

Avaliações externas como tática da governamentalidade: o caso da Prova Brasil¹

External assessments as a tactic of governmentality: the Prova Brasil case

Evaluaciones externas como táctica de gubernamentalidad: el caso de la Prueba Brasil

Karla de Oliveira Santos²
Universidade Estadual de Alagoas

Resumo: O objetivo desse estudo é compreender os impactos produzidos pela Prova Brasil em uma escola pública do município de São Miguel dos Campos, no estado de Alagoas, com o maior IDEB municipal, observando as táticas da governamentalidade que são mobilizadas para a cooptação dos sujeitos em busca por bom desempenho e resultados satisfatórios. A metodologia adotada segue a abordagem qualitativa, com foco no estudo de caso e pesquisa bibliográfica, utilizando as técnicas de observação e entrevista semiestruturada com um membro da gestão escolar e uma professora de reforço dos 5º anos A e B, turmas participantes da avaliação oficial. Contudo, concluímos que a Prova Brasil é uma tática da governamentalidade neoliberal que produz saberes e discursos que assujeitaram a comunidade educativa para o alcance de indicadores educacionais e performances exitosas, que tem se apresentado como qualidade da educação, baseada em estatísticas de desempenhos, competitividade e ranqueamentos.

Palavras-chave: Governamentalidade; Avaliações Externas; Prova Brasil; Qualidade da Educação.

Abstract: The aim of this study is to understand the impacts of Prova Brasil in a public school in the municipality of São Miguel dos Campos, in the state of Alagoas, which has the highest Index of Development of Basic Education (IDEB) among the municipalities, observing the tactics of governmentality that are mobilized for the co-optation of subjects around the search for good performance and satisfactory results. The methodology we use is a qualitative approach, with bibliographical research and a case study, using the techniques of observation and semi-structured interviews with a member of the school management and a tutoring teacher from 5th grades, A and B, classes that are participating in the official assessment. However, we concluded that the Prova Brasil is a tactic of neoliberal governmentality based on the production of knowledge and discourses that subject the educational community to the achievement of educational indicators and successful performances, which have been presented as quality of education, based on performance statistics, competitiveness and rankings.

Keywords: Governmentality; External Assessments; Prova Brasil; Quality of Education.

Resumen: El objetivo de este estudio es comprender los impactos producidos por Prueba Brasil en una escuela pública del municipio de São Miguel dos Campos, en el estado de Alagoas, con el mayor IDEB municipal, observando las tácticas de la gubernamentalidad que se movilizan para la cooptación de sujetos en busca de buen desempeño y resultados satisfactorios. La metodología adoptada sigue un enfoque cualitativo, centrándose en estudios de caso e investigación bibliográfica, utilizando técnicas de observación y entrevistas

¹ Stanley da Cruz Simões. E-mail: stanleydacruz7@hotmail.com.

² PhD in Education (PPGE/UFAL). Assistant Teacher in State University of Alagoas (UNEAL), Campus IV, São Miguel dos Campos, Alagoas (AL), Brazil. E-mail: karla.oliveira@uneal.edu.br; Lattes: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/7995265157981192>; ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4954-8184>.

semiestructuradas con un miembro de la gestión escolar y una profesora de refuerzo de 5º años A y B, clases participantes en la evaluación oficial. Sin embargo, concluimos que la prueba Brasil es una táctica de gubernamentalidad neoliberal, que produce conocimientos y discursos que han sometido a la comunidad educativa al logro de indicadores educativos y desempeños exitosos, lo que se ha presentado como calidad de la educación, con base en estadísticas de desempeño, competitividad y rankings.

Palabras clave: Gubernamentalidad; Evaluaciones externas; Prueba Brasil; Calidad de educación.

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Introduction

External evaluations have been characterized as a parameter of quality in Brazilian education, especially Prova Brasil. This has been configured as an indicator of effectiveness, efficiency, performativity, with the imposition of educational indicators of a competitive and meritocratic logic, which has produced discourses, knowledge and control tactics for the government of students, teachers and schools.

The Prova Brasil was created in 1995, as part of the educational reforms during the Fernando Henrique Cardoso government, and became part of the National System for the Evaluation of Basic Education (SAEB). According to information on the website of the Anísio Teixeira National Institute for Educational Studies and Research (INEP), the Prova Brasil is a census test that evaluates students in the final years of each stage of elementary school (5th and 9th grades) and in the 3rd year of secondary school, focusing on proficiency scales in Portuguese Language and Mathematics, every 2 years. It is universal, homogeneous and standardized, with the aim of helping government officials make decisions and direct technical and financial resources, set targets and implement pedagogical and administrative actions to improve the quality of teaching. In 2019, its name was changed to Prova Saeb.

Therefore, we started with the following problem: What are the tactics of governmentality mobilized and produced by Prova Brasil, in a municipal public school in the city of São Miguel dos Campos/AL, with the highest municipal Basic Education Development Index (IDEB)?

Based on the Foucauldian theoretical framework, we aimed to understand the impacts produced by the Prova Brasil in a public school in the municipality of São Miguel dos Campos, in the state of Alagoas, observing the tactics of governmentality that are

mobilized to co-opt subjects in the search for good performance and satisfactory results in the Prova Brasil. The school that was the focus of this research had the highest municipal IDEB in 2017, and even received an award from the Alagoas government for achieving positive indicators.

The methodology adopted in this work is qualitative, through a case study in a municipal public school, using bibliographic research, observation and semi-structured interviews with a member of the School Management and with the tutoring teacher of the 5th grade classes A and B, who are directly responsible for answering the Prova Brasil, since this official assessment evaluates the competencies and skills in Portuguese Language and Mathematics of students in the 5th and 9th grades of elementary school.

The text is organized into three sections which are linked to the introduction and conclusions. In the first section, entitled "Governmentality and its relationship with the neoliberal state", we present the conceptual basis of governmentality, based on Michel Foucault and its relationship with neoliberalism. The second section, "External assessment policies in Brazil", presents the large-scale assessment policies that have been implemented in Brazil, characterizing them and presenting the social, political and educational scenario. And in the last section, "The case of the Prova Brasil in a public school in São Miguel dos Campos/AL", we present the data and analysis of the research object, showing the tactics and discourses mobilized to achieve targets and the emphasis on successful performativities so that the school remained in 1st place in the municipal IDEB.

Governmentality and its relationship with the neoliberal state

The concept of governmentality first appeared in Michel Foucault's studies, in his course at the Collège de France, between 1977 and 1978, which began on February 1, 1978 and was soon published in his work entitled: *Security, Territory, Population* (1978).

Foucault (2008, p.143) gives the following explanations for the concept:

- 1) the set of institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, calculations and tactics that make it possible to exercise this very specific and complex form of power, which targets the population, and whose main form of knowledge is political economy and the essential technical instruments, security devices.
- 2) the tendency that throughout the West has incessantly led, for a long time, to the pre-eminence of this type of power, which can be called government, over all others – sovereignty, discipline, etc. – and led to the development of a series of specific apparatuses of government and a body of knowledge.

3) the result of the process by which the state of justice of the Middle Ages, which became the administrative state in the 15th and 16th centuries, was gradually governmentalized.

In other words, governmentality is the “art of governing” the population and no longer the individual. To do this, the state uses a set of procedures, mechanisms, tactics, knowledge, techniques and instruments designed to direct the conduct of men, based on a political rationality. “Governmentality is a technique of social control that is characterized by the attempt to manage society” (Branco, 2016, p.113). As Prado Filho (2006, p.82) points out, “contemporary governmentality therefore presupposes that the state politically takes care of everything and everyone, which implies macro and micro political strategies”.

Gallo (2015,p.337) adds that governmentality is:

[...] a set of actions, articulated in a machinery of power, which consists of exercising control over individuals, through work on the populations in which these individuals are inserted, so that they believe themselves to be free, participatory citizens and central players in the democratic game.

Thus, governmentality operates with techniques and methods that guarantee the conduct of men and the guidelines for the state's governing action over the population, with the aim of assembling artifacts for the maintenance of the state itself. “The governmentalized state aims at the population and not the territory, using economic knowledge that controls society through security devices” (Castro, 2009, p.193). In this sense, the population ends up becoming the aim and the instrument of government, so that it can govern rationally.

According to Foucault (2013), governmentality has the population as its main target and security devices as its essential mechanisms. Governing consists of conducting behavior and souls. To govern is to govern things. It is a way of acting on one or several acting subjects. It is a conduct that aims to act on other conducts; that aims to incite, induce, divert, facilitate or hinder the behavior of subjects. Governing also implies the relationship that can be established with oneself, in the subject's action on oneself.

It is the start of completely new tactics, in which the population emerges as an end, but also as an instrument for government. Temple (2013) adds that the art of governing is related to a set of strategies, analyses, calculations and statistics used by the state to conduct the population.

According to Marshall (2011), we have a political rationality linked to a political technology, which involves interventions in the lives of individuals, through observation, surveillance, examinations, classification and normalization. And here we highlight the role that the exam plays in producing "normalized" individuals, by exposing the subject to their own identity and true self, with the school being the privileged locus for this.

In neoliberalism, the art of governing consists of maintaining the government's autonomy in the face of the impossibility of managing all economic processes. To this end, the reason for the state creates a new space for action, which is civil society. There is also a need for flexibility in the way individuals are governed, which must be regulated, because the important thing for the state is the exercise of power. Avelino (2016, p.177) states that "neoliberalism has reinforced a more perfect and lasting type of subjection in Western political history".

Individuals are no longer exchange partners, but economic, governable partners. The question of how to govern focuses on the interests of economic man, following the neoliberal logic of producer and consumer. According to Dardot and Laval (2016), neoliberal rationality produces the subject it needs, ordering the means to govern them so that the subject really conduct themselves as an entity in competition and, therefore, must maximize their results, exposing themselves to risks and taking full responsibility for any failures, implementing techniques aimed at producing more effective forms of subjection and obedience.

According to Veiga-Neto (2013, p.39):

[...] neoliberal governmentality will intervene to maximize competition, to produce freedom so that everyone can be in the economic game. In this way, neoliberalism constantly produces and consumes freedom. This means that freedom itself becomes yet another object of consumption.

However, the state is minimal in terms of its intervention in the economic and financial market, but it is omnipresent and omnipotent as an investor in policies – especially educational ones. Subjects need to be educated within certain precepts, which emphasize the entrepreneurial nature of themselves, requiring dedication and training in order to undertake and enter the economic game. According to Peters (2011, p.213):

Although the neoliberal policies of privatizing state resources and commercializing the public sphere may have led to a minimal state, or at least a significant reduction in it, the state has retained its institutional power through a new form of individualization, in which human beings become subjects of the market, under the sign of Homo economicus. This

is the basis for understanding the government of individuals in education as a technique or form of power that is promoted through the adoption of market forms.

Avelino (2016) points out that in neoliberalism it is not the individual who thinks about their conduct, and with this reflexive gesture strengthens themselves as a subject of will; on the contrary, they are thought about, objectified by the truths of the economy that will structure their freedom, that is, their field of action, to constitute them as an economic subject.

Thus, the school becomes a locus for the production, subjection and objectification of docile, disciplined, competitive, productive subjects who are self-responsible for their success or failure, in other words, self-entrepreneurs, co-opted by a new political domination that guarantees neoliberal governmentality, appropriating market terminology such as flexibility, effectiveness and efficiency, following the dictates of a business agenda. To this end, external assessments, performance statistics and rankings play a key role in governing students.

External assessment policies in Brazil

The educational reforms of the late 20th century and early 21st century put external assessments at the center of validating educational quality, with a competitive and meritocratic logic. To this end, large-scale assessment systems were created in a global movement, under the influence of the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the neoliberal policies implemented in Brazil from the 1990s onwards. This phenomenon has also occurred in other Latin American countries, such as: Honduras (1990); Colombia (1991); Dominican Republic (1992); Argentina and El Salvador (1993); Mexico (1994); Costa Rica, Paraguay and Venezuela (1995) and Bolivia (1996).

According to Oliveira (2020), international organizations, such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), set standards for the quality of education, linked to ways of standardizing and classifying students, schools and educational systems; imposing criteria of effectiveness and efficiency in education for students all over the world, guiding changes in the organization of educational systems based on a meritocratic logic, classifying subjects and institutions.

In Brazil, the National System for the Evaluation of Basic Education (SAEB) was created by INEP in 1995, with the Prova Brasil standing out in this assessment system, which has been presented as an effective technology of power, capable of subjecting,

classifying and punishing their targets. Initially it focused on establishing proficiency scales in Portuguese Language and Mathematics, carrying out tests on a sample of public and private schools, with a diagnostic character, but with no initial objective of promoting performances and rankings.

In 2007, the IDEB was created as part of the Education Development Plan (PDE) and as a qualifying parameter for Brazilian education. This indicator analyzes the school flow and the average performance in the Prova Brasil, which are seen as indicators of the quality of education in government discourse. It is calculated on the basis of student performance in the Prova Brasil/Prova SAEB and pass rates.

External evaluations have generated a rationalization focused only on quantifiable results, based on performance that disregards the intra- and extra-school conditioning factors that directly influence student learning.

According to Fontanive (2013, p.3):

Large-scale assessments are quite different from the assessment practices carried out by teachers within a classroom, because not only do they cover a large number of students from different grades or school years, but they also need to present a large number of questions to ensure curricular validity, i.e. that the assessment covers the main content taught. These systems also rely on new theories and practices of educational measurement that combine data collection methods and different ways of judging their quality, on the one hand, and rely on the use of complex mathematical and statistical models, on the other. These specificities have brought to the field of Educational Assessment the great challenge of finding effective ways of disseminating the results found, since the technologies used are not common sense to teachers, other members of the school community and society in general.

Thus, there are tactics to control the conduct of teachers and students, based on national assessment policies. As Arroyo (2011, p. 49) states, "the national assessment policy is part of a conservative resacralization of content, especially that which can be reduced to measurable competences and skills, and which condition the nation's progress". According to the same author, neoliberal policies, with their emphasis on training and mastering competencies, as well as on evaluations and classifications of students and teachers according to results, are once again expatriating education from its territories, schools, curricula and teaching (Arroyo, 2011).

According to Dardot and Laval (2016), assessment has become the primary means of guiding behavior by encouraging individual "good performance". It can be defined as a power relationship exercised by hierarchical superiors in charge of the expertise of the results, a

relationship whose effect is an accounting subjectivation of the evaluated, which leads their conduct to recognize the competence of the evaluator and the validity of the tools employed.

The performance of students in large-scale assessments, as an expression of quality, has gradually been subsidizing various network management initiatives, which are presented in the name of promoting this quality. Under the argument of transparency, government programs and plans have included mechanisms aimed at giving broad visibility to the results of the evaluations and, in some cases, making professionals or schools responsible for these results, translated into the implementation of symbolic or monetary incentives, with a view to inducing changes. The allocation of differentiated resources to schools, as a means of rewarding good results, reveals the belief that competition within education networks leads to better results. The same assumption is present in initiatives offering monetary incentives to school professionals. The search for better results can lead schools [or perhaps is already leading them] to invest more intensely in the students judged to have the greatest potential for obtaining better scores in external tests, even if this results in inequalities (Sousa, 2014, p.412).

Therefore, the quality of education cannot be limited exclusively to the quantitative aspect of acquiring skills and abilities, disregarding the lives of the subjects, holding schools, teachers, students and families responsible for these results. According to Laval (2019), there is an ideology of evaluation with an accounting rationality that, with great strength of conviction, equates every human action with a technical action measurable by quantitative indicators, which is not concerned with a social quality of education, but rather with a production of data that hides the reality of the educational act in its complexity and tends to measure only a fiction.

Based on the above, we need to understand the impacts that external assessments have had on the social quality of education, reduced to the imposition of educational indicators and the discourses of accountability that are mobilized, with financial compensation and awards to objectify, control and punish schools.

The case of the Prova Brasil in a public school in São Miguel dos Campos/AL

The study is a selection of the data collected during my PhD and part of the observations made in a municipal public school in São Miguel dos Campos, in the state of Alagoas, located in the urban area of the city, which works with the initial years of elementary school and achieved the highest IDEB score of the area.

Data collection was approved by the Research Ethics Committee (CEP) of the Federal University of Alagoas and the participants signed a Free and Informed Consent

Form (TCLE). We chose to use the nomenclature Prova Brasil because it was the terminology adopted at the time of the research, however, with the changes of government in the country, it was renamed Prova Saeb in 2019 by the Bolsonaro government. This demonstrates the discontinuity of public policies, changing only the nomenclature but remaining with the same essence.

The article presented here uses a qualitative methodology, based on a case study in a municipal public school, with bibliographical research based on Foucault, through observations and semi-structured interviews carried out with a member of School Management, in which we chose to maintain the anonymity of the specific function performed by the participant, and with the teacher responsible for school tutoring classes. Both participants are female and have more than 20 years' experience in basic education.

Upon entering the research locus, we observed the tactics and discourses mobilized by the school's management so that the results of the educational indicators were increasingly improved, thus demonstrating significant performativity beyond the standards set by INEP. Corroborating this discussion, Ball (2010) states that the performativity demanded by its adepts is a means of social control, not allowing individuals the possibility of reflection and criticism.

The school was involved and taking responsibility for itself in order to remain in first place, according to the School Management report:

In particular, I gave to this cause my body and soul (pause), because the school's IDEB score was high and our goal is to not let it go down, to want more and more. And in order to do that, I had to work hard, I had to monitor these students a lot, because we don't just have to think about the IDEB, we also have to think about the student's learning, which is our focus, which is the main thing, and for that it was a lot of work, a lot of work. And (pause) at each end of the unit we were there with the class council, those students who were outside the target range of the results, we were calling the parents, holding meetings with the students, showing reflection videos, and that's how we worked during the school year.

During the school year, the school developed various strategies with the 5th grade A and B classes, co-opting the classroom teachers, the teacher responsible for tutoring, the students and their families. There was a daily ritual, carried out by the school management, based on speeches that were made in the schoolyard in front of everyone, before the students entered the classroom, using motivational phrases, but at the same time placing responsibility on the subjects, attributing to them the responsibility of keeping the school with the highest IDEB score in São Miguel dos Campos/AL. Furthermore, after entering the classroom, the management reinforced the discourse, going once a

week to talk about the importance of the Prova Brasil and the IDEB score. A WhatsApp group was set up with families, where informative videos about the Prova Brasil and IDEB were shared, as well as parent meetings, the production of handouts for students who took part in tutoring, among other actions. There was also a proliferation of tests and performance measurement among its actions, as explained by the School Management, when reporting on the priority actions developed by the school to achieve the IDEB goals:

Mock exams, several mock exams, weekly, fortnightly, we did mock exams with the descriptors. Marathons, in each unit we were developing our marathons, in addition to the marathons determined by SEMED, the school also had its marathons, the school even developed several marathons and several mock exams.

According to the speech presented, we can see the centrality of tests in the actions developed by the school to achieve positive educational indicators. That comes from the neoliberal and managerialist policies that have been taking shape in the country in the last decades of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century, where there is a cult of tests, encouragement to “good” performance, in preparation/training for official evaluation.

For the authors Peters, Marshall and Fitzsimons (2004), the new managerialism functions as an emerging and increasingly rationalized and complex governance technology, which operates on several levels: the individual (the self-managed student and teacher), the classroom (classroom management techniques), the academic program (with the explicit promotion of self-management objectives) and the school or educational institution (self-managed institutions).

In the specific case of our investigation, the Prova Brasil operates as a control mechanism, in which the subjects of Portuguese Language and Mathematics are prioritized, as they are the subjects assessed in the tests. What was also noted in our research was the narrowing of the curriculum, with the other areas of knowledge being absent during the period leading up to the application of the Prova Brasil. The contents of other areas, such as History, Geography, Science, Philosophy, among others, were only worked on in the school in the last month of the school year in a reductionist way. An important observation about the Prova Brasil, as reported by the tutoring teacher, is that the 5th grade classroom teachers overloaded the students with content for the external assessment, leaving aside other content that would also be important for their education. She even added that there had been some progress, but she couldn't guarantee that the students who were being tutored were able to take the Prova Brasil: “I thought they had improved, but I could not say that they had the skills to take the test. The proof is that I was in charge of the 10 worst of the worst (referring to the students), right!”.

The inducing power of external assessments objectifies students so that they present the best cognitive performance or even excludes students with disabilities and learning difficulties from the enrollment process in order to avoid possible damaging results that the school may present. Freitas (2018) points out that the standardization of tests provides the basis for the moral judgment of students considered “adequate” or “inadequate”. The proposal is to eliminate the “rotten tomatoes” before they spoil the good ones and lower their overall averages, protecting schools and contributing to the marketing of an institution without problematic students. As is the case with the school under investigation, which has a positive image in the educational community and is a reference for the others, this explains the movement that they use their “body and soul” by the institution, as a form of accountability for the work carried out.

The planning of the 5th grade teachers also focused only on Portuguese and Mathematics, with the exhaustive study of the descriptors, passed on in the continuing training offered weekly by SEMED, through activity books prepared by the technical trainers. In other words, there was an instrumentalization of knowledge and control over the teachers' practices, as well as over the school's actions. However, there was resistance¹:

Some (referring to the projects) came from SEMED and others the school developed itself. For example, from 1st to 5th grade, we didn't try to work on SEMED projects, we got the teachers together and tried to focus on learning, on literacy, we tried to develop a reading project, we developed a project with literary genres, in which I could be able to see there are almost no students who can't read here at school, because in the first year we worked with nursery rhymes, the second year worked with parlendas (another type of nursery rhymes), the third year with comic books, the fourth year with newspapers and the fifth year with fables. It was a very fruitful job, and I can see that we're finishing the year with the feeling that we've done our duty, that we've planted a reading seed in the school (School Management).

However, when it came to resistance on the part of the 5th grade A and B teachers, we identified its absence and observed in the locus of the research a total commitment to obtaining positive performances, competitiveness between the classes, based on a meritocratic discourse, which makes invisible any conduct other than that of subjection and objectification:

No. There wasn't any resistance, I could see a lot of dedication, the education department asked me to bring their final reports to be handed in next week and they had a lot of satisfaction when we handed in the reports of everything that had been done. Yeah, we were kind of sorry, because in our action plan we wanted to do some leafleting, but for us to go out in the community doing leafleting it would have to be really nice leaflets. We got as far as doing it, but we realized that it wasn't that nice, ready for the community, right?

Because everything is criticized and we did the leafleting inside the school and they (the students) wanted to go out and hand them out to the people, stop the people, hand them out in the streets, stop the cars, but we didn't manage to make those really nice leaflets like we wanted and I noticed that they (the teachers) were sad, because they wanted to. The teachers' motivation was contagious, we have it here (pause), I could see that there was an attunement with them, when I got here: 'They (the students) studied descriptor 15, but I saw that they (the students) didn't master it, today I've come with the same tasks, with the same descriptors, to see if we can achieve our goal'. So I could see a symphony, a desire to do things, in a way that I thought that was very beautiful (School Management).

When it came to possible student resistance, we were also unable to identify it. We observed they were making efforts, demonstrating the technologies of subjection to which the students were subjected based on discourses of truth, not only institutionally dictated, but also incorporated by the students themselves, as pointed out in the speech below:

No. None of them, all of them engaged, even to this day they ask about the results, right? They were so involved that to this day they ask about the IDEB result: When will it come out? – Not until next year. Because they were so committed that they wanted a satisfactory result (School Management).

There was the production of subjection mechanisms, which controlled the students' bodies and minds in order to achieve the goals. In addition to the tactics reported in this paper, the school also had control over the students' private lives that went beyond the school walls, as the teachers and school management developed a framework, delimiting the times and actions that the students would carry out from Monday to Friday at home, such as; time to study for Portuguese and Mathematics, to play, to pick up the cell phone and even to sleep.

According to Garcia (2010), the current reforms in Brazilian education direct and guide school and teacher work, establishing a series of regulations, mobilizing discourses and technologies (such as the curriculum, didactics, school organization and management modalities, etc.), making the soul and human capacities objects of dispute and government.

The day before the Prova Brasil, the city's mayor at the time recorded a video with a message of encouragement, but above all of unilateral accountability and pressure for the 5th grade A and B students who would be taking the assessment, which demonstrates their subjection to the government's interests in achieving the established metrics and the power of the discourses produced for satisfactory performance, as shown in the following statement by the School Management: "They got nervous, because there

were students who said: I can't wait to pass this test, can you believe I haven't slept, my mind is just IDEB, IDEB, IDEB. Really? Yes, I dreamt all night about this test”.

Students' conduct is driven by a rationality that produces discourses, knowledge and techniques that lead subjects to govern themselves and other people. According to Dardot and Laval (2016), this involves the training of bodies and the management of minds, creating the neoliberal man. In other words, a subject who is competitive, efficient, useful, docile to work and willing to consume.

In this context of pressure, the school was concerned about those students who had some weaknesses in the subjects assessed, even though the School Management reported that there were a minimum number of students who couldn't read. The important thing was to achieve maximum performance. In the meantime, after-school tutoring was set up for students in the 5th grade, made up of classes of 10 (ten) students, selected on the basis of a diagnosis carried out by the tutoring teacher, identifying the learning difficulties that would have an impact on the results of the Prova Brasil. The School Management interviewee emphasized the progress that tutoring had made and the coordination between the planning of the teachers in charge of the assessed classes and the tutoring teacher:

The planning was articulated, including now in the pre-class council I held last week with the girls from 1st to 5th (referring to the teachers), how the tutoring worked, because it was a joint work, the teachers with the tutoring teacher, to say how the student was progressing on, what they needed to improve, we observed students who, yeah (pause) were reading sentences, now they're reading texts and the student's satisfaction too: 'Auntie, are you going to pick me up now? Because he uses that term for that moment when the teacher gives assistance and I felt that way, their happiness at having learned to read and the reinforcement gave a very positive result (School Management).

However, the tutoring teacher contradicts the School Management's statement when she states that:

My work wasn't linked to the teacher, it was what I saw the student needed. I put together a workbook with what they needed, which included (pause) reading with text interpretation, math tables and graphs, problem situations to be worked on, there was a section with the multiplication table, but in a different way, with a different strategy to be worked on, and there was only text production, since the Prova Brasil came up, I focused more on reading and text interpretation, even because he only had one day with me during tutoring.

Thus, there is a government over the school that mobilizes governing strategies over subjects in search of efficient teaching and a neoliberal rationality based on performance measurement calculations, rankings and competitiveness. According to Dardot and Laval (2016), measurement and incentive practices aimed at guiding behavior are an integral part of the way in which people are governed in market societies, and assessments are used to do this.

The day the Prova Brasil was the culmination of the ritual of governing subjects. The 5th grade A and B students entered the school under a red carpet and with gospel music playing in the background, entitled “conquering the impossible”, and were photographed by their families who were thrilled with the moment. After the triumphal entry, some motivational words were said by the school management and a snack was offered. Shortly afterwards, the official assessment took place.

The school management criticizes the external assessment that didn't let the students feel free to answer the questions; on the contrary, it controlled the time that each question had to be answered, reinforcing at every moment the number of minutes that remained before the answers to each question had to be completed, causing nervousness and a demand to meet the deadline.

The way in which external assessments and their results have been conducted in Brazil implies the standardization of knowledge and students, who are seen as trainable, useful and productive subjects, promoting exclusions and deepening inequalities. During the application of the Prova Brasil at the school under investigation, students with mental disabilities were excluded because, according to the school management, they would not be able to take part in the assessment due to their disability and could “disrupt” the moment, since they only sang. This is an important element for discussion, when we think about the type of normalized and disciplined subject that serves the interests of capital and large-scale assessment policies that propagate an educational quality based on quantifiable aspects, with metrics and performances, moving away from a social quality that trains for the exercise of citizenship, with social and cognitive justice and promotes an emancipatory and inclusive education.

According to Sarmiento (2001, p.24):

[...] neoliberal impulses propose to change the school by introducing a competitive market logic, opening up the public institutional space to private forms of management and a dynamic of competition for the “best” results, the “best” students and the “best” schools. In one case or another, all those who differ from the dominant standards are excluded, thus generating new and more flagrant school and social inequalities.

From the above, we can state that the quality of teaching is being reduced to the performance of students in external assessments, controlling the results obtained by each school in this country, selecting the best ones and ranking them, as well as increasing disciplinary control over students. The school investigated was committed to remaining in 1st place in the municipal IDEB, which is seen as synonymous with quality. However, it is important to highlight the tutoring teacher's position on the Prova Brasil

I think the Prova Brasil, for me, I think it doesn't show the quality of teaching at all, not at all, it doesn't. It doesn't examine text production, it doesn't examine the student's reading, you know? It is composed of multiple choice questions, the student can take a guess and get it right.

The movement that has emerged and co-opted the school community stems from an established culture of spectacularizing results, since according to information collected from the educational institution under investigation, in 2017, the school received the Ib Gatto Falcão Award, worth R\$10,000.00 (ten thousand reais) at the time, due to the IDEB result presented in 2015. The school made a banner showing its results to society, as an account of the work it had done. The award was an initiative of the Alagoas government, aimed at municipal public schools that had satisfactory IDEB results, called the Ib Gatto Falcão Municipal Education Quality Award. We would point out that it was replaced by another award created in 2019, now called the School 10 Award, with other guidelines and linked to a government policy, the School 10 Program.

Thus, despite all the efforts made, the school that was the focus of our research exceeded the goal projected by INEP for 2019, which was 5.4, and achieved 5.7, but lost its first place at municipal level, coming second among the schools that serve the early years. The school with the best performance had a goal of 4.7 and achieved 6, significantly raising its target and putting it ahead of the school under investigation.

For 2021, the goal was 5.7 and the school, even though it had already achieved this score in 2019, fell to 5.6, now occupying 4th place in the municipal IDEB ranking. This can be explained by the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has had a drastic impact on Brazilian education, or by the change in school management, because of the municipal government changed in the last election, since we still have the presence of political appointments to management positions and authoritarian practices.

After the results of the Prova Brasil were published, the students who took part in the exam did not receive any prizes, despite their efforts and concern about the possible decline in the municipal IDEB score. The Department of Education held a meeting with the school

management and all the teachers to present the results and one of the sensitive points presented by the technical team was the school flow, especially in relation to the percentage of failures, even though the school had less than 3% of failing students in 2019.

The fetishization of the results presented in the form of data appears as the quality of the school and as a measure of the population's cultural level (Laval, 2019), which for us, these results do not represent a social quality, which in fact promotes cognitive justice and an emancipatory, citizen and inclusive education, but on the contrary, they cover up the specificities of everyday school life and operate a machinery of fascination for assessments and successful performances, exercising control over the school community, with large-scale measurement techniques and standardizations.

Conclusions

We conclude this article by stating that public education policies incorporate large-scale assessments as a way of measuring and proving the effectiveness of education quality. Regarding primary education, especially in the early years, the Prova Brasil and its articulation with the IDEB has been a validating factor for educational quality. We have seen the unilateral accountability of the educational community in the search for better performance in external assessments, with an exacerbated demand for satisfactory student performance in the tests, including the creation of incentives for improved learning, rankings, awards, stimulating competitiveness, pressure from families and public managers to raise educational indicators with increasingly high metrics, with PISA as a reference for the quality of global education.

In view of the observations and analysis of the data produced in a municipal public school that serves the initial years of elementary school in São Miguel dos Campos/AL, we affirm that the Prova Brasil is characterized as a tactic of governmentality by producing discourses that are incorporated by the school community with effects of truth, holding students responsible for achieving the indicators and keeping the school investigated in 1st place in the municipal IDEB as an institutional success; the instrumentalization of knowledge, based on handouts, the narrowing of the curriculum and the practices of IDEB mock exams and marathons; the government of students' private lives and the involvement of families, with the creation of a daily agenda for students to follow at home and a WhatsApp group with families. In other words, there is the production of governable, productive and performative subjects. However, it's also important to highlight the processes of exclusion of “inadequate” students, such as children with mental disabilities and the concern for students in 5th grades A and B who were in tutoring and were considered “the worst”.

We emphasize that the tactics undertaken and the investment in the students' bodies and minds were not enough for the school to remain in 1st place in the municipal IDEB for 2019, despite having improved its results. Therefore, an education that is perhaps democratic, emancipatory and inclusive, with social quality, will only become effective with other and more powerful resistances, created on the school floor to this neoliberal rationality that treats education as an economic input at the service of capital, far from the aspirations of the working class and the heterogeneity of Alagoas' public schools, especially those located in the countryside of Alagoas, in a state marked by deep educational and social inequalities.

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