

PAPER

The simplification of the actual school curriculum through large-scale evaluation within the framework of municipal managerialism: consequences for the quality of public schools***A simplificação do currículo escolar real pela avaliação em larga escala no bojo do gerencialismo municipal: consequência para a qualidade da escola pública*****Marcos Oliveira Santos^a**

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**ABSTRACT**

The text examines the simplifying effect of the actual school curriculum through a large-scale evaluation of pedagogical practices of two public municipal schools with a higher and lower Education Development Index (IDEB), by an education management guided by managerialism, from the research results in a city in the interior of Bahia, Brazil. Therefore, the study investigated the forms of monitoring and vertical commands, financial incentives tied to performances and effects on teaching work intertwined with school evaluation, curriculum determination, and pedagogical practices. With the support of Historical and Dialectical Materialism in corresponding theoretical references, documentary research and interviews with school managers and teachers, the conclusions point to public education with a damaged social quality, lacking proper attention to the historically constituted problems, following a logic focused on educational indicators that emphasizes competitiveness, individualism, accountability, and exclusion.

Keywords: Managerialism. Accountability. Large-Scale Evaluation. Curriculum.

RESUMO

O texto debruça sobre o efeito simplificador do currículo escolar real pela avaliação em larga escala no fazer pedagógico de duas escolas públicas e municipais, com maior e menor IDEB, por uma gestão da educação pautada pelo gerencialismo, a partir dos resultados de pesquisa em cidade do interior da Bahia. Para tanto, investigaram-se as formas de monitoramento e comandos verticais, os incentivos financeiros atrelados a desempenhos e os efeitos sobre o trabalho docente imbricando na avaliação escolar, na determinação

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do currículo e do fazer pedagógico. Com o aporte no Materialismo Histórico-Dialético, em referencial teórico correspondente, na pesquisa documental e nas entrevistas com gestores e docentes, as conclusões apontam para uma educação pública com qualidade social comprometida, sem a devida atenção aos problemas historicamente constituídos, sob uma lógica focada em indicadores educacionais e que prima por competitividade, individualismo, responsabilização e exclusão.

Palavras-chave: Gerencialismo. Responsabilização. Avaliação em Larga Escala. Currículo.

Introduction

External evaluations, given the current changes in national legislation and the implementations in the distribution criteria of educational resources¹, have been strategically consolidated in educational policies developed by the municipalities and have impacted the pedagogical formulations of Brazilian schools, demarcating, in these, a scenario of the hegemony of large-scale evaluation and its indicators.

From the use of data collection instruments such as documentary analysis and interviews, the research developed² and presented in this text, supported by the theoretical-methodological assumption of Historical and Dialectical Materialism (HDM), sought to examine the relationship between managerialism³ and the educational indicators generated in this context and how, in some way, this reaches the didactic-pedagogical planning of two municipal schools. The objective is to investigate the forms of monitoring and vertical commands of municipal public management, the financial incentives linked to performance and the effects on the teaching work, imbricating the school evaluation in determining the curriculum and the pedagogical practice.

The option for the epistemology of the HDM is justified by the capture that makes of the historical and dialectical movement of concrete reality in its essence, it overcomes immediate knowability and reaches through approximations the multiple determinations in the current capitalist mode of production in yet another of its global crisis. It is noted here that, in the power relations involved in public policies (which take materiality in the internal clashes between the different interests of classes and their fractions), the conception of public education, and its management in public administration is consolidated in the contradictions and historicity of Western society, which, in the search to reestablish the restructuring of capitalist accumulation, reformulates the role of the State in a perspective of reduction of investments in social policies, thus implementing, in recent decades, conceptions from the business universe.

¹ The enactment of Constitutional Amendment No. 108 (EC No. 108/2020) in Congress for the implementation of the New FUNDEB brings in one of its requirements the transfer of 2.5% of the complementation of FUNDEB to the municipalities, conditioned to educational indicators. It also establishes a change in the share of the Tax on the Circulation of Goods and Services (ICMS), linked to the educational performance of the municipal education networks in the criterion for the distribution of this amount by the municipalities. This formulation in the sphere of policy is called Educational ICMS.

² Based on the master's thesis entitled Monitoring and management of external evaluations and Ideb within the scope of municipal education, defended in the Postgraduate Program in Education (PPGed) at the State University of Southwest Bahia (UESB) in 2020.

³ Managerial form that materialized a new management model, which guided public administration from the 1980s onward. The most general characteristics where it was implemented were: 'the pursuit of efficiency, through the reduction and control of public spending and services, as well as the demand for better quality and administrative decentralization, thus granting greater autonomy to agencies and departments' (Castro, 2007, p. 124)".

These conceptions, endorsed in Brazilian legislation, outlined the conditions of legitimacy for the transfer of responsibility for the quality of public services to their managers, who are submitted to a periodic evaluation and their users are treated as clients who qualitatively regulate the activities offered through complaints to ombudsman offices or regulatory agencies specific to each service, leaving the State strategically the role of regulator of the “services”. In education, since the creation of the National System of Evaluation of Basic Education [*Sistema de Avaliação da Educação Básica* (SAEB)] in 1990, the tendency of these principles was already being delineated, centered on what came to be considered by some authors as neoliberal ideology⁴. In the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (Brasil, 1996), a national evaluation system was established as a condition to assess the education quality in the education networks. In article 87, § 3, item IV, On Transitional Provisions, the text of the law states that each municipality has the duty to “integrate all elementary education establishments in its territory into the national system for the evaluation of school performance” (Brasil, 1996).

Despite the clash of ideas in disputes opposed by educators and social movements, even influencing the drafting of legal texts, the ideology of the minimal State has been consolidated through various legislations. Examples include Privatization program (Law No. 8,031, dated 04.12.1990, repealed and amended in Law No. 9,491, dated 09.09.1997); linking public services to economic policy (Decree No. 137, of 27.05.1991); administrative decentralization with *Fundo de Manutenção e Desenvolvimento do Ensino Fundamental e de Valorização do Magistério* (FUNDEF) – Law No. 9,424, of 12.24.1996 – and later with *Fundo de Manutenção e Desenvolvimento da Educação Básica e de Valorização dos Profissionais da Educação* (FUNDEB) – Law No. 11,494, of 06.20.2007 – which bring the deconcentration of responsibility; Fiscal Responsibility Law, which restricts the contribution of resources to social policies (Complementary Law No. 101, of 05.04.2000); evaluation of higher education courses holding responsible the academic management (Law No. 10,870, of 05.19.2004); Public budget freeze, safeguarding the public debt (EC n.º 95, de 15.12.2016); the most current investee, the New FUNDEB (EC No. 108, of 08.26.2020).

To the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, an extra aggravating factor is added to the neoliberal State model, which is the presence of multilateral organizations directly or indirectly influencing the formulation of educational policies of these nations considered peripheral in the production of the world economy. Such bodies often emphasize the need for the state to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of education spending. To achieve these guidelines, they suggest “that the public sector should rely on management modes used by the private sector, becoming more effective and expanding the margin of use of resources” (Shiroma; Evangelista, 2011, p. 132).

With the determination of one of the shares of the Tax on the Circulation of Goods and Services should be linked to educational indicators (Educational ICMS) within the scope of the New FUNDEB yet meeting the neoliberal assumptions of achieving a supposed improvement in qualitative results, although expressed quantitatively by indexes, through the management effort and the minimum use of resources.

⁴ A capitalist ideology that gained global adhesion in the 1990s in nations such as England and the USA, spreading throughout the Western world. It reached Brazil during the governments of Fernando Collor de Melo (1990-1992), Itamar Franco (1993-1994) and Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1995-2002) and presents approximate characteristics of the places where this experience had been consolidated. For example, government actions for public administration reform, privatization, fiscal regime, and managerialism (Anderson, 1995). Since then, Brazilian governments, including progressive ones, have had greater or lesser adherence to the materialization of this conception, which has gained strength in recent years.

Consider the reference to the pioneering experience of Ceará, not by linking this, which is the most important source of resources for the states, to the area of education, but by establishing educational goals to increase literacy and proficiency indicators in Portuguese and mathematics, linked to the receipt of resources. This context materializes throughout the national territory based on this new policy, although in the empirical field of this research this logic had already been executed in previous years.

Considering these conjunctures, this article is divided into three fundamental parts. The first deals with the peculiar aspects in this municipal context and their implications for the social quality⁵ (Silva, 2009) of the municipal schools studied. In the second, the elements of managerialism present in municipal public management are addressed, influencing, and determining the internal evaluation of school units. The third and final part is the final considerations.

The public management in education, the object of this study, is located in the third largest municipality in the State of Bahia, Vitória da Conquista, located in the south-central region of the interior of Bahia. In view of the data collection instruments, the documentary analysis and interviews stand out with public managers of the Municipal Department of Education (SMED), school managers and teachers of two municipal public schools that respectively achieved the highest and lowest IDEB in 2017.

It was investigated, among several matters that will not be part of the analysis of this one due to their extension, the following aspects of this management: the effect of this management model on the actual school curriculum⁶, affecting the social quality of municipal education; the financial incentive under the logic of performance and the social pressure on teachers; finally, the effectiveness of the policies of management of results and accountability over two school units; in which the criterion already mentioned made it possible for the schools to be analyzed, respectively, one in the head office of the municipality and another in the rural area.

Thus, the locus and the social actors are presented as follows: **Locus 1** – Municipal Department of Education: Municipal Manager A (Municipal Secretary of Education) and Municipal Manager B (General Pedagogical Coordinator of the pedagogical center of SMED); **Locus 2** – School A (with the lowest IDEB): School Manager A, Pedagogical Coordinator A and Teacher A; **Locus 3** – School B (with the highest IDEB): Pedagogical Coordinator B and Professor B. It is important to note that the research was approved by the Ethics Committee for Research with Human Beings (Consolidated Opinion of the CEP/UESB No. 3,637,600).

The absence in the interviews of the school manager with the highest IDEB, the one at the head office, is noteworthy. In addition to consulting social actors, SMED documents were analyzed, namely: the structuring project, the school regulations, the goal plan, the action plans, the annual plan for continuing education and the schedule of SMED activities. Other documents were also consulted and some of the school units researched, namely: the pedagogical proposal, the school regiment and the didactic projects. It is important to emphasize that the listening to the voices of

⁵ A very recurrent expression in this text, we refer to Silva (2009) concerning the social quality of public education, which must be considered in its multiple, complex, and diverse aspects of reality and not only by merely quantitative and technical criteria used in educational evaluation. The author defends considering qualitative elements in this process, such as social justice, democracy, and citizenship.

⁶ Not being the focus of this study, the concept of school curriculum here is to relate to the content of the educational act that makes it possible to understand and critically analyze reality, intervening in it in an active and transformative way (Martins; Pasqualini, 2020). The term actual highlights what is effectively taught.

the interviewees occurred after the first documentary analysis and, in this dynamism, what was not covered in the documents was substantially unveiled in the subjects' speeches, which demanded a return to the documentary data for their resignification.

The importance of this study is due to the current situation in the country, where public educational policies are increasingly consolidated, based on tax incentives for performance in large-scale external evaluations. It is enough to consider, among several public governance actions in recent decades, the ultraliberal reforms of Michel Temer (2016-2018) and Jair Bolsonaro (2019-2022)⁷ governments, the regulation proposed by the approval of the New FUNDEB. Thus, to be contemplated by public funds, schools tend to adapt to managerial guidelines, directing their efforts in the search for performance in the large-scale evaluation instruments, due to their effects on the heteronomy of teachers in their pedagogical practice on the school floor. In addition, the complexity of the teaching-learning process is compressed, and teachers are blamed for the success/failure of the school unit in which they operate.

The implications of the management model for the social quality of municipal education

As the manager of educational institutions and to manage actions in municipal education, SMED prepares a document called "Structuring Project No. 20: Municipal Pedagogical Proposal of the Vitória da Conquista Education Network" for the 2018-2021 quadrennium (Vitória da Conquista, 2018). This project was organized to operate through small projects in partnership with the private sector, through planning involving teachers from the entire network and in the (late) creation of the municipality's pedagogical proposal, an instrument not yet elaborated in that education. Among program instruments, a plan of goals with seven purposes⁸ established by the pedagogical center of SMED stands out, as one of the main demands of this project that marks the debut of the political group in municipal management, marked by managerial performances.

In the municipality investigated, the first year of operation of the public management investigated, in 2018, was marked by SMED diagnoses based on external evaluations applied in schools. In a standardized way, unified intervention projects were signed for the entire education network, "disregarding the specificities and material conditions of operation of the schools, as well as the socioeconomic context in which they are inserted" (Santos, 2021, p. 90). The promise was that, as of 2020, the interventions would come from the

⁷ In order not to incur in a selectively partisan judgment, the actions of the Lula-Dilma governments (2002-2016) stand out for the Brazilian scenario, despite the centrality of large-scale evaluation in the daily life of municipal public management and the classroom. Although a progressive government, it expanded neoliberal conceptions in government actions through managerialism, such as the creation of the Basic Education Development Index (IDEB), the improvement of the evaluations of higher education courses, the creation of the National Evaluation of Basic Education (ANEB) and the National Evaluation of School Performance (ANRESC), with the application of standardized tests, called Prova Brasil [Brazil Exam], for students in the 5th and 9th grades of EF. Subsequently, the National Literacy Assessment (ANA) was incorporated through Ordinance No. 482, of 06.07.2013, of the MEC. It is also worth mentioning the National Education Plan (PNE 2014-2024) that groups and consolidates the IDEB in the ten-year plan.

⁸ In summary: Goals 1 and 2 – children's literacy; Goals 3 and 4 – raise the IDEB in Elementary Education; Goal 5 – monitor school attendance in the municipal network; Goal 6 – reduce the age-grade distortion to 5% in 4 years; and Goal 7 – increase the offer of Early Childhood Education classes by 20% (Vitória da Conquista, 2018).

school units themselves, certainly referenced in the practices of this first year of implementation, recorded in the reports of the school's pedagogical coordination. Such a commitment cannot be ascertained since it took place after the research period. However, it proved to be a difficult proposition to fulfil, given the impact on the curriculum when mobilized to "meet the demands of public-private management" (Andrade, 2021, p. 134). These demands are justified by actions to improve the IDEB, mediated by the partnership between SMED and the outsourced *Educar pra Valor* [Educating for Real] (of the Lemann Foundation).

Consequently, during the two years analyzed in this study, the teachers of the classes evaluated by the SAEB underwent periodic training in the secretariat, aiming to improve pedagogical practices that would enhance the students' performance in large-scale standardized tests. These 5th and 9th-grade students were still subjected to testing activities for the test called simulated tests of the *Prova Brasil* (previous nomenclature).

In the speech of the minority of interviewees, the quality of education is linked to the school's results in the official indicators of the Ministry of Education (MEC). Thus, regardless of the physical and material conditions of the schools, the teacher can supposedly improve the development of his students within these external evaluation instruments. In this aspect, the discourse of some of the educational agents themselves points to the teacher's responsibility for improving the quality of education, explained in the results of their students in external evaluations.

Another important observation, based on its own program, the Direct Money at School Program [*Programa Dinheiro na Escola*] (PDDE Municipal), is the fact that SMED transfers financial resources to schools conditioned to learning results. Half of this amount at the beginning of the school year and the rest depended on the fulfillment of IDEB goals or internal designs of the secretariat. Professionals from these same school units who advanced in these goals were paid a fourteenth salary and another bonus of 10% to teachers and pedagogical coordinators of the classes evaluated in the SAEB.

Having made these considerations, it is not possible to analyze the National Evaluation System of Brazil detached from the broader context of the crisis conditions of bourgeois society founded on the capitalist mode of production. As already mentioned, Brazilian legislation has been shaping itself for a gradual and growing adoption of managerialism assumptions in the conduct of government actions in the country, reaching its municipalities generally. This is in line with the global movement identified as neoliberalism, which in Great Britain, the USA, New Zealand and Australia has presented common characteristics that are in line with the concept of the minimal State and has been materializing in the Brazilian country from the contribution of multilateral organizations⁹ and financiers, guiding and establishing conditions for the adoption of the managerialism in educational policies and, in this way, conditioning the receipt of financial resources to the materialization of these conceptions in the public sector.

Creating a national system to evaluate education is one of these conditions and represents the final phase in the dynamism of an accountability policy. In it, those responsible for the results

⁹ The main ones are the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco) in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Latin America (Ecla) and the Organization of American States (OAS), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the World Bank, composed of two institutions: the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (Ibrd); and International Development Association (IDA) etc. In addition to these two, it is made up of: International Finance Corporation (IFC); Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA); and the International Center for the Resolution of Investment Disputes (Icsid).

of the service provided and their respective implications are established, previously agreed upon in specific legislation. This characteristic of financial reports (accountability)¹⁰ did not exist in the first versions of the large-scale evaluation, however, it was gradually incorporated into the letter of the law, in various local contexts of the country. A more in-depth historical reading of reality makes it possible to unveil the contradictions beyond the legal documents, which generally present only the immediate knowable reality and, therefore, a concrete part of reality, not its totality. The legislation (the hegemony that appears) conceals private interests as representative of the efforts of an entire society based on state action. And so, Marx and Engels (2007, p. 76) said:

Since the State is the form in which the individuals of a ruling class assert their common interests and reduce the entire civil society of an epoch, it follows that all collective institutions are mediated by the State and acquire through it a political form.

In the relations between the State and civil society, the dominant classes, and their most strategically established fractions in the disputes for the hegemony of their propositions in the political field have in the education systems a strong ally to neoliberal guidelines. In this way, the privatism with a tone of public interest and non-profit established between the secretariats and the educational companies emerges as benevolence in search of the quality of education by messianic managerialism, through the actions formulated from management to teaching performance, having as a prerogative the achievement of indicators mobilized by financial incentives.

Thus, by consolidating the IDEB as an indicator of quality in the incorporation into the ten-year plan, the National Education Plan (PNE 2014-2024)¹¹ reinforces the attention of society to the historical series of this index in the respective municipal and school contexts. This thus strengthens the relevance of the National Evaluation System in diagnosing the qualitative context of Basic Education. Reproducing the effect on the induction of pedagogical planning due to standardized tests, the Municipal Education Plan of Vitória da Conquista (PME 2015-2025) also proposes to promote the improvement of education quality partially guided by the logic of system evaluation.

This concept of quality in the formulations of international organizations in communion with neoliberal ideology, has been undergoing reforms since the 1990s, moving “from a reference to management to another more linked to student learning” (Cabral Neto; Rodriguez, 2007, p. 23). These learnings are demonstrated in the descriptors of the external evaluations, which serve as a backdrop to evaluate the contents expressed in the reference matrix of these instruments. Thus, the curricular cut is contemplated by a written test in the universe of Portuguese language and mathematics, which incorporates competencies and skills within the conception of work, exploited, expropriated of vital and alienating activity, in a process of broad capitalist accumulation of modernity (Marx, 2017) called globalization.

¹⁰ An expression from the corporate world, from English, it means “accountability” in Portuguese. Usual in managerialism, it indicates the responsibility of some public service to be accountable for its public activities before the client-citizen. In education, it stands out in the media exposure of the results of external evaluations.

¹¹ Contradictorily to the assumption of a neoliberal state, the strategies of Goal 7 of the PNE (2014-2024) in the aspect of educational quality add elements that demand more investments in education, namely: continuing education of education professionals, democratic management, didactic-pedagogical improvement, acquisition of school equipment, transportation, and school food, among others.

This standardizing characteristic due to a model instrument, simplifies the actual curriculum of the school and places all students in the same measure. This is confirmed by Pedagogical Coordinator A:

There are these pedagogical proposals that we end up leaving a little bit, that we would work at the school, touching on the student's reality, that I know that we, each school have its reality, and each location has its reality. So, sometimes a pedagogical proposal that comes [from SMED] for the 1st grade doesn't work in the 1st grade of my school. Because the students are at the lower level or there are some students who are more advanced, but the class is mixed. So, we still need to sit down to be able to see an ideal proposal for our school, because the group of students is different from region to region (Pedagogical Coordinator A).

In the two schools surveyed, the coordinators and teachers show dissatisfaction with the centrality that occurs internally in the school for the actions of SMED, which is concerned with the improvement of the IDEB of the municipality. It is evident that the choice of what should be taught in the evaluated classes is related to the content of the SAEB evaluations. Thus, the consequences of curricular impoverishment, given the pedagogical centrality of these evaluated contents, stand out as one of the nefarious effects of this large-scale evaluation policy in its current guise. Public education suffers qualitative consequences because it is in the "narrowing of the curriculum at the initiative of schools that, when trying to adapt to the new demands, they can eliminate content that is not directly related to the basic curricular references" (Barreto, 2000, p. 58). It is worth considering that in other countries that adopt these business assumptions in the public sector, to mention the Americans¹², public school education is equally impaired.

Given the implications of the restricted access to scientific knowledge, another effect of this system evaluation policy is the financial consequence for teachers in achieving goals. According to Teacher B, "When you say 'fourteenth salary', you have the weight of not having received it. And another, the weight of having received". Thus, the career plan is secondary and dispersed by the hunt centered on educational indicators. Siems and Bassi (2023, p. 21) point out:

By articulating continuing education for teacher professionalization with evaluation by results, the proposal for a policy of variation in teachers' remuneration ends up hiding the growing and real devaluation of the teaching career, a way of compensating teachers with occasional allowances that do not, however, alter their career plan and their retirement, anointed by a managerialist ideology. In addition, it promotes the fragmentation of the teaching category and disintegrates the traditional ties of solidarity, promoting competition among teachers.

Even though they are a little oblivious to this understanding of reality, the teachers interviewed do not align themselves with the managerial perspective of public administration and are skeptical of this model. When asked about the bonuses received by her school unit for achieving the best municipal IDEB, Teacher B ponders that "it is necessary to understand the specificities that each school experiences, because each school lives a reality. We live in a reality that provides this improvement in

¹² Ravicth (2011), in *Life and death of the great American school system: how standardized tests and the market model threaten education*, denounces how the policy of results aligned with the policy of accountability has been destroying public education in the USA in recent decades.

the IDEB score, but other schools live in a reality that does not provide it" (Teacher B). His speech is justified by the fact that his group comes from socioeconomic realities that are equally favorable and not very representative of the predominant vulnerable social contexts in the municipality.

Working in a less urbanized area and with poor students, teacher A, who was not rewarded, considers that the most important thing is her students' learning. "I think the biggest bonus is that you arrive at the end of the year and get that class to improve" (Teacher A). Contrary to this, the teacher at the school with the highest IDEB received the bonus, however, both teachers understand that this award is not generic among education professionals.

Another disastrous implication, in addition to state control over the curriculum and the forms of regulation of the school system, is the State's authority over the application of resources in the educational area (Barreto, 2000). These determinations weaken the public sector and make room for the private network, which in the form of institutes/foundations are associated with political society, disseminating more business assumptions whose consequences reaffirm the weakening of the public educational sector. In the context studied, the most general characteristics of managerialism and its recurrent implications reappear:

[...] the exploitation by the State of the teacher in his profession, within the neoliberal context [...], acts to promote the favoring of the bourgeois class, benefited by the advent of the minimal State. Teacher planning in the classroom, for standardized tests, does not contribute to their class but rather makes up a greater determination that appropriates evaluation systems to legitimize public policies of low investment, in addition to making education professionals accountable (Santos, 2021, p. 99).

Bourgeois favoritism from a neoliberal perspective materializes in this educational market under various capillarities of profits, as well as in its several arrangements of privatization whether in the educational advisory provided to municipal public administrations, even those classified as non-profit, but which have the appeal of marketing in the association they make of the educational company with the idea of educational quality, whether in the sale of didactic-pedagogical material to the public and private education networks, or outsourcing, or in the actions of execution and implementation of the evaluation itself on a large scale, etc. It is also worth noting that these large companies are publicly traded, and these returns only make up a portion of their profitability since they also have strong performances in higher education.

This public-private promiscuity in the concrete reality of the municipality studied, especially in the two schools analyzed, proved to be insufficient to mitigate the following impasses: the school unit with the highest IDEB in the municipality presented precariousness in its infrastructure (absence of cafeteria, library and teachers' room) that were not remedied with the policy instituted by SMED in partnership with the Lemann Foundation; the other, with a lower IDEB, in addition to not having interventions to improve its functioning (majority of hired teachers, precarious school transportation and overcrowded classroom), it was penalized by the lack of resources, since it did not meet the established goals. Both were induced to improve their performance in the IDEB through the testing of students for large-scale evaluation and teacher training for standardized testing, making concrete solutions to the real problems located in these school units secondary.

In this way, the social quality of these schools was compromised. Considering the negligence in the human, (im)material, didactic-pedagogical and structural aspects, the quality made possible in this municipal policy only brings out values of market and economic dispute, inspired by a logic of international competition, by business assumptions, and in no way related to citizen, democratic-participatory, inclusive and diversity values. Charlot (2021, p. 12) warns that “a school operating in the logic of generalized and permanent competition will never be a school of solidarity and inclusion”.

Given these considerations and weighing the statement of Pedagogical Coordinator B it is stated that the effects sought by SMED are summarized in approval and failure in the instruments applied. They have the society's attention through their electorate and reflect the quality expected by system evaluation. Because of all these consequences (curricular, pedagogical, salary, professional and material) to the educational system of the municipality analyzed, a fundamental question emerges: what would justify the existence of a single evaluation instrument (standardization) to encompass and represent the multiple dimensions of formal education and, at the same time, serve as a parameter for the formulation of policies (of low investment) to meet broad governmental demands in education of an entire municipality, if not an alignment with capitalism and submission to the determinations of the global market?

Managerialism in the public management of the municipality: from external evaluations to pedagogical practice in the classroom

In the business conception, in the private sector, every service provided by an agency/individual, when submitted to an evaluation by another agency external to it, may have a reliable diagnosis of its performance. To have a higher effectiveness of this constitution, a set of goals and indicators need to be established in advance and agreed upon with a contracting mechanism, that is, with its consequences such as collection, reward, or punishment (Abrúcio; Segatto, 2017), concerning the consequences traced, whether obtained or not. Charlot (2021, p. 8) better elucidates this scenario:

In contemporary society, the production process becomes too complex to be organized in detail from the center (the company's headquarters or the ministry). Thus, we enter a period in which the center reserves strategic decisions to itself but entrusts the detailed organization of the process to those who do it in loco: the a priori hierarchical order is followed by the a posteriori evaluation of the results. Since the quality of the product depends on the act in a work situation, companies and administrations have encouraged the creation of “quality circles”; even, sometimes, promising prizes for proposals that improved the quality of the product or service. Thus, at the end of the 80s, “quality” became a buzzword, far beyond the field of education.

With these administrative assumptions incorporated into the public sector, large-scale evaluations occupy the strategic position of an agent external to the school and relate the performance of students in standardized tests to quality parameters, thus deriving the responsibility of school agents, managers and teachers for the results achieved in these evaluation instruments. In this way, merit/penalty are incurred and vary in different contexts, which may imply salary bonuses for education professionals or promotion/loss of financial resources for schools.

As well as in other studies on the advent of external evaluations in the State of Bahia (Andrade, 2021; Brito, 2023; Viana, 2022), the students' results in these instruments reflect the educational quality achieved. In this way, the school gives centrality to a pedagogical work that can improve its performance in these external evaluation instruments. Certainly, the strategies employed to improve these results change from one reality to another, however testing for the test or projects focused on Portuguese language and mathematics are increasingly adopted with the aim of preparing the public for standardized tests on a large scale, usually through a public-private partnership between the secretariat and an educational institute.

It is worth recalling historically the fact that in the implementation of large-scale evaluation, that is, in its first generation, it only reported results without any implication for the school or teachers. From the second generation onwards, it had consequences for educational performance, combining a policy of accountability with symbolic and material effects. In the third generation, it determined the efforts of the teachers for the topics evaluated, focusing the curricular focus on their pedagogical practice (Bonamino; Sousa, 2012). Hence, the media exposure of the results is accentuated with the exacerbation of teacher blaming in the face of the effects of these educational indicators.

With this belief increasingly crystallized, the written test takes center stage in the pedagogical practice of these teachers induced by interventionist actions, vertically programmed by the pedagogical coordination of SMED. What is charged in these external evaluation instruments becomes a parameter for content selection, and subjects such as Portuguese language and mathematics gain prominence in curricular priorities. The specific demands of the school unit, such as commemorative dates, internal projects, other school subjects and specific needs of the class and students, give way to preparatory activities for external evaluation. The statement of Pedagogical Coordinator A demarcates some of these situations here:

All the school's actions are focused on SMED's actions. Then there is the holding of tests in the style of the SAEB test. Students have a lot of difficulty filling out the answer key, so we try to take the school tests, the internal evaluations, in Portuguese, in mathematics. I put the environment because there are now some science questions at SAEB, we also put history, even though we know that it will not have weight, but that the student is there being tested, but knowing that it will not be worth it, right? What will really count is Portuguese and mathematics. But we put these students to train, although [SMED] only sends questions in Portuguese and mathematics, we have been asking questions about the environment, which involves the natural sciences, and history to be training this student also thinking about these other areas and those that will also be present there in the test. They will not score now, but they will be present. So what we are doing is, mainly, objective questions with answer keys, so that he has more contact with this type of evaluation (Pedagogical Coordinator A).

Another professional, the teacher at school A, reinforces this centrality in the search for improvement in the IDEB by SMED. She explains:

The mock tests are good, but like this, the SAEB test, [SMED] has a book of questions that is charged and sometimes we can't work on all those contents until the test arrives. So, like this... There is content, the level of the class is one, so you are in that dilemma: you work on the content for him to take a good test or you work on the difficulty of that student.

For example, four basic mathematics operations and writing is their biggest difficulty. The interpretation of the text, the textual genres, the typology... so, when we go to work with him, you are in doubt, you know that he does not master, but you have to give that content, because that content will be charged in the SAEB test (Teacher A).

Teacher A is distressed by the demand to dedicate herself to more complex content when the students have not yet mastered more fundamental subjects. This vertical relationship between SMED's external commands and the school's internal actions means that the teachers of the evaluated classes are absent during the school year, sometimes replaced in their classes by people who do not have specific training in the area and whose activities have little relationship with the teaching-learning process. Continuing education focuses on teacher preparation for standardized tests and teaching strategies that improve student performance in these official evaluation instruments.

Thus, teachers are determined to act with these restricted performative objectives, simplifying the actual curriculum of these classes. "To the extent that evaluation is something inseparable from the pedagogical process, it becomes an instrument for controlling the teaching work" (Santos, 2021, p. 96). Thus, a direct influence on the teacher's activity is evidenced. According to Marx (2017), control over the worker's actions is one of the ways to undermine their autonomy, minimally restricting to the domination of only a portion of their productive performance, thus preserving the *status quo* of the capitalist system.

Given these considerations, it is noteworthy that the didactic-pedagogical weaknesses of the use of tests as an exclusive instrument in the evaluation process, already denounced by Luckesi (2011) in the so-called Pedagogy of Evaluation in the 1990s, return with force and are consolidated in the various municipal realities of the country from the provisions of the New FUNDEB, mainly by the Educational ICMS, as a tax incentive policy for the improvement of municipal school performance. As in this reality investigated, even long before the new ICMS policy, in the search to improve the IDEB, schools tend to pay too much attention to the daily ritual of tests and exams in the school space. The much-criticized system centralized in grades, indexes, and statistics, supported by parents with an inclination for the promotion of their children, an inheritance of a Jesuit pedagogy and materialized in bourgeois society with its naturalized social selectivity, as well as in various national contexts in which this process was consolidated, generally puts the quality of Brazilian public education at risk.

At the end of the 20th century, in the context of post-democratization of access to Elementary Education by children and adolescents aged 7 to 14 years, the defenders of a school evaluation that was effectively mediating (Hoffmann, 1996), emancipatory (Demo, 1990), historical-social (Franco, 1994), critical-humanist (Abramowicz, 1995; Grinspun, 1994; 1996; Werneck, 1996), democratic (Luckesi, 1999) and formative (André, 1990) become theoretically as current as in their times and still level in theoretical eclecticism, in the face of a controversial conjuncture that treats the evaluation of the school conceptually at the same level or lower than that of a large-scale evaluation. Thus, "the state model reduces educational evaluation to a control procedure, hierarchically defining norms for the entire education system" (Cappelletti, 2015, p. 97). See Table 1 for the similarities between the Pedagogy of Evaluation and the National Evaluation System in the current social context.

Table 1: Analogy Between Pedagogy of Evaluation and the National Evaluation System

	Pedagogy Of Evaluation	National Evaluation System
Focus	Grades	Ideb
Evaluator	Teacher	State
Audience	Students	Schools
Nature Of Punishment	Blaming	Accountability
Instrument	Written Test	Large-Scale Standardizing Tests
Classification	Pass/Fail	Better/Worse
Legitim�er	Family	Civil Society
Effect	Exclusion	Precarization

Source: Developed by the authors

Although the school test is one of the evaluative instruments in the pedagogical process, its centrality is equivalent to the excessive focus on large-scale testing. In this configuration established in Table 1, both standardized resources hide the real materially constituted problems, dispersing more comprehensive and effective solutions to their specific challenges.

In the Pedagogy of Evaluation, the teacher transfers exclusively to the student the blame for passing/failing in the studies, whose representation of learning focuses on the grade in the written test. This limited evaluative instrument in its curricular scope, supported by the family that accompanies the results in the report cards, focuses on what is measurable by writing and does not serve in any way for the entire process (planning, objectives set, methodology used, mobilized tools and the test itself) to be effectively judged and repositioned. In this way, there is no effective learning, leading to the exclusion of those who do not succeed in this perverse logic.

With such similarity, the National Evaluation System, through large-scale standardized tests, makes schools, management and teaching responsible for the formalized indicators that represent the quality sought by the education networks. The State, with the support of society, exempts itself from a real investment in education and operates in the sense of inducing an inter-institutional dispute for scarce public resources which makes that even more precarious for the school that most needs public funds. It is also considered the fact that the educational indexes used in this evaluative dynamism do not reach the real and concrete problems historically constructed in the educational field.

The real context of school performance as well as its socioeconomic aspects are ideologically dispersed, thus compromising the social quality of public education. Imbued with the current logic of technological, industrial, and military competition between rich nations, in a production system mobilized by results, not unlike in education, “those responsible for school systems suffer from a syndrome of absolute transparency and domination, as if evaluating allowed solving the school’s problems” (Charlot, 2021, p. 9).

Final Considerations

The crisis in the capitalist mode of accumulation, which appears in government norms and discourses as a world economic crisis, restructures and reorders the state role selectively minimal to investments in social policies and maximum to the new accumulative cycle of capital. To do so, it relies on managerialist conceptions in the public sector through neoliberal ideology. In Brazil, with the aggregation of the guidelines of international organizations, it is reflected in educational policies in external evaluations that serve as a parameter for government demands, met from the perspective of competition, meritocracy and accountability. Such policies, increasingly comprehensive in Brazilian municipalities, due to the historical and gradual changes in legislation, intervene in the curriculum of schools and in the pedagogical practice of teachers, weakening the public sector, which is increasingly at the mercy of the advice of educational companies.

In the context studied, some contradictions are well situated: the PME (2015-2025) is secondary to the visibility of the accountability policy, in which the continuing education of teachers, in addition to being restricted to groups of certain classes, focuses on testing for standardized tests; the material demands of the functioning of the schools are overshadowed by the goals of the secretariat; the career plan is secondary to bonuses; the socioeconomic realities of the students ignored by verticalized educational projects; finally, the real and concrete educational needs, which demand comprehensive projects of greater conceptual depth, maximum participatory mobilization of educational workers and large contributions of financial resources, are dispersed among the seven goals of SMED.

Contradiction, as a category of reality, points out ways to supplant it. Thus, other aspects unveiled in this study can guide social praxis to overcome this context, in which curricular impoverishment conforms to the requirements of the subjects tested; the autonomy of the teacher is undermined by state control in the forms of regulation of the system, which devalues their professional performance; bonuses reflect social pressure on educational workers; investments in education are summarized in financial incentives conditioned to performance in official indexes, penalizing the schools that most need money; public education, as in other contexts of similarities in this policy, is weakening; and public management, governed by political-administrative principles of managerial administration, becomes more dependent on the private performance of educational companies. Additionally, the fact that the municipal public management appropriates this dynamism due to the political appeals for electoral visibility.

Finally, it is essential to consider that this research raises the obligation for new investigations on the relationship between municipal public management and broader educational policies and their impacts on school units, the teacher's work, students' performance, the community, and the very conception of public management.

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