

**“Corporate quality” and “social quality” in educational reform:
causes, consequences, and disputes**

*A “qualidade empresarial” e a “qualidade social” na reforma educacional:
causas, consequências e disputas*

*“Calidad empresarial” y “calidad social” en la reforma educativa:
causas, consecuencias y disputas*

Interview: Luiz Carlos de Freitas

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Abstract: The interview aims to analyze the conceptions of assessment and educational quality in contemporary times, in light of reflections on Brazilian public policies influenced by the global development of capitalist society. The interview discusses the structural causes of the corporate reform of education and its intent, exemplifying the risks associated with the development of this policy in its countries of origin—North America—which is at a more advanced stage, allowing for an examination of its consequences and implications for Brazilian educational policy, driven by strategies in the field of assessment and educational quality. The

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interviewee points out the impacts and dilemmas of corporate reform in the Brazilian context and indicates pathways for resistance, proposing alternative concepts for assessment processes that challenge the prevailing notion of “corporate quality” in education and strengthen the fight for social quality in public schools.

Keywords: Assessment; Social quality; Corporate reform.

Resumo: O objetivo da entrevista é analisar as concepções de avaliação e qualidade educacional na contemporaneidade à luz das reflexões sobre as políticas públicas brasileiras influenciadas pelo desenvolvimento global da sociedade capitalista. A entrevista discute as causas estruturais da reforma empresarial da educação e sua intencionalidade, exemplificando os riscos com o desenvolvimento desta política em seu país de origem - a América do Norte - e que se encontra em estágio mais avançado, permitindo analisar suas consequências e desdobramentos na política educacional brasileira, instigados pelas estratégias no campo da avaliação e qualidade educacional. O entrevistado aponta impactos e dilemas da reforma empresarial no contexto brasileiro e indica caminhos de resistência, propondo conceitos alternativos para os processos de avaliação que contrariam a noção predominante da “qualidade empresarial” para a educação e fortalecem a luta e defesa da qualidade social da escola pública.

Palavras-chave: Avaliação; Qualidade social; Reforma empresarial.

Resumen: El objetivo de la entrevista es analizar las concepciones de evaluación y calidad educativa en la contemporaneidad a la luz de las reflexiones sobre las políticas públicas brasileñas, influenciadas por el desarrollo global de la sociedad capitalista. La entrevista discute las causas estructurales de la reforma empresarial de la educación y su intencionalidad, ejemplificando los riesgos asociados con el desarrollo de esta política en su país de origen - América del Norte - que se encuentra en una fase más avanzada, permitiendo así analizar sus consecuencias y repercusiones en la política educativa brasileña, impulsadas por las estrategias en el campo de la evaluación y la calidad educativa. El entrevistado señala los impactos y dilemas de la reforma empresarial en el contexto brasileño y sugiere caminos de resistencia, proponiendo conceptos alternativos para los procesos de evaluación que contrarrestan la noción predominante de “calidad empresarial” en la educación y fortalecen la lucha y defensa de la calidad social de la escuela pública.

Palabras clave: Evaluación; Calidad social; Reforma empresarial.

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Interview

REPOD: Based on your work in the field of educational assessment, how do you analyze the development and consolidation of corporate hegemony?

Luiz Carlos de Freitas: This is a very broad question that requires situating it within the context we are, and will continue to face. It cannot be answered solely from within the field of assessment; that would overlook the historical perspective that has significant power to shape public policies, including education. This question demands a critique of the educational purposes we assign to schools, which leads us to a historically and socially grounded reflection,

i.e., it directs us to the historical project we wish to build for our society. This project allows us to visualize the educational purposes that define the form and content of schools. This project allows us to visualize the educational purposes that define the form and content of the school (Shulgin, 2022).

Thus, our vision has always emphasized the need for a historical project to guide what has been broadly referred to as progressive education since the 1980s, thereby better defining the term “social transformation”.

This is made clear in an article I wrote in the 1980s (Freitas, 1987), which marked a preference for a Marxist perspective. However, as I criticized at the time, referring only to a vague “social transformation” does not specify the directions of our future. Hence the need for a historical project that guides this social transformation, its meaning, and its modes of realization.

The absence of a historical project has been exacerbated by the advent of postmodernism (Azzarà, 2022) and, to some extent, by the misinterpretation of Gramsci and his concept of the expanded State, allowing a certain intellectual elite (self-identified as “organic”) to find a comfortable position for struggle by denying the radical nature of Marxist analysis and placing social struggle within the field of institutional struggle, particularly within the State. This has led to a failure, especially in academia, to recognize that these struggles - both inside and outside the State - are simultaneously complementary.

From a practical standpoint, weighed down by postmodern denialism and the impact of new technologies, we have arrived at a current state where the struggle is increasingly confined to action via social media. Consequently, there is a growing detachment from the real struggles afflicting the population. The postmodern ahistorical critique of “truth” has turned into fake news in the hands of the right and its media outlets (MacManus, 2020); thus, it has become a “cultural war” of narratives, divorced from reality, while the idea of “social transformation” has, at best, transformed into the art of how to “fix capitalismo”.

If we want to visualize the role of learning assessment, we must first envision an educational and political-pedagogical project for the school, within the context of struggles, based on a historical project aimed at overcoming the decadent capital. One of the possibilities for this overcoming, which has the most accumulated historical experience, is socialism.

Such an overcoming is necessary because the social system created over the last six centuries, at least, based on the extraction of infinite profit, has compromised the prospects for human life and the environment, plunging our society into a structural crisis (Meszaros, 2009; Wallerstein *et al.*, 2013; Streeck, 2016). As Marx (1985) anticipated—an author that capital does everything to discredit—he illustrates how some can accumulate wealth through the exploitation of others, resulting in approximately 1% of adults owning 45% of the world's produced wealth, while another 52% possess merely 1% (Roberts, 2022). There is no foreseeable reduction of these disparities (Stiglitz, 2022; Carchedi; Roberts, 2018).

About 250 years ago, capital developed a political system, known as liberal democracy, which theoretically committed to changing this scenario, yet only managed to exacerbate it (Roberts, 2018). Furthermore, over time, capital, sensing such difficulties and the negative reactions from those affected, has become incompatible with its own proposal of liberal democracy and, when necessary, implements illiberal democracies of an authoritarian nature, manipulating the specter of the far-right (Norris; Inglehart, 2019).

This process, as Eleutério Prado (2023; 2024) points out, has given rise to what can be termed a “suicidal neoliberal extremism” that jeopardizes not only the facade of liberal democracy but humanity itself. Polarizing between the extreme right and left, capital recreates the political center and adjusts the proposals of the “extremes” to its terms, that is, to the same vague proposals that existed 250 years ago, in the form of a “recycled social democracy.” The more consequential left finds itself compelled, in the name of social-democratic governance, to settle for visions aimed at “fixing” the existing system, at least tactically. Broadly speaking, this is our current political landscape.

However, this situation is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain. Those who have reached Volume III of Marx's work (1985) are aware of this growing impossibility over our times. I will not elaborate on this here, but interested parties can find this issue addressed in Chapter XIII.

To summarize the principle, capital will, over time, experience a tendency for its profit rates to decline due to the fact that, to sustain its profit hunger, it will increasingly need to introduce new technologies that enhance productivity, thereby distancing human labor from the production process. This will reduce the generation of value, which is the basis of profit, leading to successive crises (see also Roberts, 2016; 2018; 2020; Carchedi; Roberts, 2023).

It is certain - Marx states - that there will be actions that capital will implement to compensate for this loss, but the tendency is for this decline to persist, creating a social reality that is difficult to sustain through democratic means (Roberts, 2020; 2021; 2021a).

As social tensions, especially those stemming from the alienation and precarization of labor (Huws, 2014), give rise to possibilities for resistance and change, capital's response will be to lean towards the extreme right as a survival mechanism. Therefore, the conservative and neoliberal extreme right is not a voluntaristic endeavor of this or that figure. It is a structural problem of capitalism that will not abandon us (Norris; Inglehart, 2019; Hudson, 2022; Wallerstein, 2001). In this scenario, the left is compelled to defend liberal democracy as the minimum standard of democracy, as a means to continue existing and alleviate the suffering of the population.

However, the political center is not the historical place of the left (Wallerstein, 2011), except tactically as a way to implement a broader strategy. It is necessary that this strategy is formulated and known so that the population understands the need to transcend capital and its model of social organization based on infinite profit, and this cannot be constructed without a historical project. If, fifty years ago, this was desirable, today it has become vital for humanity itself, given the limited possibilities of rectifying capitalism. Both neoliberalism and Keynesianism (not to mention variations of both) have failed in this endeavor (Gerstle, 2022). Furthermore, there is no postmodernity that can save us, as true postmodernity is only possible with the overcoming of capital and its social system.

Nevertheless, nobody enjoys receiving bad news. The crisis of the capitalist system will be difficult to assimilate, as it disrupts the beliefs of those striving to resolve their daily problems. It is understandable that well-intentioned individuals may view this position as pessimistic.

Today, the left is not much different. Those who believe that the system may have corrected itself argue that this position is that of "Marxists waiting idly for the revolution", while they are actively doing something for the future of humanity at this moment. The alleged pessimism, of course, depends on the worldview adopted.

The issue is not to believe that we will "automatically" move toward a better system. It will be necessary to recognize its structural limits and act so that the solution of rupture occurs positively: as in other moments in history, this involves significant social struggle and, as Wallerstein (2018) warns, history does not have a predefined script. But, our horizon is not pessimistic, as the inevitable crises of capital can be a factor that mobilizes its overcoming. Capital is aware of this: hence, it mobilizes a violent far-right by creating, in association with neoliberals, a "suicidal neoliberal extremism" (Prado, 2023; 2024). In this context, we must address the question posed regarding the development of educational assessment in Brazil and its forthcoming directions.

This formulation was necessary to understand the scenario in which education is situated within contemporary society, thereby enabling a critique of its educational purposes and, consequently, its assessment project, as the latter is not a field of study separate from the educational project, contrary to the desires of technocrats and evaluation entrepreneurs.

For now, it is essential to reaffirm that a minimally critical historical project, consistent with the present time, recognizes the gradual exhaustion of the current social organization model. It also acknowledges that efforts to fix capitalism are limited, as evidenced by the presence of

the far-right, the continuous crises of the system - whether economic or social - the failures of attempts to rectify its functioning, and the geopolitical crises that aim to establish a new cycle of expansion for capital.

It is from this reality that we must position the term “social responsibility”, emerging from a historical project aimed at overcoming this system and preparing youth for this reality, contending for both the form and content of education (Caldart, 2023).

This allows for a visualization of educational purposes for schools and the development of an “expanded formative matrix”, thus moving well beyond the narrow national common curricular base and its mechanisms of domination via accountability for equally limited learning assessments - now complemented by the direct action of the far-right in schools, recontextualizing the “school without party” movement.

The pressure to maintain this system will involve the privatization of schools, meaning the removal of schools from state control (Ravitch, 2011; Freitas, 2018) and placing them under the complete control of ideologically trustworthy entrepreneurs. This shift will also create room for ideological interference in the education of youth through far-right movements and their allies, which will prevent young people from becoming aware of the social issues that afflict them, instead preparing them solely to be entrepreneurs - essentially, future unemployed individuals with some form of self-sufficiency in an increasingly precarious world characterized by diminishing formal employment and the encroachment of robots and artificial intelligence.

The capital’s educational project, therefore, involves regulating both the form and content of education, particularly through digital learning platforms, and limiting the teachers’ roles to the officially programmed curriculum. Additionally, it perpetuates a meritocratic justification for the inequalities and problems within the system, transferring the blame of poverty onto the poor themselves, as if it were a personal choice, thus exonerating the existing social system (Freitas, 2018; Prado, 2024). The evaluation processes based on accountability, rooted in a concept of “business quality” will increasingly gain traction, aimed at familiarizing students with these logics and ensuring the success of these objectives.

REPOD: There is a clear distinction in the Brazilian educational sphere between what we can understand from its output as the logic of social quality and business quality. How do you see these poles in the current political reality? Have we managed to secure allies in the struggle for social quality? Is there space in the current government, or within specific political sectors (which ones?), for contesting the logic that guides public policy regarding national evaluation and quality?

Luiz Carlos de Freitas: The term “social quality” suffers from the same issue as that of “social transformation”, which I commented on earlier. Fifty years ago, it was challenging to accept a generic designation like “transformation”; now it sounds anachronistic considering the current stage of capital, which incites its furious far-right faction to present itself as “revolutionary”. The same applies to the use of the term “social quality”.

If we do not specify what quality we are talking about, its meaning could be restricted to the context of the current system as an enhancement of worker qualifications for new production technologies, for instance—a narrow interpretation that capital and education reformers claim when they assert they are “preparing new generations for the new skills of the 21st century”. Therefore, if we want to be distinctive, “social quality” must today be objectively defined as a clear opposition to the prevailing “business quality”, stemming from an alternative historical project. This does not imply we will cease to prepare youth for the current reality; it merely means we will not do so solely to adapt them to this reality.

However, it is evident that, in today’s political landscape, there is a predominance of what is termed “business quality” in the educational policies proposed by NGOs and private

foundations, which serve as instruments for its promotion. This is happening both within and outside the realm of the current Lula administration.

At this moment, I see no space in the educational policy of the Lula government for a defense - albeit within the confines of centrist policy - that contradicts this business quality. The ongoing educational policy at the Ministry of Education, originating from Ceará, was designed with the theses and support of business entities.

The connection between Ceará's reform and the Lemann Foundation is recounted by Clodoveu from PT:

“Jorge Paulo Lemann visited Sobral when I was the mayor (...)” because the municipality had achieved first place in the IDEB (Basic Education Development Index). *“Then, he invited me to spend a year and a half in the United States (...) at Columbia University. And some time later, he challenged me to develop a program to, as he put it, ‘sobralize’ Brazilian public education”* (Portal IN, 05/26/2022).

The national common bases and the high school reform, on the other hand, were formulated under the inspiration of the Lemann Foundation (Tarlau; Moeller, 2020) and a group of neoliberals who directed education in São Paulo for more than two decades and occupied the MEC and the National Education Council (CNE) after the coup against Dilma.

These same individuals who crafted Ceará's policy are now overseeing the educational policy of the Ministry—this includes NGOs. This has been in development since the government's transitional phase. As long as they are not removed from their positions, this is what they will continue to do.

However, it is important to clarify that we are not criticizing the Lula government as a whole, since our perspective is that there is no opposition between taking action at this moment for the population, as the current Lula government does, and acting with a strategic vision that goes beyond tactical social democracy. What is being criticized here is the lack of a guiding strategy that, in the case of education, for instance, would lead to a more vigorous action aimed at contesting an educational project for the schools that at least strives to counter the neoliberal/conservative legacy. It is not a policy formulated within a ministry that had to be surrendered to allied forces; it remains a ministry under the control of PT, the main party of the coalition.

REPOD: Considering the current guidelines concerning education financing, which tie funding resources to school performance results, what is the status of alternative evaluation methods? - We observe an increasing enclosure around a single form/vision of evaluation and quality; do we have any “loopholes” for action that are not aligned with the prevailing logic?

Luiz Carlos de Freitas: In my opinion, we must continue to support the Lula government while simultaneously critiquing its educational policies. I believe this is our role at this moment. There is also considerable space for struggle at the state and municipal levels or even within schools, fighting against corporate encirclement and ideological constraints. Undoubtedly, wherever we can implement new concepts of evaluation that are free from unilateral corporate accountability, this will be very important (see, for example, Bertagna; Pereira, 2023; Sordi; Freitas, 2013).

Today, we have all the critique developed by North American scholars who have been facing the consequences of these policies for decades, which are increasingly being implemented here. They begin with their mild and appealing forms, presenting ambitious proposals for school improvement and assistance to underprivileged children, ensuring everyone's right to learn at the appropriate age. They implement large-scale assessments that demoralize teachers and public schools with unilateral standardized tests, initially involving only the outsourcing of public schools to nonprofit NGOs, and then advancing to proposals for privatization and the

elimination of the public system, executing privatization on a large scale and placing education outside the realm of the State. For those who have doubts about this, it suffices to consult the scientific literature available over the past decade that analyzes these policies in that country (Koretz, 2017; 2019; Ravitch, 2011).

These policies have failed to improve American education and have instead fostered significant privatization of the educational system. Presently, a voucher policy that began with the pretext that underprivileged children needed to have options to choose either public or private schools has evolved from a subtle and alluring policy of outsourcing public schools to so-called nonprofit social organizations (see Network for Public Education report, 2021) into an indiscriminate distribution of “vouchers” for children regardless of income level, leading to the implementation of universal voucher policies in several states (MacGillis, 2024).

The consequence is that funds that were previously allocated to public schools are now being diverted to private schools, thereby strengthening the private sector at the expense of the public. Perry Bacon Jr. (2023) published an article in the Washington Post with a very telling title: “The ‘reform’ of education is dying. Now we can really reform education”. It is telling because it anticipates what will happen in Brazil after the Ministry of Education (MEC) implements its “Ceará-style educational reform” and states replicate these ideas or even more radical ones contained in this movement. We will waste valuable time and prevent other more significant changes from being put into practice. According to Perry:

The bipartisan movement for “educational reform” in the United States, which lasted for decades and was defined by an obsession with test results and the view of education largely as a tool for attaining higher-paying jobs, is finally in decline. What should replace it is an educational system that values learning, creativity, integration, and citizenship (Perry, 2023).

As Ravitch explains, this outcome for American education has been anticipated and denounced for decades:

In 2020, when I published my last book, *Slaying Goliath*, I stated that the educational “reform” known as No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top (standardized testing, school closures, school grades, charter schools, teacher evaluations based on student scores, merit pay, Common Core, *etc.*) was a colossal failure. The demands for testing, punishment, and standardization transformed schooling into a testing-obsessed experience that demoralized both teachers and students. None of the promises of “reform” were fulfilled, but privatization through outsourcing inevitably led to vouchers and a reduction in funding for public schools (Ravitch, 2023).

The American experience with this educational policy is evident in its consequences, as Daniel Koretz (2017) asserts in his book, *The testing charade: pretending to make schools better*. Recently, he wrote an article (Koretz, 2019) addressing the failure of American students both in PISA and in internal assessments within the United States. He states:

The routine debate is ongoing about how bad this news is, but these arguments often overlook an essential lesson: the school reform movement in the U.S. has clearly failed. It is time to confront this failure and think of new approaches to improve education.

There have been countless reforms over the last two decades, but at their core, they focus on pressuring educators to raise test scores. The idea is deceptively simple. Tests measure important things we want students to learn. Hold educators accountable for raising scores, and they will teach

children more. By concentrating accountability on low-scoring groups—most often setting uniform goals through state or federal laws like No Child Left Behind or the Every Student Succeeds Act—we will close performance gaps. Unfortunately, this concept has proven to be more simplistic than effective, and it has not worked (Koretz, 2019).

Moreover, the country faces the interference of business chains operating private and outsourced schools funded by public money, promoting religious beliefs and far-right ideology. A recent report summarizes the actions of these groups (Network for Public Education, 2023). (See also, Ravitch, 2024).

I believe that this formulation of business reform, much like its origin, will exhaust itself here as well, but not without resistance from teachers, students, and administrators, as its support - contrary to its claims - is not based on “empirical evidence” but rather on mere ideological necessity.

REPOD: It can be stated that the agenda of educational policy has been moving towards intensifying accountability processes for schools and their professionals, as well as for education networks - hard accountability. How do you analyze this agenda? In your academic work, there is the proposition of participative accountability as a form of resistance; what is the potential of this concept today?

Luiz Carlos de Freitas: Corporate-style accountability has been the proposal even within the current Ministry of Education, which, by supporting this type of pressure for results, encourages states and municipalities to follow suit. This pressure trickles down and reaches teachers and students.

Consider what is happening in Santa Catarina and now in São Paulo, with administrations that flirt with the far-right: principals are being threatened with dismissal if goals are not met (Freitas, 2023a, 2023b, 2023c, and 2023d).

If funding depends on results, under pressure, these results will be obtained or produced through inappropriate means. The manipulation of results is well known when associated with evaluation. Who doesn't remember the Beverly Hall scandal in the United States? (Freitas, 2013; Freitas, 2013c).

Even if one is now more aware that a harsher form of accountability, like that of the Bush administration (restructuring entire schools by replacing staff or closing schools that fail to meet targets), will generate fraud and fail to achieve the stipulated goals - unless the hidden goal is increased privatization - a theoretically softer form of accountability that ties resources to targets will produce the same effect, exacerbated by a narrowed curriculum that leads to teaching to pass tests with numerous simulations throughout the year. This process exhausts youth, in addition to creating habits of fierce competition among students, teachers, and schools at the expense of solidarity. One can see the situation in Sobral, Ceará (Freitas, 2023e; Araújo, 2023).

As we have long argued at the Laboratory of Observation and Descriptive Studies at the Faculty of Education at UNICAMP, the responsibility for student learning must be a collective construction originating within the school and established through bilateral collaboration between school professionals and network management (Sordi; Souza, 2009; Sordi; Freitas, 2013).

My perception of the experiences in which I have participated is that the challenge of forging this path does not rest with the school professionals but with the central management of the networks, which are pressured to deliver unfeasible results or to adapt to constant changes.

However, the path of negotiation is a healthy avenue for the advancement of schools that should be valued. Nevertheless, in the overarching context I have described, the pressures will continue to mount to adopt shortcuts that will produce disastrous side effects.

REPOD: Do you believe that external large-scale assessment policies are still viable under an emancipatory logic, or should they be discontinued due to their establishment within a corporate framework?

Luiz Carlos de Freitas: The role of national external assessment is to evaluate government policy, not specific schools. The results obtained from schools cannot be fitted into a general metric with the aim of extracting recommendations for individual institutions, as each has its own peculiarities.

Why is this done, then? It is based on a mindset that assigns the responsibility of meeting targets to the schools, regardless of the particular factors that constrain the performance of their professionals. This is why it is conducted census-style, including all schools rather than using a sample-based approach that selects a valid sample from the universe of schools. This results in unnecessary expenditures. In the United States, for instance, national large-scale assessment is conducted using a sampling method.

With this insistence on being census-based, they are misled by standardized test results. Local factors must be considered, and there is technology available to conduct this type of modulation, such as Data Envelopment Analysis, qualitative research techniques, and others (Freitas, Sordi, Malavasi, and Freitas, 2014; Dalben, 2014).

The business rationale is predicated on the notion that teachers do not know the results of their work, which is false; they know more than any standardized test that can be administered to their students by either corporate or governmental external evaluation agencies. Worse still, there is an assumption that they know what happens with their students, yet they believe they cannot perform their jobs effectively without external pressures.

For various reasons, the idea has emerged that all children can learn at the same pace if schools are held accountable for leveling student learning. However, student reality is diverse. Teachers are not oblivious to the learning conditions of their students; rather, they lack the necessary means to address the limitations that impact their development. For instance, we cannot expect this to be feasible with 25-30 students per class in Elementary Education and 45 in Upper Elementary, in a classroom with an award-winning teacher based on evaluation results but situated within a deficient school structure.

The most effective educational reform is reducing the number of students per teacher so that they can identify and address the varying learning paces of their students, coupled with ongoing professional development for teachers.

If we wish to fulfill the social responsibility currently imposed on schools, we must reduce inequalities (both social and academic performance) and move toward an emancipatory and democratic education, as future times will demand, altering both the structure and content of education - this includes the processes for assessing student learning and schooling - cultivating solidarity rather than fostering meritocratic competition.

REPOD: Assuming the current context, what concepts do you consider essential for addressing and uncovering the field of assessment? Among the concepts constructed around the field of educational assessment from your academic production, which would you highlight given their relevance in relation to current educational policies?

Luiz Carlos de Freitas: The field must be convinced that quality cannot be imposed by decree or through external incentives to motivate individuals to meet targets; rather, it must be constructed locally.

This means that individuals - managers, teachers, and students - possess intrinsic motivations to be in school, and these motivations need to be understood and valued. It is these motivations that should be the focus of quality management, rather than external pressures. However, the current corporate approach applied to schools does not focus on individuals' motivations and instead treats them as disposable components of management. Those who meet targets remain, while those who do not are replaced.

This management style may yield immediate results in business activities, but it fails to address complex endeavors that require collective construction to be achieved. It is not an individualized outcome that can be framed within a target such as "all students must be literate by the second year of Elementary School, measured by a standardized test", supplemented with "if the school fails to meet the target, its principal will be replaced in the subsequent evaluation". Such pressure undermines relationships, creates an institutional environment of surveillance and fear, and competes with the development of a team that fosters and values intrinsic motivations. Quality must be cultivated by the team. The construction of quality arises from participation in a formative assessment process.

This means that quantitative assessments must be combined with qualitative analyses within the school that contextualize the quantitative results and make them comprehensible within the school environment. This can only be achieved from within the schools, with the support of local management (Freitas; Sordi; Malavasi; Freitas, 2014).

This form of qualitative-quantitative assessment should be continuously developed within the school in multiple aspects, as I have already mentioned (socioeconomic level, results from external assessments, operational difficulties of the school and its administrators, teachers' working conditions, relationships with the community and parents, parents' perceptions of the school, students' viewpoints, evaluations conducted with students in school and in the classroom by teachers *etc.*), and should not be reduced to the isolated task of mock exams and sporadic assessments through tests. Furthermore, it is certainly not a task for the federal government, which should conduct its sample-based external assessment as a means of examining its educational policy rather than evaluating the schools themselves.

These results should be discussed, and commitments should be established first within the school (administrators, teachers, and students), and subsequently, in those aspects that depend on external variables linked to the local system, negotiated at the municipal level.

A central issue in this strategy is that regarding the development of a specific student, the authority rests with the teacher. It is the teacher who determines, in documented form, whether the student has achieved the desired level of learning and commits to this assessment. As mentioned earlier, it is essential to have a sufficient number of students in the classroom to allow the teacher to carry out this work effectively. Therefore, the best educational reform is one that reduces the number of students in classrooms and invests in improving the working conditions of schools and teachers.

Unfortunately, what has been done is to seek shortcuts that fit within the educational misery of schools, originating from the very crisis I described at the beginning: a decline in profits is followed by a decrease in tax revenues, which means fewer available resources, increasingly reserved to meet the demands of capital itself. Legends such as "education does not need more money" are then created, leading to the conclusion that "more money must be associated with goals". To validate this, a supposedly "successful" educational policy (Freitas, 2023e; Villas-Boas, 2017; Araújo, 2020; Araújo, 2023) is implemented in the state of Ceará utilizing all sorts of shortcuts and pressures, which is then presented to the nation as a solution (Freitas, 2016; Freitas, 2019).

This story is familiar to Americans. They too had their "Ceará" with the Bush administration, when he generalized the "successful" policy he had developed in Texas across the entire

country (Freitas, 2013b) and enacted the “No Child Left Behind” law, giving American schools 14 years to demonstrate competence or face adverse consequences during that period. While it did not enhance the quality of schools, it did succeed in privatizing education and initiating vouchers, which are now becoming widespread, defunding public schools and reallocating public resources to the private education sector in America.

An important aspect of this process of evaluating schools and learning in a participatory manner is that students must be invited to take part in it. This is essential to “vaccinate” students against authoritarian processes, allowing them to exercise a broadly based democracy through their participation.

REPOD: Currently, you manage a blog on educational assessment. How do you evaluate this medium of information/training, and what impact does it have on the discourse in the field?

Luiz Carlos de Freitas: I believe that after 12 years in operation, the Blog has fulfilled its role in raising readers’ awareness of the issues surrounding these corporate policies transferred into the education sector. It has brought forth studies and scientific literature indicating the direction these policies will lead our schools. So far, it has received over 3 million visits. I hope it has contributed positively to the discourse.

REPOD: Considering the concept of education for human emancipation and acknowledging that the transformation in the quality of education emanates from schools and their participants, what message should be conveyed to education professionals to reinvigorate the struggle?

Luiz Carlos de Freitas: This is a challenging question, especially in light of the political context I described earlier. Although there is a glimmer of hope at the end of the tunnel, as I emphasized, the journey through the dark tunnel to reach the light is neither comfortable nor guaranteed. It depends on our actions to get there, which significantly heightens our responsibility.

First and foremost, this is not a struggle that can be resolved individually, even though there is much to be done within schools as professionals. There may be temporary relief measures to ease short-term economic pressures, but the challenges cannot be contained if we consider longer timeframes. They will likely be a permanent feature of this century. Therefore, the first imperative is to act collectively and work towards raising awareness of the severity of the moment we are in. As much as possible, we must strive for an education system that prepares youth for this reality while attempting to construct an alternative form and content for education - whether through broader policy frameworks or as everyday resistance.

The closest collective instance to the school - beyond the official bodies related to management - are the unions. It is not without reason that the system seeks to dismantle the unions, as they unite teachers and universalize the struggle, in addition to collectively defending educators.

I reiterate the necessity for changes in schools that promote, whether within the school community or in a classroom, the creation of settings where students can experience early on the possibility of participation - not only in evaluation but in decisions that are not distinctly technical - and engage in local grassroots democracy with a tangible opportunity to impact the daily life of the classroom and the school.

In this regard, a book by educator Roseli Salette Caldart has just been released by the publisher Expressão Popular, titled *On the educational tasks of the school and current issues*, which compiles

what she considers urgent tasks for today's schools. It presents a strategic vision that can be adapted to each institution and developed according to its capacities, providing a framework for differentiated practices.

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