
Understanding OECD representations of teachers and teaching: A visual discourse analysis of covers in OECD documents

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Abstract

OECD dominance in the international educational policy discourse in the developed regions of the world, particularly in promoting teaching policy has been long acknowledged. While many works have explored the organization's verbal discourse, no study has considered exploring the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) visual discourse despite the potential contribution of such an analysis to uncovering the organization's underlying constructions. To close that gap, we employed a visual discourse analysis on the covers of OECD documents pertaining to teachers and teaching (i.e., TALIS and ISTP). Our goal was to use this analysis to better understand the OECD's discourses. The analysis found that OECD's covers drew mainly on two discourses, a conservative discourse on teachers and teaching, and a liberal diversity discourse. However, the latter was entangled with constructions of traditional gender relations and whiteness, both of which serve to maintain a conservative order. Visual representations constitute a significant part of OECD documents and shed new light on the constructions of teachers and teaching used by the organization.

Keywords: ISTP, OECD, TALIS, Teachers, Visual Discourse Analysis

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1. Introduction

Recently, the discourse on teacher professionalism has evolved in a new direction; the new focus of researchers' and practitioners' attention has shifted to teacher quality, which has come under attack (Kelly et al. 2017; MacBeath 2012; Robertson 2012; Simmie, Moles, and O'Grady 2016). This new focus is aligned with increased global competitiveness and an educational context emphasizing test-based accountability with obvious implication for teachers' work demands (Lingard and Lewis 2016; Youdell and McGimpsey 2015). The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), one of the international agencies that most prominently influences teachers' work transformation, offers, through its publications and documentation, a definition of what it believes should be considered 'teacher quality', advancing policies to support these new perspectives (Gonzalez 2015; Robertson 2012; Schleicher 2015). Prior scholarly work has emphasized that the OECD not only works at framing and evaluating teacher quality, but also invests from a political perspective in labelling and marketing their opinion of what constitutes 'teacher quality' (Sorensen and Robertson 2017).

Recent research has explored the ways in which the OECD frames teacher quality (Sorensen and Robertson 2017). However, few studies have investigated the rhetorical strategies and devices used by the OECD to promote their definition of 'teacher quality' (e.g., Berkovich and Benoliel 2018) and no study has explored the OECD visual discourses. Employing Visual Discourse Analysis (VDA), the present research attempts to examine the politics at work in visual representations of teachers and teaching in the covers of OECD documents. To explore the politics of OECD's visual representational practices, two research questions have been generated: (1) How are representations of teaching and teachers achieved by the visual resources

used in OECD covers ?; and (2) What does this politics of representation reflect about in the OECD? Thus, in line with the VDA approach, we seek not only to understand the image producer's world but also to understand the audience's experience of the image (Banks 2001).

2. Literature review

2.1 The politics of representation

Representation is a human activity in which particular elements signify 'reality' (Walker 1994). The politics of representation focuses on the contextual manner in which certain signs and symbols stand for particular meanings, and on how these meanings are related to power relations (Walker 1994). According to Walker (1994), '[h]uman beings are distinguished from other living creatures by their capacity to create and manipulate signs and symbols for particular political ends [but] representing something always extracts a cost. Something is lost in the transfer from "original" to "copy"'. (48). Thus, representation illuminates one of the possible meanings but obscures others. Hartley (1992) argued that representations are 'the place where collective social action, individual identity and symbolic imagination meet the nexus between culture and politics' (3). This is true even more when the cultural representations display humans and human interactions. For example, the literature suggests that power relations drive the politics of representation and affect the image of social groups based on gender, ethnicity, geography, economic resources, and occupations (Doty 1996; Ghosh 2016; Hutnyk 1996; Mehan 1997; Pickering 2001; Walker 1994). Despite the link between power relations and social representation, manifestations of the politics of representation are not necessarily trenchant. Ideologically and culturally encoded messages can be minimal, for

example, placing an object to which one wishes to ascribe higher status than to other objects, on the right side or at the top of the frame (Walker 1994). Mitchell (1994) argued that we live in a culture dominated by visuals disseminated to the wide public, a fact that is inseparable from the politics of representation. Images are human creations that raise questions of agency and power about their creators and consumers; these questions are at the heart of the distinction between reality and illusion (Mitchell 1994). Foucault argued that that 'the relation of language to painting is an infinite relation' (Foucault 1994, 10), but others claimed that there are key differences between language and images, such as the difference between 'telling and showing; between "hearsay" and "eyewitness" testimony, between words (heard, quoted, inscribed) and objects or actions (seen, depicted, described)' (Mitchell 1994, 3). In the spirit of the latter, the present study explores the visual representations used by the OECD.

2.2 The OECD as an international actor in education

Global developments have reformed the context in which educational policy decision making is perceived, influencing policy issues and the political context in which various educational systems function (Robertson and Dale 2015; Robertson and Sorensen 2017). Globalization refers to a set of procedures in which social communication across national borders has become significant and important for both peoples and individuals (Ben-Peretz 2009). Information and communication technologies have created new financial networks that have shaped a global capitalist economy (Knight 2004). The growing global education policy arena has become a key factor influencing decision making for national policy, causing the redesign of educational systems and impacting teaching and learning practices in schools (Hardy

2018; Lingard and Rawolle 2011; Robertson 2012). This is because according to the global discourse, education represents the core of the quality of a nation-state's human capital within the particular context of economic competition resulting from global processes (Stobart 2008). Consequently, several international tests have become a new norm for comparing and evaluating the quality of a nation-state's educational system (Bonal and Tarabini 2013). In this regard, since the 2000s, the OECD has come to play a prominent role in the international educational arena in developed regions of the world (Robertson 2012; Sellar and Lingard 2013).

Established in 1961, the OECD was intended to promote the economies of developed markets (Carroll and Kellow 2011). Originally education was not the main area of interest of the OECD, but since the mid-1990s, the organisation has increased its activities as an international actor in the field of educational policy (Sellar and Lingard 2013). The interest of the OECD in education in 1990s coincided with the rise in the popularity of the human capital theory. At this time, the availability of international data on education motivated several high profile macro-economic studies arguing that education reflects national per capita income and economic growth rate (Psacharopoulos 2006). The OECD has thus redefined itself as a main actor regarding education policy expertise and comparative international data. In contrast to other institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Trade Organization (WTO), and the World Bank, the OECD has a unique position; the OECD owns high practical and methodological proficiency and capability. Also, given its multifaceted structure, the OECD is exclusively positioned to facilitate and organize interactions and connections within a trans-governmental system agency of policy professionals (Sellar and Lingard 2014). Moreover, the OECD organizational adaptation ability across the various public policy domains has been recognized as a

factor contributing to the enhancement of its political influence (Carroll and Kellow 2011). Thus, unlike that of other intentional agencies, the OECD agenda is considered ordoliberal, as the organisation has traditionally advised governments to let the market manage itself (Woodward 2004).

Since the 1990s, the OECD has progressively expanded its influence by involving new members from the Middle East, the Asia-Pacific region, and Eastern Europe, and has contracted collaboration agreements with additional countries not members of the OECD such as China, Russia, India, and Brazil (Carroll and Kellow 2011; Sellar and Lingard 2013). The OECD promotes the participation of countries in PISA testing and encourages countries to follow reform programs that apparently originate from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) findings. However, it is important to mention that countries volunteer and chose to participate in PISA (Sellar and Lingard 2014). Yet, the increasing popularity of the OECD standardized achievement tests, such as PISA, have largely contributed to placing education as a central field of influence of the OECD (Bonal and Tarabini 2013; Lingard and Sellar 2013). In 2002, education was a distinct Directorate within the OECD (Sellar and Lingard 2014).

Embracing the notion of an economy that is global, additional nations are meeting the OECD membership principles of commitment to a market economy, pluralist consensus, and human rights (Carroll and Kellow 2011; Woodward 2009). Such a growing participation of several countries in the PISA test as well as the increasing use of comparative data, provide evidence of the impact and importance of the OECD programs in highly developed countries (Ozga 2013; Sorensen and Robertson 2017). Research has indicated that the strong influence of the OECD comes from soft modes of governance (Meyer, Strietholt and Epstein 2017; Sellar and

Lingard 2013). This is related to the fact that the organisation has no sovereignty over its member countries (Bieber and Martens 2011). Woodward (2009) proposed that the OECD is the 'sculptor' of education policies worldwide that promote a neoliberal market agenda.

Woodward (2009) identified four kinds of governance used by the OECD: the first, *cognitive governance*, occurs through the choices of members according to their earlier definite commitment to fundamental values related to a liberal democracy and a market-based economy; the second, *normative governance*, refers to the generation of a new epistemology regarding policy and procedures and encouraging epistemic societies at the national level; the third kind of governance, *legal governance*, occurs through formal agreements and permissions that generally function as monitors and pressure instead of sanctions; and finally, *palliative governance*, occurs through entrepreneurial behavior resulting from opportunities in international governance, such as examining new policy issues, and cooperation with the WTO and the G8. According to Sellar and Lingard (2013), cognitive and normative governance are fundamental in understanding the impact of the OECD. These cognitive and normative influences in education are said to be used to promote ideas about the rise of a global knowledge economy and a knowledge society that transcends national borders. Such ideas are becoming more and more popular (Ozga and Lingard 2007; Piro and Mullen 2013). Scholars have argued that the OECD efforts to set an assessment regime not only involve a false promise to precisely capture 'quality' in education (Meyer 2017); but moreover, reflect its view of its role as assisting individuals to become integrated into a learning society and knowledge-based economy that align with the neoliberal agenda (Ball 2015; Walker 2009). In this context, the OECD's focus on 'teacher quality' and its attempts to achieve cognitive

and normative control over teacher quality, can be seen as another step in a neoconservative agenda (Robertson and Sorensen 2017; Singh 2017).

2.3 Teachers at the centre: The OECD and the teacher quality agenda

Until the beginning of the 21st century, teaching methods and practices in developed countries were not a principal focus of research for policymakers and practitioners (Robertson 2012; Thompson and Mockler 2016). Emerging reservations related to the knowledge economy, as well as school graduates' scepticism regarding the appropriate skill set for teachers, have further stimulated interest in teacher quality (Angus 2015; Robertson 2005). Research indicates that these trends have directly added to the deterioration of the status of the teaching profession, which has become an unattractive profession worldwide (Sleeter 2008). Teachers, learning, pedagogy, and teaching have become dominant issues for educational policy both nationally in individual countries and in international forums (Darling-Hammond and Lieberman 2012; Schleicher 2012). Robertson (2013) has stressed the contribution of international agencies in transforming teachers' learning pedagogies, emphasizing that global agencies support a 'field of symbolic control'. In examining the policies and programs of the global agencies with regard to teachers and their work, we can also see a concern for governing in education for identities and their social relations (Au 2011; Ball and Olmedo 2013).

The OECD has devoted attention to the policy topic of 'teacher quality'. In concentrating on teaching policy, the OECD has already engaged in numerous reviews and analyses, and devoted significant resources, thereby strengthening its symbolic authority on the subject (Robertson 2012). This is well demonstrated by the emphasis on OECD's Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS), a

significant indicator of the growing importance given to this topic in the OECD. TALIS is described as a 'collaboration' between member states of the OECD, as well as non-members. Through a five year cycle, TALIS has been conducted in 2008 and 2013 and has included both countries and subnational political entities. The TALIS program centers on teachers' work and school management with the goal of providing data and information about teachers. In a recent study, Sorensen and Robertson (2017) have examined the means by which the OECD advances and emphasizes TALIS through the diffusion of results in conferences and webinars. The OECD also organizes an international conference, the International Summit on the Teaching Profession (ISTP), 'that brings together education ministers, union leaders and other teacher leaders from high-performing and rapidly improving educational systems.' (OECD website). In spite of the emerging awareness regarding the activities and the role played by the OECD in influencing 'teacher quality', few works have used discourse analyses to explore OECD documents that deal with 'teacher quality' (e.g., Berkovich and Benoliel 2018). Therefore, VDA can deepen our understanding of the non-verbal language applied by the OECD to represent teaching, teachers, and the politics of education.

3. Method

In this study we performed VDA which is a specific form of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Discourse can take verbal and non-verbal forms (Wekesa 2012). Non-verbal discourse often incorporates emotional and symbolic aspects of human experience which are intermediated by visual texts (Niesyto, Buckingham and Fisherkeller 2003), and the resulting visual communication of affect and figurative aspects are often more free and radical because they are less subject to cultural norms

and the political correctness of verbal language (Malherbe et al. 2016; Rich and Chalfen 1999). Moreover, images are accessible to people that are external to the cultural context in which the images were produced (i.e., cultural outsiders). They can enable the message to overcome the limitations of linguistic communication (Suffla, Kaminer and Bawa 2012).

Visual discourses combine rhetoric (i.e., persuasive application of language) and argumentation (i.e., mobilizing a logical chain by presenting premises, supporting them in a manner driving specific conclusions) (Birdsell and Groarke 1996; Wekesa 2012). Barthe (1977) argued that the rhetoric of images is linked with the association of the image to its caption, the literal meaning of the visual aspects, and the symbolic and ideological levels of the image. Visuals can be used not only to promote specific arguments but also to counter specific arguments by (Lake and Pickering 1998): (a) substitution as one image is swapped with a different image from a contrasting polarity; and (b) transformation as an image is re-contextualized in a new visual setting, thus the new association modifies its polarity.

The claim that all visuals are tied to argumentation and rhetoric is debatable, but it is reasonable to contend that all visuals displaying humans or human interactions are rhetorical because they serve the politics of representation. For example, women in paintings in art galleries, as well as in family photos reflect specific gender representations that are political and function as discursive ideological mechanisms in society (Hartley 1992). The explicit or implicit meaning of visuals is said to promote premises about society and the world (Birdsell and Groarke 1996). Images resonate with the cultural and historical sense-meaning of viewers (Banks 2001). Thus, 'It is therefore not the photograph [or image] per se that communicates visual meaning [...] it is the viewer who attaches interpretative discursive meanings to

visual images' (Malherbe et al. 2016, 591). Therefore, VDA is not only an attempt to understand the image producer's world, but also an attempt to understand the audience's world (Banks 2001).

VDA researchers (e.g., Kress and Van Leeuwen 1990; Malherbe et al. 2016) apply Halliday's (1978) systematic functional model as a guide to analysing visual discourses. The systematic functional model for VDA identifies three metafunctions that comprise visual discourse: (1) textual metafunctions that involve the ability of images to form comprehensible texts (e.g., point of view framing the image, the visual symbols used, distances between the subjects in the image); (2) the interpersonal metafunction that mobilizes a social relationship between the producer of the image and the audience; and (3) the ideational metafunction that involves the representation of human experiences of the world as they are manifested in the ideas behind the construction of the image.

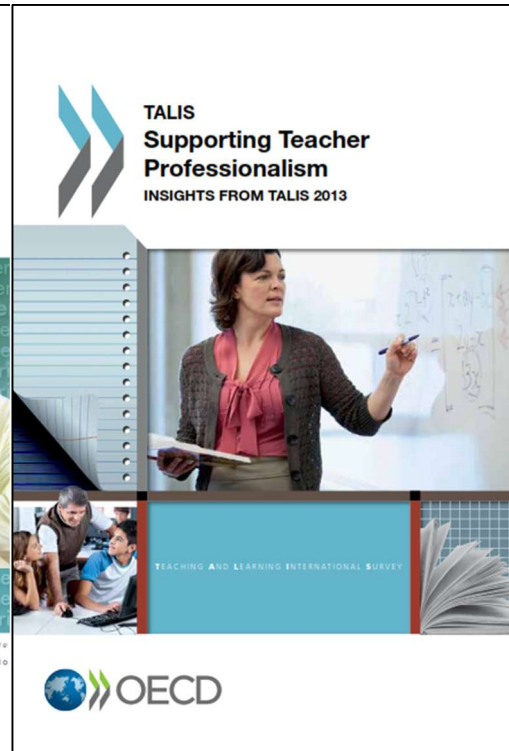
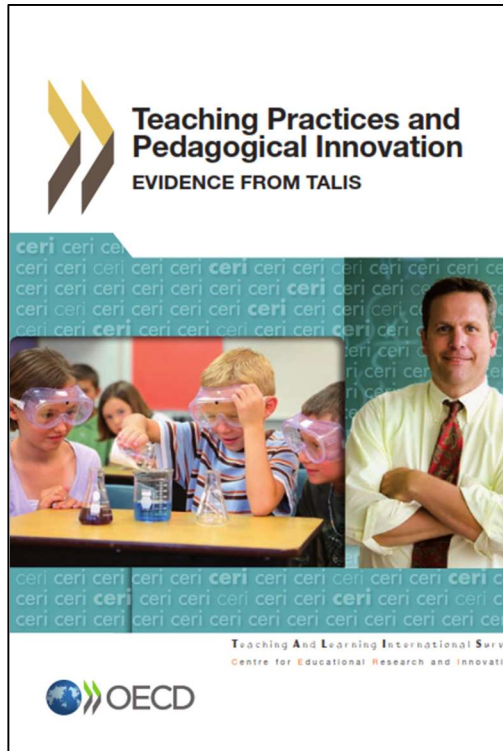
The data analysis focuses on the covers of OECD documents about TALIS and teaching excellence which are part of OECD's knowledge distribution and marketing program (Sorensen and Robertson 2017) and thus warrant analysis. Covers of texts are chosen by authors and/or designers of the organization because they use visual signs and techniques to communicate messages that are related to the broader context of power relations and to the image producers' goals (Rogers and Mosley 2008). In the OECD online library, 13 documents (see Table 1) on teachers and teaching tagged under the TALIS label and under the ISTP label were located and served as the sample. Representative OECD covers of the documents sampled are displayed in Figure 1.

Table 1. OECD documents on effective teaching and TALIS included in the present study.

Authors	Year of publication	Title
<i>TALIS documents</i>		
OECD	2009	Creating Effective Teaching and Learning Environments
OECD	2010	TALIS 2008 Technical Report
Jensen et al.	2012	The Experience of New Teachers
Vieluf et al.	2012	Teaching Practices and Pedagogical Innovation
OECD	2014a	A Teachers' Guide to TALIS 2013
OECD	2014b	TALIS 2013 Results
OECD	2014c	New Insights from TALIS 2013
OECD	2016	Supporting Teacher Professionalism
<i>ISTP documents</i>		
Schleicher	2011	Building a High-Quality Teaching Profession
Schleicher	2012	Preparing Teachers and Developing School Leaders for the 21st Century
Schleicher	2014	Equity, Excellence and Inclusiveness in Education
Schleicher	2015	Schools for 21st-Century Learners
Schleicher	2016	Teaching Excellence through Professional Learning and Policy Reform

Notes. Source: <http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org>

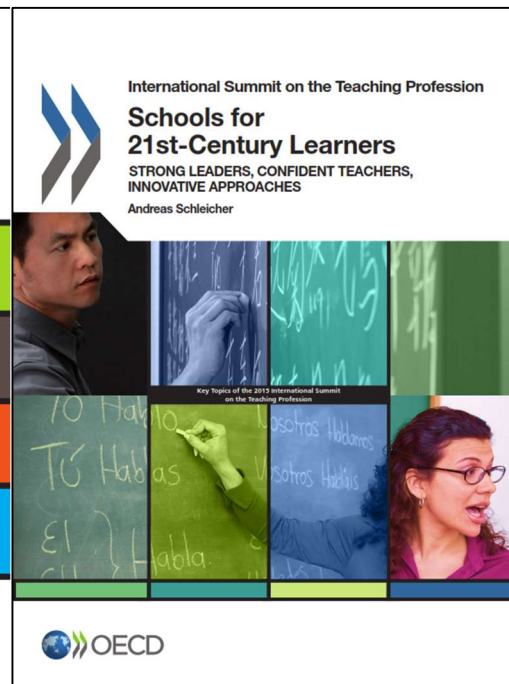
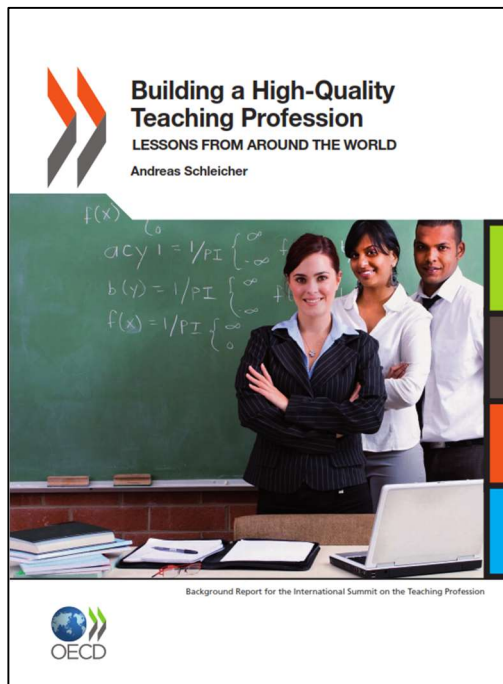
TALIS



1a (Vieluf et al. 2012)

1b (OECD 2016)

ISTP



1c (Schleicher 2011)

1d (Schleicher 2015)

Figure 1. Representative OECD covers.

Thematic analysis is a common method used in structuring CDA (e.g., Bhatia 2006). Therefore, the study adopted thematisation as a method to organise the information by identifying and conceptualising topics and patterns in a qualitative dataset (Aronson 1995). We sought to uncover the connection between smaller visual meaning indicators in an attempt to form visually-related themes and sub-themes that capture social discourses and reflect societal power relations.

Data analysis included several analytic steps common in qualitative research (Marshall and Rossman 2014; Miles and Huberman 1994). Step one was to organise the data and identify themes and patterns. Step two focused on comparing data to detect similarities and differences over time within TALIS and ISTP publications and between them. Step three included an iterative process between data and the literature, focusing on conceptual refinement of categories and patterns, and a description of the interrelations between them.

We sought to promote trustworthiness in our process of analysis. Trustworthiness in naturalistic exploration has to do with the manner in which researchers can assure themselves and the readers that their findings deserve attention (Lincoln and Guba 1985). In this type of interpretive study, the researcher is considered a central device in the analytic process (Golafshani 2003). We therefore took various steps to ensure trustworthiness. First, because the literature dealing with CDA advises reflectivity as a key measure for promoting trustworthiness (Rogers 2004), we adopted reflexivity to minimise the possible effects of predispositions stemming from our viewpoints. Such viewpoints may be related to our being critical researchers of educational policies. We discussed these predispositions between us to ensure that they did not bias the analysis. Second, we used researcher triangulation, as the authors initially conducted separate analyses of the data and produced generally

similar outcomes (Nowell et al. 2017). Third, we performed peer debriefing concerning our analysis and interpretation to ensure that they are reasonably impartial (Creswell and Miller 2000).

4. Findings

All OECD covers seem to capture teachers and students in action, meaning that the covers adopt a demonstrative mode that involves construing of visuals as iconic and representing a real process in action (Shelley 1996). In our analysis, we identified the interplay of two dominant discourses that emerge in OECD's covers: a conservative discourse on teachers and teaching, and a liberal diversity discourse. Table 2 displays the frequency of themes and sub-themes related to these discourses, as they emerged from our VDA of the OECD ISTP and TALIS documents over time. In the description of the findings below, we focus on certain representative covers to make possible a rich description of how micro-visual design elements serve discursive purposes.

Table 2. Summary of themes and sub-themes emerging from the VDA of the ISTP and TALIS documents of the OECD over time.

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Total N
<i>THE CONSERVATIVE DISCOURSE ON TEACHERS AND TEACHING</i>									
<i>Teacher-centred</i>									
Lack of teacher-student interactions	T	T	I	T, T, I		I	I	I	9
Teacher in front of	T	T	I	T, T, I		T, T, I	I	T, I	12

blackboard or writing on it								
<i>Emphasis on mathematics, science, and technology</i>								
Use of mathematics symbols or of scientific equipment	T	T	I	T, T, I	T, T		T	9
PC folder framing the photo area	T	T		T	T, T, I	I	T, I	9
Teacher using digital tools (mouse, laptop, etc.)			I	I	T, T		T	5
<i>THE LIBERAL DIVERSITY DISCOURSE</i>								
<i>Diversity in teacher and student representation</i>								
All white	T	T		T, T	T, T		T	7
Mix			I	I	T			3
All non-white					I	I	I	3
Use of visual diversity symbols (coloured strip, etc.)			I	I	I	I	I	5
<i>Hierarchy in position (sole teacher / located at the top or front)</i>								
Dominant white	T	T	I	T, T, I	T, T, T		T	10
Dominant non-white teacher					I	I	I	3
Dominant male teacher	T	T		T, T	I	I	I	7
Dominant female teacher			I	I	T, T, T		T	6

Notes. I=ISTP document; T=TALIS document.

4.1 The conservative discourse on teachers and teaching

In the following section, we describe the conservative discourse expressed in OECD covers that is manifested in two elements: (1) the portrayal of a teacher-centered approach; and (2) an emphasis on mathematics, science, and technology as central subjects.

The visuals in OECD covers display a classic teacher-centred approach. Teacher-centred pedagogy is derived from the traditional conservative¹ view portraying teachers as powerful figures of authority, students as passive recipients of knowledge, and conceptualising the primary goal of education as preparing students for the labour market (Jones 2009). For instance, in three documents addressing TALIS (Jensen et al. 2012; OECD 2009, 2010), the centre of the cover is the photo area: three quarters of this area are taken up by a close-up photo of a 12-15-year-old female student (on the right), and one quarter of this area includes a wide shot of a teacher (on the left). The male teacher is looking directly at the viewer, demanding that the viewer enter into 'an imaginary social relation' (Kress and van Leeuwen 1990, 28) with him. With respect to the discourse's interpersonal metafunction, the teacher's direct stare acts to involve the viewers and captures their attention and engagement (Van Leeuwen and Jewitt 2008). On the other hand, the female student looks down, writing and thinking. The teacher stands in front of a blackboard covered with math equations. He is wearing a buttoned shirt and a tie, his face lit, and he is smiling, which in semiotic terms creates assertive confidence. The student is leaning over a notebook and seems to reflect. The positions of the two photos, side by side, not in

¹ A teacher-centred didactic approach is conservative in the sense that it is imitation-based (repetition and memorization) and guided by the needs of society rather than by those expressed by students (Eilam 2003). As such, it aligns with cultural conservatism, which emphasises tradition and seeks to justify and maintain the "natural" order of things (Brown 2004).

one scene or interacting personally, reflects classic conservative emotive styles that 'avoid emotions or pursue less intense emotional experiences' (Leone and Chirumbolo 2008, 760). The textual metafunction of the cover imbues this view with a message of affective detachment between teacher and student, excluding any perception of personal intimacy.

In terms of textual metafunction, in some of the ISTP documents (Schleicher 2011, 2012) portrayals of students are absent, suggesting that the teacher-student relationship is not considered by the designer as the central 'fantasy' in this visual project (see 1c in Figure 1). In three other documents about ISTP (Schleicher 2014, 2015, 2016), we find teachers writing on the blackboard using chalk. The teachers are not looking directly at the viewer; the male teacher looks at the blackboard, and the female teacher seems to be interacting with students outside of the scope of the image. The intensity of the teachers in the photos creates a sense of task-orientation in semiotic terms. This sense of determination has a part in the interpersonal metafunction of the covers, as it promotes social relations involving creditability and trust with the viewers. In visuals, we often see actors using props as part of the act they are portraying (Jewitt and Oyama 2001). The choice to use recognizable props (e.g., blackboard and chalk) rather than an abstract approach indicates an intention to create a sense of familiarity and security in the readership.

Regarding the textual metafunction in the coders, we also noted minor references (e.g., laptop, desktop etc.) to the digital learning discourse (Hayes 2017). For instance, the photo area in OECD documents (Jensen et al. 2012; OECD 2009, 2010, 2014b, 2014c, 2016) is shaped like a folder that resembles the well-known PC icon (see Figure 1). This subtle framing insinuates that traditional teaching and learning are facing a digitally oriented world. Nevertheless, despite their integration in

the covers their marginalization reflects a counter approach to the digital learning discourse. For example, in two documents addressing ISTP (Schleicher 2011, 2012), there is only one large photo in the centre, showing three teachers standing and smiling with confidence in front of a board covered with math equations. In front of the teachers is a desk with a stack of books, notepad, glasses, and a laptop, suggesting that the teachers mix traditional with digital learning practices. Another example can be noted in three more recent documents about TALIS (OECD 2014b, 2014c, 2016) in which the cover uses two photos (see 1b in Figure 1). At the top-right is a large photo of a white female teacher, which occupies three quarters of the photo area. The teacher is holding a book and writing math formulas with a marker on the white board. In the second, small photo at the bottom-left, a white male teacher uses the mouse of a desktop computer to explain something to two white students, aged 13-15. These photos and their proportions serve to stress traditional teaching.

4.2 The liberal diversity discourse

So far, it seems that OECD covers promote a conservative discourse on teachers and teaching, but there is a noticeable presence of growing liberal diversity discourse in the portrayal of race and gender in the covers. The adoption of liberal diversity discourse in OECD covers is recognizable in two changes of representations (see Table 2 for trends over time): (1) changes in the representation of the race and gender of teachers and students; and (2) changes in the hierarchy portrayed in the covers' layout of teachers by race and gender.

Lazar (2000) stresses that in the construction of social categories (e.g., gender) the politics of representation is manifested both through the relative presences and the relative absences that signify social categories. The racial categorization of the actors

in the photos used in many old TALIS documents seems to be white (Jensen et al. 2012; OECD 2009, 2010). In addition, the oldest OECD documents on teaching display a conservative view of gender relations. For instance, in one document addressing TALIS (Vieluf et al. 2012 – see 1a in Figure 1), the same white male teacher from the three prior documents was used, this time in the right side of the photo area. Cropping and zooming were used to create a close-up image of him. The other photo again occupied three quarters of the photo area, but this time it included three young white students aged 9-12, two boys and a girl. This portrayal involves systematic divergence in the roles performed by women and men in the photos (Lazar 2000).

With time, there are noticeable changes in the racial and gender construction of both teachers and students in OECD documents. In ISTP documents (Schleicher 2014, 2015, 2016), we find that the photo area contains two photos of teachers (see 1d in Figure 1). The top photo is of an Asian male teacher, writing on the board; the bottom photo is of a Latino female teacher, writing on the blackboard. The two photos are divided into four rectangles: the first rectangle with the teacher seems unfiltered, and the three others are tinted, each one using a different filter. This diversification of softly contrasting tints creates something that resembles a stained glass window with a 'rainbow' association often used to mark variety in Western cultures. This 'rainbow' association also surfaces in other ISTP documents that include a narrow vertical strip on the right side of the image (Schleicher 2011, 2012) (see 1c in Figure 1). Thus, the symbolic level mobilized in the ideation metafunction is of liberal openness and acceptance of multiculturalism and diversity. When considering photographs' ideation metafunction, attention should also be given to their 'commodified illustration' and how the visual discourse that generates symbols of diversity is a currency in attaching

the specific symbolic attribution to an entity (Malherbe et al. 2016), such as the covers' attempt to associate symbolic diversity with the OECD.

Although, the idea of diversity seems to have become a central consideration in the OECD visual design, it seems that even when diversity is the visual goal, a hegemonic power structure persists and partly shapes the representations in the covers. For instance, in ISTP documents (Schleicher 2011, 2012) two of the teachers (male and female) in the back seem to be of Southern or Southeast Asian origin, but the female teacher in the front is white (see 1c in Figure 1). The white teacher appears to be equal to the other two, but she stands in front and wears a managerial power pantsuit, portraying her as the leader of the group. In a latter OECD (2014a) document, the three photos are used and displayed in a vertical layout. The white female teacher is in the top photo in layout, the white male teacher is in the middle photo in layout, and the black male teacher smiling and interacting with two black female students over a book is positioned at the bottom photo in layout. This may attest to a Eurocentrism/Whiteness bias that holds supremacy of European or White people (Gillborn 2014; Shahjahan 2013) underlining the design of the covers. Moreover, we noted that all teachers in the covers use a western business casual style of clothing that does not reflect any cultural variety. Thus this version of liberal diversity used by the OECD covers is closer to the corporate take of 'capitalizing on diversity' than the idealistic view of 'transformative diversity' (Blackmore 2006, 185).

5. Discussion and conclusion

The present study sought to examine the politics of OECD's visual representational practices in OECD covers in TALIS and ISTP documents,² and to analyse how constructions of teaching and teachers are promoted by visual means and what this politics of representation reflects. From our analysis, it seems that the OECD covers were dominated by conservative discourse and liberal diversity discourse. In the conservative discourse, we saw that roles were structured in markedly rigid ways for teachers and for students. In addition, we found that in liberal diversity discourse representation of racial and gender diversity in the OECD documents, and discovered the portrayal of the ideal demonstrative teacher as someone who is white and male. Both discourses underscore the role of power relations in the construction of social hierarchy.

The two discourses, however, focus on different power relations. The conservative discourse addresses them in schools (i.e., the bureaucratic divide between teachers and students) whereas the liberal diversity discourse addresses them in society between races and genders. The conservative discourse favours a traditional, asymmetrical arrangement between teachers and students, whereby each has specific roles. The liberal diversity discourse, in contrast, which is motivated in part by liberalism, strives for racial and gender equivalence in public life.

In this context, it is worth noting that the gap between pre-service teachers and students with respect to their backgrounds (migrant or minority origin) is particularly

² We performed a *post hoc* comparison with OECD documents intended specifically for teachers (Teaching in Focus). The covers of these documents (from May 2012 onward) are more static (Briefs No. 1-17 have the same visual strip at the top of the page, and Briefs No. 18-21 have the same full-page cover). We concluded that in many ways these visuals mirror our findings in reverse: they show teacher-student interactions, the teacher is not in front of blackboard or writing on it, the emphasis on mathematics, science, and technology is absent, the teacher does not use digital tools, and the cover presents a mixed racial composition.

high in Western Europe (e.g., UK, Austria) and Northern Europe (e.g., Estonia), and less so in Eastern Europe (Donlevy et al. 2016). For example, in the UK only 7.6% of public school teachers are individuals of colour, whereas 25% of pupils in public schools are of colour (The Bureau of Investigative Journalism, September 5, 2016). The interest of the OECD in communicating commitment to social cohesion, as expressed in the covers, may be related to broader socio-economic events at the start of the 21st century, including the 2008 financial crisis and rising inequalities (Wisman 2013). The conservative discourse revealed in the OECD covers somewhat differs from the neo-conservative ideas underpinning the verbal discourse of the organization. While both neo-conservative and conservative agendas promote 'increasing international competitiveness, profit, and discipline and for returning us to a romanticized past of the 'ideal' home, family, and school' (Apple 2004, 15), neo-conservatism favours state intervention and regulation (e.g., standards) whereas conservatism favours authority and dislikes state intervention (Apple 2004; Wolfson 2004). The verbal discourse of the OECD promoting 'personalized learning', 'tailor-made education' and 'customized learning' (Waslander 2007), which is said to address multiple and diverse needs at the individual student level, is missing in the covers. This reflects a more classic conservative agenda of the OECD, in contrast to the more modernized version identified in the verbal discourse. Adopting classic conservative representation of teaching and teacher-student relations in the visual discourse solves the inherent logical tension behind the claim that unified standards can promote customization (Cuban 2012).

Another explanation may have to do with the tensions in the visual design. It is possible that designers needed to place teachers in the frame because without them it was not possible to capture personalised, tailor-made learning. Machin (2004) argued

that when designers in the corporate world need to represent abstract concepts (e.g., values, sensation, experiences), they often adopt a new age visual language (e.g., people jumping and smiling). This may not be the type of visual appearance the OECD sought. Because harmony between the visual language and the corporate ideology is central to legitimizing the corporation and its operations, any discrepancy between the two may be hazardous if it represents a political belief or ideology that can destabilise the corporation (Machin 2004).

In addition, the conservative discourse emphasized mathematics, science and technology as central subjects. This visual choice corresponds with the discourse about a 'knowledge economy', which emerged in the 1960s (Powell and Snellman 2004). The term originates in the macro-economic discourse on the role of science-based industries in social and economic change (e.g., Machlup 1962), and in micro-managerial discourse focused on continuous learning and innovation (e.g., Drucker 1969). Thus, emphasis on mathematics, science and technology, driven by human capital theory, is suggested as a strategy for coping with the challenges of global economic competitiveness (Lemola 2002; Lingard and Gale 2007). These pressures mobilise national education systems to form a hierarchy of subjects (and teachers) in which mathematics, science, and technology are at the top, and other humanistic and creative subjects are at the bottom (Robinson 2009). At the same time, our analysis of the covers indicated marginalization of new neo-conservative 'knowledge economy' pedagogy (i.e., digital practices) (Andreotti and Pashby 2013), which can be interpreted as countering the digital learning discourse (Hayes 2017). This counter discourse again attests to the dominance of conservative discourse in OECD covers over the neo-conservative discourse that has been associated in prior critical analysis with the organization's verbal discourse.

The liberal diversity discourse that surfaced indicates that while the OECD attempts to emphasize the uniqueness of the various identity groups in society, and portray its work as seeking to advance the interests of these groups, the organization actually holds a conservative view of gender roles and has an Eurocentrism/Whiteness bias. Critical scholars have identified global policy designs such as those offered by the OECD regarding teaching, as Anglo-Eurocentrism colonialist efforts to replace local values and norms (Connell 2007; Mignolo 2005) with Anglo-Eurocentrism values and norms that serve the ideology of white supremacy (Shahjahan 2013). This has been most frequently addressed regarding measurement epistemologies and techniques that normalize and idealize the white Euro-American mindset (Stanfield 1999). Thus, our work contributes to this body of work as it provides additional support for the argument that this Eurocentrism/Whiteness approach, despite the adaptation some level of liberal diversity discourse, is highly dominant in OECD visual representations. Thus, even in OECD visual representations of teachers and teaching, this cultural hegemonic logic is pervasive.

While the visual adoption of liberal diversity discourse might be viewed by some as an expression of the organization's liberal agenda that contradicts the conservative agenda of the organization, some scholars suggest a viewpoint that consolidate the two apparent agendas. For instance, Gimenez (2006) argues that the political construction of identities fixes the public's attention on the cultural domain and therefore excludes 'any consideration of class as a key determinant of the failure of some and the success of others' (436). Gimenez further explains that 'In educational institutions and workplaces [...] the notion of 'diversity' seldom extends to include consideration of the problems that first generation working-class students, white collar and professional workers might experience in the context of middle-class institutions,

workplaces and professional organizations.' (436). This observation illustrates that the type of liberal diversity used in OECD is a Eurocentrism/Whiteness diversity that reflects others in the gaze of the white middle class. Moreover, professional conduct such as the conduct linked with modes of dress very much reflects business images that tend to emphasize conservatism, conformity, and masculinity (Kimle and Damhorst 1997). Interestingly, the visual discourse of the OECD significantly differs from the verbal discourse mobilized by the OECD's policies and measurements which is said to include racializing discourse about Asian education, since many Asian countries lead the PISA achievements tables (Takayama 2017).

To conclude our analysis, we argue as others have suggested previously that when conflicting discourses are manifested in a given set of visual texts, they are said to be 'managed' via 'an implicit strategy of disproportionate coexistence' (Lazar 2000, 395). Therefore, while some liberal values may be reflected in the OECD's covers in terms of diversity this is outweighed by a dominant conservative discourse about teaching, race, and gender that dominates these same covers, and consequently, reduces the 'volume' and importance of liberal values. Thus, in this way the OECD's diversity covers do not contradict its conservative agenda.

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