the issue, spreading through public opinion, would probably not be the same if these movements had not existed.

Despite the gains of these movements –public opinion, expert committees, and eventually, cutting back the number of standardized tests— the educational system's overall metrics-based governance, following a managerial and neoliberal approach, has stayed intact. The persistence of this paradigm relies on a common sense that connects to notions of transparency, fairness, equality, and meritocracy (Santori, 2018), together with powerful corporate interests that lobby for its continuity and expansion. Pointing toward “the naked King”, as in Andersen's children's story, is not enough as fears of “governing blinded”, without national tests, dominate the state agenda. Dismantling such long-established forms of social governance requires more than understanding its engineering, and challenges resistance movements to go beyond protest towards the construction of alternative proposals that deepen democracy and confidence in teachers' professional judgment.

The COVID-19 pandemic has accentuated the discomfort and intensified a sense of crisis against testing policies (see Moss in this issue). Hence, the current turmoil opens an opportunity for resistance movements to push towards a democratic and professional school accountability paradigm.

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