





EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT AND TEACHING AUTONOMY: SMAEF as a means of reproducing culture through results

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ABSTRACT

This research brings up a study about external examinations and their implications for teaching autonomy and profession. The reference is the county of Russas, located in the Jaguaribe Valley Region, in the State of Ceará. We intend to analyze the implications of the *Sistema Municipal de Avaliação do Ensino Fundamental* (SMAEF), in the municipality of Russas-CE, in the autonomy and valorization of teaching work. The paradigm was investigative Marxism with the Dialectical Historical Materialism method. Fifty seven teachers from the educational network of the municipality of Russas-CE were interviewed, from April to June 2020, using the Google Forms. We used speech analysis. Of 57 respondents, 50 reported that the level of demand for results that falls on teachers, through the education network, is high, while only 7 reported that the requirement is reasonable. In addition, with an educational policy focused on large-scale examinations, 73.7% of respondents reported that the autonomy of teaching work was reduced with the SMAEF policy. The autonomy and appreciation of teaching work enters a path of suppression.

Finally, it remains to be seen what kind of children and adolescents we seek to form from this mercantile and meritocratic logic that public education is transforming every day. So that inequalities in opportunities do not perpetuate, we need to modify this scenario and raise the issue of large-scale exam policies to the political, historical and social level.

Keywords: Education. External Examination. SMAEF.

AVALIAÇÃO EXTERNA E AUTONOMIA DOCENTE: o SMAEF como meio de reprodução da cultura por resultados

RESUMO

Esta pesquisa traz à tona um estudo a respeito das avaliações externas e das suas implicações na autonomia e na profissão docente. A referência é o município de Russas, localizado na Região do Vale do Jaguaribe, no estado do Ceará. Analisa as implicações do Sistema Municipal de Avaliação do Ensino Fundamental (SMAEF) nessa localidade na autonomia e na valorização do trabalho docente. O paradigma foi o marxismo investigativo com o método Materialismo Histórico Dialético. Foram entrevistados 57 professores da rede de ensino do município de Russas-CE, no período de abril a junho de 2020, por meio de formulário eletrônico do Google Forms. Utiliza-se a análise de discurso. Dos 57 entrevistados, 50 informaram que o nível de exigência por resultados que recai sobre os docentes, por meio da rede de ensino, é alto, enquanto apenas 7 informaram que a exigência é razoável. Somado a isso, com uma política educacional voltada com afincamento para as avaliações em larga escala, 73,7% dos entrevistados informaram que a autonomia do trabalho docente foi reduzida com a política do SMAEF. A autonomia e a valorização do trabalho docente entram por uma via de supressão. Por fim, resta saber que tipo de crianças e de adolescentes se busca formar com base nessa lógica mercantilizadora e meritocrática na qual a educação pública se transforma a cada dia. Para que as desigualdades de oportunidades não perpetuem, é necessário modificar esse cenário e elevar a problemática das políticas de avaliação em larga escala ao patamar político, histórico e social.

Palavras-chave: Educação. Avaliação externa. SMAEF.

EVALUACIÓN EXTERNA Y AUTONOMÍA DE LA ENSEÑANZA: SMAEF como medio para reproducir la cultura a través de los resultados

RESUMEN

Esta investigación plantea un estudio sobre evaluaciones externas y sus implicaciones en la autonomía y profesión docente. La referencia es el municipio de Russas, ubicado en la Región del Vale do Jaguaribe, en el Estado de Ceará.

Pretendemos analizar las implicaciones del *Sistema Municipal de Avaliação do Ensino Fundamental* (SMAEF), en el municipio de Russas-CE, en la autonomía y valorización del trabajo docente. El paradigma fue el marxismo de investigación con el método materialismo histórico dialéctico. Se entrevistó a 57 docentes de la red educativa del municipio de Russas-CE, de abril a junio de 2020, utilizando el formulario electrónico en Google Forms. Utilizamos el análisis del discurso. De 57 entrevistados, 50 informaron que el nivel de demanda de resultados que recae en los docentes, a través de la red educativa, es alto, mientras que solo 7 informaron que el requisito es razonable. Además, con una política educativa centrada en evaluaciones a gran escala, el 73.7% de los entrevistados informaron que la autonomía del trabajo docente se redujo con la política SMAEF. La autonomía y la valorización del trabajo docente entra en un camino de supresión. Finalmente, queda por ver qué tipo de niños y adolescentes buscamos formar en base a esta lógica mercantilizadora y meritocrática que la educación pública cambia todos los días. Para que las desigualdades en las oportunidades no se perpetúen, necesitamos modificar este escenario y plantear el tema de las políticas de evaluación a gran escala a nivel político, histórico y social.

Palabras clave: Educación. Evaluación externa. SMAEF.

Introduction

"The contents and methods of conquest vary historically, which does not vary, as long as there is a dominating elite, it is this necrophilic eagerey to oppress" (FREIRE, 2001, p. 138).

This research brings up a study on external examinations and their implications for autonomy and the teaching profession. The investigative *locus* is the municipality of Russas, located in the Jaguaribe Valley Region, in the state of Ceará. The theme arises from developments that involve the implementation of examination policies in Brazil, which emerge from a management model that finds, in external and large-scale examinations, the official reference for measuring students' learning levels and deciding on the future schools.

As Werle (2011, p. 774) points out, "é a partir de 1988 que são ensaiadas as experiências de avaliação em larga escala na Educação Básica¹". Carrying out a time jump for the year 2020 and anchored in the thinking of Brooke and Cunha

(2011), we emphasize that research on external examinations is relevant today in view of the expansion of large-scale examinations that have consolidated in recent years in Brazil in certain levels, formats, and scales.

The policies of large-scale assessment, notoriously, have become the object of study by too many researchers due to their implications in the educational context, such as the Sistema de Avaliação da Educação Básica (SAEB), which until the year 2018 comprised three different assessments: *Avaliação Nacional da Alfabetização* (ANA); *Avaliação Nacional da Educação Básica* (ANEB); *Avaliação Nacional do Rendimento Escolar* (ANRESC), also known as *Prova Brasil*. It should be noted that there are also dozens of other state and municipal assessments.

It is worth noting that the performance of students in large-scale assessments has increasingly guided the formulation of educational policies in state and municipal networks, with monetary incentives and accountability for professionals and/or the school. The SAEB results, for example, act as a reference matrix for the examination proposals of these networks (SOUSA, 2014).

Based on this structure, in the state of Ceará, there is the *Sistema Permanente de Avaliação da Educação Básica do Ceará* (SPAECE), in addition to other municipal examinations, among which we highlight the one carried out in the municipality of Russas, that is, that of the *Sistema Municipal de Avaliação do Ensino Fundamental* (SMAEF), object of study of this research.

SMAEF was created by the company called *Assessoria e Gestão Educacional* (AGE), based in Brasília, and is present in some cities in Ceará, such as Pacatuba, Aratuba, Acarape, Maranguape, Quixeré and Itaitinga. It is important to note that the national policy for large-scale assessments inspires states and municipalities in structuring their external assessments applied in education networks. As we can see in the *Plano Municipal de Educação* (PME, 2015-2025) of Russas regarding SMAEF:

Em relação ao acompanhamento, os alunos das escolas municipais são avaliados pelo Sistema Municipal de Avaliação do Ensino Fundamental (SMAEF), que é aplicado periodicamente pela Assessoria Técnica e Tecnologia Educacional (ATTE). As avaliações são elaboradas pela Secretaria Municipal de Educação e estão fundamentadas nos descritores do Sistema Permanente de Avaliação da Educação Básica do Ceará – SPAECE

e da Prova Brasil, bem assim na proposta curricular e em sua própria matriz de referência (RUSSAS, 2015, p. 37)².

In turn, SMAEF has always evaluated content in Portuguese and Mathematics, following the course of examinations at the federal level, however, in its latest editions, it has also incorporated the contents of Science, History and Geography. The examinations, unlike the *Prova Brasil*³, are not only applicable to classes that finish each teaching cycle but have been extended to students from the 3rd to the 9th grade of elementary school (RUSSAS, 2019).

All these policies emerged through narratives about the quality of education, a theme that has led to major debates since the 1960s, going back to different concepts at different times, moving between issues of access, permanence, and school flow, in the first moments, and finally, nowadays, about quality as performance in school contents. However, it is reasonable to emphasize that the focus of these assessments is only the student's performance in standardized tests, leaving out other relevant elements of the educational process, such as the teacher and the content (knowledge) studied (GENTILI; SILVA, 1994).

In this context, León (2011) asserts that the changes that have occurred in relation to the teacher's role, such as the fragmentation of his work and the advent of technologies at the service of capital, make him an employee even in extra-school time and the complexity of demands that are imposed on it, the result of demands for the fulfillment of educational objectives that society is unable to achieve, coincide with a historical process of rapid transformation of the social context.

In this logic, the teaching work in Russas is, to a large extent, an expression of the educational policy developed in the state of Ceará, which, at the same time,

² In relation to monitoring, students from municipal schools are evaluated by the Municipal System for the Evaluation of Elementary Education (SMAEF), which is applied periodically by the Technical Advisory and Educational Technology (ATTE). The assessments are prepared by the Municipal Department of Education and are based on the descriptors of the Permanent Evaluation System for Basic Education in Ceará - SPAECE and Prova Brasil, as well as in the curriculum proposal and in its own reference matrix (RUSSAS, 2015, p. 37, **our translation**).

³ Prova Brasil is a diagnostic examination developed by the Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais Anísio Teixeira (INEP). It aims to assess the quality of education offered by the Brazilian educational system, based on standardized tests and socioeconomic questionnaires. The tests are applied only in the 5th and 9th years of elementary school. Students respond to items only in Portuguese and Mathematics (BRASIL, c2018).

has a close relationship with orientations arising from a national educational policy and, therefore, are linked to the goals and propositions made by international organizations, such as the *Banco Internacional para Reconstrução e Desenvolvimento* (BIRD) (MENDES, 2005).

This is because, with the advancement of neoliberal forces, which carry in their ideals the minimal intervention of the State and free competition, increasingly present in the spaces for discussions of educational and curricular policies, the educational scenario has been considered as another instrument maintenance of capitalist society, which finds in the perspective of ranking and standardization an imperative of economic growth.

As a consequence, in the education networks, it is possible to observe , according to what is defined by groups of specialists and teaching departments, the teaching focused on pre-established contents, detailing the aspects destined to human and cultural formation and regionalization.

Therefore, the interest in carrying out this study is generated considering the experiences observed in the state of Ceará, in the training of teachers and managers promoted at state and municipal level, especially in the municipality of Russas with SMAEF, and the importance that these administrations provide to policies external examinations, seeking to guarantee its applicability even if, for this, the quality of teaching and the curriculum are sacrificed.

In view of what was presented, this study has the following guiding question: what are the implications of the *Sistema Municipal de Avaliação do Ensino Fundamental* (SMAEF) in the municipality of Russas-CE in the autonomy and appreciation of teaching work?

As a primary objective, we intend to analyze the implications of SMAEF in the municipality of Russas-CE in the autonomy and appreciation of teaching work. To this end, we will verify the autonomy of the teacher in the organization, planning and execution of the pedagogical work of the subjects evaluated by SMAEF and we will also identify the link of the valorization of the teaching work through the results extracted from the local examination policy.

1. Large-scale examinations in Brazil

Let us begin by discussing the incorporation of *Accountability* objectives in the process of expanding the large-scale assessment policy in educational management. This model is evidenced by being strongly situated in the field of structural reforms carried out by the *Banco Mundial* and the *Fundo Monetário Internacional* (FMI) at the end of the 20th century. In the area of education, it was marked by the implementation of the *Banco Mundial* and the *Fundo Monetário Internacional* (IDEB)⁴.

These structural reforms began to manifest themselves significantly in Brazilian education under the government of Fernando Henrique Cardoso (FHC, 1995-2002). It is from this period that the prerogative of promoting the supposed quality of teaching is consolidated. Thus, standardized examinations were used, making an inversion in the emphasis of political actions, that is, the policies for evaluating school performance at the expense of educational ones within the scope of the curriculum.

For a better understanding of this process, initially, we will resort to Durham (2010), who ensures that a significant part of educational policies sought, in summary, to meet the guidelines expressed in Law No. 9,394 / 1996 (BRASIL, 1996). Despite the scope of this law, the author explains that most of the actions focused on education taken by the FHC government fell on the effectiveness of an examination system, namely, the SAEB and the National Course Conclusion Exam. The first aimed at evaluating basic education and collecting subsidies for the creation of new educational public policies, while the second assessed higher education.

It is noteworthy that the implementation of these evaluative reforms has global dimensions and influences. Thus, according to Bauer, Alavarse and Oliveira (2015), these reforms, implemented mainly in peripheral countries, mostly in Latin

⁴ IDEB was created in 2007, and its index was calculated considering the data on school approval, obtained through the School Census, and the performance averages presented in the SAEB (INEP, 2020).

America, aimed at both the redefinition of educational systems and the centralization of external examinations.

In the meantime, the great incidence of these educational examination policies in peripheral countries refers to the attempt to recover the economy through education, since South American countries, such as Brazil, were in a strong financial crisis. In view of this, the *Banco Mundial*, together with the FMI, began to make loans to countries in crisis, as long as they followed their guidelines for the development of education (MELO, 2004), in this case, specifically, followed by the imposition of large-scale assessments.

According to Leher (1999), this was because the *Banco Mundial* came to understand education as the main means of eradicating poverty in these countries. It is in this context that, during the FHC government, several educational reforms took place, in order to align Brazilian education with the guidelines and guidelines coming from the *Banco Mundial* and the FMI (MELO, 2004).

To fulfill this demand, several actions were taken, among them, the decentralization of management and financing processes, teacher accountability practices, stimulating competition mechanisms between schools, centralizing examination systems, allocating greater resources to schools with better results, among other factors (MELO, 2004).

This national policy that follows the goals and objectives of an international policy for economic groups maintains more than a mere similarity with the objectives of *corporate reformers*. To Freitas (2012, p. 380), business education reformers in the United States are reflected in:

[...] coalizão entre políticos, mídia, empresários, empresas educacionais, institutos e fundações privadas e pesquisadores alinhados a ideia de que o modo de organizar a iniciativa privada é uma proposta mais adequada para “consertar” a educação americana, do que propostas feitas pelos educadores profissionais.⁵

⁵ [...] coalition between politicians, media, entrepreneurs, educational companies, institutes and private foundations and researchers aligned with the idea that the way of organizing the private initiative is a more adequate proposal to “fix” American education, than proposals made by professional educators. (FREITAS, 2012, p. 380, **our translation**)

It is a neo-technicism that uses accountability, meritocracy and, finally, privatization to obtain the idea of controlling processes, which, when achieved, guarantee results such as the so-called "*standards*", which are verified based on standardized tests. Kane and Staiger⁶ (2002 *apud* FREITAS, 2012, p. 383) mention that this accountability system is established based on three elements: "testes para estudantes, divulgação pública do desempenho da escola e recompensas e sanções".⁷

In this scenario, the Brazilian examination policies on a large scale and the proposals of the states and municipalities, which follow the same basic structure, test students, in sequence, not only disseminate, but classify schools through performance and, in the end, promote rewards or penalties. This makes public education gain a meritocratic character from a liberal policy proposal, since it establishes that the conquests are given by the process of personal effort, the merit of each one, regardless of the inequality of opportunities (FREITAS, 2012).

This drawing is formed not as a scrawl, but as a canvas elaborated through planning that has privatization in the center, the organization of private initiative, causing the obsolescence of public education, supported by the failure of so-called *standards*, resulting in the idea that only the privatization and commodification of education would be the driving forces for rescuing the guarantee of a quality of learning.

In line with the above, Hypolito and Ivo (2013) ensures m to standardized tests, for example, establish a form of the State effecting control over what should be taught and what is taught, reducing the curriculum of schools. In fact, what is also worrying is the focus of the current assessment systems to be worked on individually, in the school unit. It is the teacher who starts to be evaluated. The school unit is now identified, generating absurdities such as fixing signs with the

⁶ KANE, RJ; STAIGER, D.O. The promise and pitfalls of using imprecise school accountability measures. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Nashville, v. 16, n. 4, p. 91-114, 2002.

⁷ "tests for students, public disclosure of school performance and rewards and penalties" (KANE; STAIGER, 2002 *apud* FREITAS, 2012, p. 383, **our translation**)

IDEB result at the entrance of schools and increasing tensions and expectations in the figure of the teacher. As noted in the following passage:

As principais leis no campo da educação promulgadas na década de 1990, todas situadas em um contexto de gestão centrada na descentralização e municipalização da educação, representam um discurso oficial de articular a regulamentação da área educacional, sobretudo o ensino fundamental, possuindo, portanto, dada a magnitude de suas implicações, o caráter de reforma. Esse novo contexto de inovações administrativas e pedagógicas no sistema educacional exerce forte influência na realidade municipal e na vida de seus docentes⁸ (MENDES, 2005, p. 15).

In this context, the use of these assessments during the course of management policies promotes an inversion in the emphasis of the sphere in educational policy. Since the examination policies should be subject to the educational policies, being elected according to the needs of improving the quality of learning, however, the examination policies are directing the processes to define meritocratic financing policies.

2. Methodology

The method erected in this study is dialectical historical materialism. Therefore, a more in-depth analysis is necessary to capture the object in its essence. Thus, the method used provides the researcher with greater elements for the interpretation of reality, avoiding mistakes and simplistic interpretations, as:

De forma aproximativa e sintética, o método dialético supõe a investigação da conexão íntima entre a forma pela qual a sociedade produz sua existência material e a escola que cria. Portanto, para o método dialético, o fundamental em pesquisas sobre instituições escolares, é relacionar o particular (o singular, o dado empírico) com o geral, isto é, com a totalidade social⁹ (NOSELLA; BUFFA, 2005, p. 362).

⁸ The main laws in the field of education enacted in the 1990s, all located in a context of management centered on the decentralization and municipalization of education, represent an official discourse of articulating the regulation of the educational area, above all elementary education, having, therefore, given the magnitude of its implications, the character of reform. This new context of administrative and pedagogical innovations in the educational system has a strong influence on the municipal reality and on the lives of its teachers (MENDES, 2005, p. 15, **our translation**).

⁹ In an approximate and synthetic way, the dialectical method supposes the investigation of the intimate connection between the way in which society produces its material existence and the school it creates. Therefore, for the dialectical method, what is fundamental in research on school institutions is to relate the particular (the singular, the empirical data) with the general, that is, with the social totality (NOSELLA; BUFFA, 2005, p. 362, **our translation**).

Therefore, we seek to understand in practice the objects and determinations in teacher examination and autonomy, using dialectical historical materialism to identify the construction of autonomy in view of external examination in the performance of professionals.

The essence of the study is quantitative-qualitative, which, according to Souza and Kerbauy (2017), is characterized by enabling more elements that allow us to distinguish the multiple aspects of the investigated phenomenon, paying attention to the research's pretensions.

The research was carried out in the municipality of Russas-CE, located 165 km from the capital Fortaleza, comprising the mesoregion of Vale do Jaguaribe. It has an area of 1,611,091 km² and an estimated population of 78,882 inhabitants, occupying the 15th position among the municipalities with the largest population in the State of Ceará, according to data from the Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (IBGE, 2020).

Coordinated by the Secretaria Municipal da Educação e do Desporto Escolar (SEMED), education in the municipality of Russas has a contingent of 47 school units, of which 4 are state schools, offering high school, 37 are municipal, 2 are daycare centers, in addition to 4 private initiative schools. However, 21 (44.7%) of schools are located in the urban area and 26 (55.3%) in the rural area.

According to the School Census prepared by IBGE in 2018, of the 184 municipalities in Ceará, Russas was the 20th city with the highest number of enrollments made in that year. Altogether, there were 15,849 in the three levels of basic education, with a contingent of 816 teachers (IBGE, 2018).

The research subjects were 52 permanent teachers and 5 temporary teachers from Russas-CE. Data collection was conducted from April to June 2020, through a questionnaire *on-line* semi-structured, that for Boni and Lent (2005), can combine open and closed questions, in which the participant is able to describe the proposed topic. The questionnaire was developed by the researchers, submitted to

a pre-test group, with the intention of improving this instrument and, later, applied through a tool of the Google platform, using the electronic form of Google Forms¹⁰.

As inclusion criteria, we elected the following: a) to have a minimum of 3 years of teaching in the municipality; b) be an effective, temporary teacher or be completing the probationary internship; c) have the consent to participate in the research within the specified period. Exclusion criteria for research include: a) having less than 3 years of teaching in the municipality; b) be a teacher working in Early Childhood Education; c) be away from the teaching profession.

As for data analysis, we use Bakhtin's theory of dialogism, which understands that enunciations constitute a fraction of verbal communication loaded with content and ideological sense. Thus, the analysis must be governed by such statements, which are, in addition to voices, living expressions of social reality (BAKHTIN, 2014).

Thus, the statement has a core of understanding for those who participate in dialogical situations (IBIAPINA, 2008), while the statement expresses an act that can mean different discursive positions, but that is individualized and established in a social, historical and ideological context.

With regard to ethical issues, we refer to Resolution No. 510 /2016, which deals with research in Humanities and Social Sciences, considering the item that describes the item "VII - pesquisa que objetiva o aprofundamento teórico de situações que emergem espontânea e contingencialmente na prática profissional, desde que não revelem dados que possam identificar o sujeito"¹¹ (CONSELHO NACIONAL DE SAÚDE, 2016, p. 2). We comply with all ethical procedures necessary to carry out scientific research.

3. Autonomy and valorization of teaching work: SMAEF on the scene

¹⁰

Questionnaire

link:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfHVAm71JcYpwRYhF3JARkFzeKolo695T8KYM_1rTifw-XN0g/viewform

¹¹ "VII - research that aims at the theoretical deepening of situations that emerge spontaneously and contingently in professional practice, as long as they do not reveal data that can identify the subject" (CONSELHO NACIONAL DE SAÚDE, 2016, p. 2, **our translation**).

This section aims to present an analytical discussion, whose central elements seek to meet the object of study, as well as the problem already mentioned in the introduction of this research. To answer the question, as elaborated by Bakhtin (2014), we located the theoretical concepts of contribution, autonomy and valorization of teaching work, using the SMAEF examination policy of the municipality of Russas and the teachers' statements, which will serve as support for all the analytical dynamics in place.

We rescued the initial problem that served as an analytical support: what are the implications of the *Sistema Municipal de Avaliação do Ensino Fundamental* (SMAEF) of the municipality of Russas-CE in the autonomy and valorization of teaching work?

We structured the analysis with three statements made through the questionnaire, which allowed the statements made by the teachers to materialize. They are: 1. Insecurity of teaching work in relation to measures related to external examination; 2. Regarding the valuation of teaching work; 3. About the level of demand for results that the teacher is submitted to during the school year.

In order to achieve the discussion of autonomy and valuing teaching work based on SMAEF in the municipality of Russas, it is necessary to enter, first, the external examination policy, materialized by this System and adopted by the municipality since 2010.

SMAEF¹² has in its base the same structure presented by a set of examination systems, such as the SAEB, which is managed by the *Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais Anísio Teixeira* (INEP), an MEC autarchy, and also like the SPAECE, implemented in 1992 by the *Secretaria da Educação do Ceará* (SEDUC-CE) (INEP, 2020; CEARÁ, 2018).

This scale of assessment systems in the municipal and state levels has emerged as a preparatory action and the adequacy of basic education for the

¹² On July 15, 2020, on the official website of the Municipal Government of Russas, we sought the documents that establish the guidelines for the SMAEF evaluation policy, in addition to the implementation of the Municipal Education Plan of Russas (2015 to 2025), however, none of the documents were available for public consultation.

fulfillment of the national large-scale examination of policies. These are examinations that followed the route of the *Sistema de Avaliação do Governo Federal*, so SMAEF conducts the examination processes to achieve better results at SPAECE and this, in turn, follows the same course to obtain good results at SAEB.

And what is the relationship established between these examination policies and teaching autonomy? Firstly, addressing teaching autonomy requires knowledge and understanding of the contradictions that surround the teacher's work, such as his professional practice, the conditions in which the work develops, the education policies, the teacher's relationship with society and the ways of it conceive its role in education (CONTRERAS, 2012).

As a result of the commodification of education, teaching work undergoes a process of proletarianization, following a rationalizing and productive productist logic. As a result, the work process is increasingly submitted to external entities, which disqualifies and fragments it from conception to execution.

We can point out the Brazilian educational reforms since the 1990s that are triggers in the transformation of educational management, in school organization and in the restructuring of teaching work. With these reforms, new regulations and norms for the educational system emerged, with standardization of processes, centralized curricular proposals, external examinations, among others, which reveal the devaluation of teaching work (OLIVEIRA, 2010).

The teacher starts to experience a deterioration in working conditions, facing the control of pedagogical practices, salaries according to merit, external examinations, excessively detailed programs that must adapt the curriculum and the teaching work to educational policies, among other conditions that represent forms of management and external control over the teacher and, consequently, the reduction of his autonomy.

Thus, the social reality that involves education and teaching work is not only complex, but, above all, contradictory. The policies are presented in a panorama of the search for quality of education and of the entire education system, however, it affects differently all the participants of the school community, especially the

teacher. Let us see some statements below that demonstrate how the external examination makes the work of the teacher precarious and, consequently, jeopardizes the teaching autonomy and the quality of the teaching process.

[...] o professor deixa de trabalhar metodologias e conteúdos muito mais importantes no dia a dia dessas crianças, porque é obrigada a dar bons resultados [...]. (TEACHER 1).

A pressão sobre os professores por resultados também é muito negativa (PROFESSOR 5).

Mecaniza e engessa em alguns aspectos o processo de ensino-aprendizagem, vislumbrando muitas vezes aspectos quantitativos e não qualitativos e/ou habilidades cognitivas de aprendizagem (TEACHER 6).

Acredito que o ensino fica engessado, específico e mecanicista, com um trabalho com foco nos resultados, em notas. A criticidade e a diversidade de demais conhecimentos é deixada de lado e, por vezes, a individualidade de cada sujeito, todos passam a ser números (notas) do sistema e esses que os representam (PROFESSOR 57).¹³

The statements corroborate Santos (2004) when he affirms that external evaluations delegate to the teacher all responsibility for the students' performance. The planning of school life becomes, on a daily basis, the chase for "gold", but in educational and structural situations that are totally unequal and which do not focus, contradictorily, on the quality of teaching and learning.

In short, it is the teachers' perception of the devaluation of their work, which we can observe when out of 57 teachers, 46 reported that they feel devalued by the education network.

¹³ [...] The teacher stops working with methodologies and content that are much more important in the daily lives of these children, because they are forced to give good results [...]. (TEACHER 1). The pressure on teachers for results is also very negative (PROFESSOR 5). Mechanizes and plaster the teaching-learning process in some aspects, often envisioning quantitative and non-qualitative aspects and / or cognitive learning skills (TEACHER 6). I believe that teaching is plastered, specific and mechanistic, with work focused on results, in grades. The criticality and diversity of other knowledge is neglected and, sometimes, the individuality of each subject, all become numbers (notes) of the system and those that represent them (PROFESSOR 57). (Our translation)

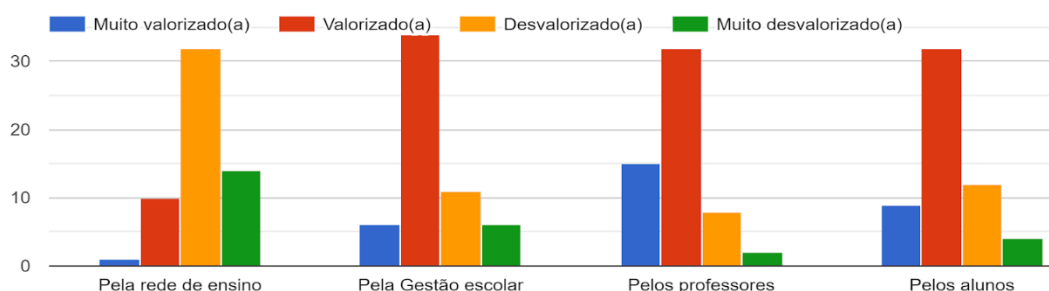


Figure 1 – Regarding the valorization of teaching work in the municipality of Russas-Ce. Source: Research data (2020).

Contradictorily, the attacks of the governments following the logic of meritocracy are supposedly presented as an action to enhance the teaching work. The responsibility of the teacher relapses and deepens the results, not considering the complexity of the issue involved between the teaching work and the quality assurance of the teaching-learning process.

Let's see that, for the state of Ceará, there is the *Prêmio Escola Nota Dez* (Ceará, 2020) and to the city of Russian, we can find what Machado (2019) points as strengthening *accountability*, with the implementation of the Gratificação de Incentivo ao Desempenho (GID), through the Job, Career and Compensation Plan for members of the teaching staff.

This action establishes a transfer of responsibilities with a supposed incentive by means of salary bonuses that already accompany a devaluation of the teaching work, that is, teachers who seek to increase their salary with bonuses, since they do not get enough to meet their needs.

For Sousa (2008), this practice does not present itself as a potent inducer of changes. In our view, changes in management, education and incentive policies remain focused on meeting large-scale assessments. Regardless of whether the results presented are carried out through tests, which, contradictorily, in education, are opposed to the understanding we have about examination.

All of these policies are not isolated, as they follow an international course that determines how underdeveloped countries should behave in the face of education through goals achieved by international organizations. This transfer of

duty and compliance also becomes political and we can verify this implementation through the systematization of what Brooke (2006, p. 379) named by ingredients.

1. A decisão por parte das autoridades de tornar públicas as diferenças de nível de desempenho das escolas (ingrediente autoridade);
2. O uso de testes ou procedimentos padronizados para fornecer este tipo de informação (ingrediente informação);
3. Os critérios para analisar esta informação e para determinar quais escolas têm melhor desempenho (ingrediente padrões);
4. Os critérios para a aplicação de incentivos ou sanções conforme os padrões estabelecidos (ingrediente consequências).¹⁴

In line with the above, the autonomy and appreciation of teaching work goes through a suppression path, in which teachers are held responsible for the results. Due to the bimonthly testing, in the case of SMAEF, the work that involves planning considering the school curriculum also becomes irresolute, guaranteeing, based on this, the path for autonomy and appreciation of teachers.

In the perception of 50 interviewees, the level of demand for results that falls on teachers, through the education network, is high, while only 7 reported that the requirement is reasonable. In addition, with an educational policy focused on external examination, 73.7% (n. 42) of the interviewees reported that the autonomy of teaching work was reduced with SMAEF.



Figure 2 – About the level of demand for results that the teacher is submitted during the school year. Source: Research data (2020).

¹⁴ 1. The decision by the authorities to make public the differences in the level of school performance (authority ingredient); 2. The use of standardized tests or procedures to provide this type of information (ingredient information); 3. The criteria for analyzing this information and for determining which schools perform best (standard ingredient); 4. The criteria for applying incentives or sanctions according to established standards (ingredient consequences). (BROKE, 2006, p. 379, **our translation**).

Are the efforts of these governments based on considering the indicators of the examination system as an instrument of measures to improve the quality of education? In Oliveira's view (2004), the examination policies follow the logic of the conceptions of educational reforms idealized for Latin America, demarcating a new reorganization of educational policies, bringing significant consequences for the organization and the school management model, resulting in a restructuring of teaching work, which may even change its nature and definition.

So, how can we talk about teacher autonomy if the preparation for SMAEF tends to limit the condition of participating in the conception and autonomous organization of their teaching work? If the school contents are already vertically pre-established by agents of the Municipal Education Department? If the school curriculum is severely limited?

These are questions that end an analytical section, demonstrating that there is still a long way to go for the discussions surrounding this theme. This study fulfills its function when we reach more structural levels to answer the problem of this research, but it also raises new questions to be investigated.

Final considerations

We observe that SMAEF has the same structure at its base presented by SPAECE, that is, a set of assessment systems and constant preparation for the state assessment. From this perspective, the same way that are created for improvement narratives of the city's quality of education, through diagnosis and for comparison, at the same time plays an educational policy based on meritocracy and individuality.

To maintain these policies is to guarantee the perpetuation of the deepening of the precariousness of public education and the removal of autonomy from teaching work. Investigative efforts serve us to identify the problems and, with the collaboration of the participants, find the elements that intensify such problems.

It remains to be seen what kind of children and adolescents we seek to train based on this mercantile and meritocratic logic in which public education is transformed every day. So that these inequalities of opportunities are not

perpetuated, it is necessary to raise the issue of external examination policies to the political, historical, and social level.

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