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## DEMOCRATIC SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND THE SOCIAL QUALITY OF EDUCATION

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**Abstract.** This article examines the tensions between managerialist and democratic perspectives in contemporary Brazilian education policies, highlighting contradictions between discourse and practice. Although guiding documents such as the LDB and PNE convey emancipatory and inclusive ideals for education, government programs have emphasized accountability, quantitative results and market logics. At the same time, austerity measures such as EC 95 strangle in practice any possibility of implementing the progressive principles laid down in the legislation. This tension reveals broader disputes in the political arena, with sectors committed to the commercialization of education historically confronting the struggles for a public, free and quality school for all. There is an urgent need to reinvent the role of the state beyond regulation, reclaiming its leading role as provider and maintainer of the material conditions for the realization of the right to education. This reinvention involves collective mobilization to build educational processes that are contextualized, emancipatory and opposed to curricular lightening. It requires democratically run schools, with popular participation in pedagogical decisions and the use of resources. This demands an educational policy that is faithful to the interests of the majority, overcoming the privatist and managerialist agenda that undermines its democratizing potential. The universalization of quality standards as a right demands this reinvented public school, ethically committed to our people.

**Keywords:** State, neoliberalism, quality, education, school management.

## **GESTÃO ESCOLAR DEMOCRÁTICA E QUALIDADE SOCIAL DA EDUCAÇÃO**

**Resumen.** O presente artigo examina as tensões entre perspectivas gerencialistas e democráticas nas políticas educacionais brasileiras contemporâneas, evidenciando contradições entre discursos e práticas. Embora documentos orientadores como LDB e PNE veiculem ideais emancipatórios e inclusivos para a educação, programas governamentais têm enfatizado accountability, resultados quantitativos e lógicas de mercado. Concomitantemente, medidas de austeridade como a EC 95 estrangulam na prática qualquer possibilidade de efetivação dos princípios progressistas previstos na legislação. Esse tensionamento revela disputas mais amplas na arena política, com setores comprometidos com a mercantilização do ensino confrontando historicamente as lutas por uma escola pública, gratuita e de qualidade para todos. Urge reinventar o papel do Estado para além da regulação, resgatando seu protagonismo como provedor e mantenedor de condições materiais à efetivação do direito à educação. Tal reinvenção passa pela mobilização coletiva pela construção de processos educativos contextualizados, emancipadores e contrários ao aligeiramento curricular. Requer escolas geridas democraticamente, com participação popular nas decisões pedagógicas e uso dos recursos. Reivindica-se assim uma política educacional fiel aos interesses das maiorias, superando a agenda privatista e gerencialista que solapa seus potenciais democratizantes. A universalização do padrão de qualidade como direito demanda essa escola pública reinventada e comprometida eticamente com nossa gente.

**Palabras clave:** Estado, neoliberalismo, qualidade, educação, gestão escolar.

### **Introduction**

The relationship between the state, educational policies and the quality of education has been exhaustively debated by various educational thinkers and scholars in contemporary times, gaining even more centrality in recent years (Azevedo, 2017; Silva, 2020; Santos, 2021; Vieira, 2022). According to Azevedo (2017), the state plays a crucial role in the realization of the human and social right to education, and is responsible for universalizing educational access through the financing and public provision of education systems. In addition to regulating parameters and guidelines for education policy, the state is also responsible for implementing this policy in order to guarantee educational opportunities for all, especially for historically excluded groups, seeking equity and social justice (Silva, 2020).

As analyzed by Santos (2021), the realization of the right to education and the provision of quality education are intrinsically related to the capacity of states to formulate and implement consistent and well-funded public education policies. In this sense, it is the primary role of governments to secure the budgetary resources necessary to fund plans, programs and actions that promote tangible improvements in the quality of learning and leverage equity in the field of education.

However, according to Vieira (2022), there are historical and structural challenges that hinder the universalization of free, inclusive and transformative public education in Brazil. Educational and social inequalities are still profound, with significant impacts on the learning outcomes of the majority of Brazilian students. This is because state investment in education is less than ideal for a country with the continental dimensions and socio-economic contrasts of Brazil. Therefore, increasing funding for education and formulating consistent policies for valuing and

teacher training are indispensable steps to boost the quality of public education in the long term.

Thus, in this author's view, a social quality education can only be achieved when the state assumes its responsibilities to expand school attendance, eliminate barriers to access and permanence and provide adequate and inclusive material and pedagogical conditions so that all students develop their full potential, from an emancipatory education perspective. Therefore, guaranteeing the right to education involves both the regulatory and funding role of the state, as well as its executive role in implementing universalist education policies aimed at equity and social justice.

However, in contrast to this vision of the state as provider and executor of inclusive education policies, in recent decades we have witnessed the advance of neoliberal reforms that have reconfigured its role in the field of education. As examined by critical thinkers such as Gentili (2020), Peroni (2020), Apple (2017), Ball (2014), Lipman (2011) and Torres (2013), these reforms have reduced the role of the state to the regulation, evaluation and control of education systems, transferring the actual execution of educational processes to private initiative or local management bodies.

According to Apple (2017), these reforms represent a political and economic agenda aimed at shrinking the state and opening up new niches for the accumulation of capital in the field of education. Ball (2014) complements this view by highlighting how principles and practices from the business sector have colonized public education systems, redesigning processes, relationships and subjectivities in school contexts.

In line with this, Lipman (2011) and Torres (2013) analyze how these neoliberal policies have been redesigning public school networks and reconfiguring relations between the state, the market and civil society in recent years. A managerialist logic is promoted, based on economic rationality, accountability and the pursuit of profitability, which undermines the redistributive and equalizing purposes of educational policies, historically linked to ideals of social justice and human rights.

Therefore, given the rise of these reforms, the authors highlight the importance of understanding their concrete impacts on teaching-learning processes, teacher work, the curriculum and school assessment, as well as educational inequalities. In view of these effects, it is necessary to strengthen the political and social struggles in defense of quality public education for all.

Under the managerialist logic, which treats education as a non-exclusive state service, governments have taken on an evaluative character, outlining policies and parameters to be met by non-state or private public education providers (Apple, 2006; Ball, 2014; Dale, 2004; Robertson, 2012; Shoen & Fusarelli, 2008). This trend represents not only a diminishing of the state, but also the emptying of its public and social commitment to the integral development of students and the reduction of the deep educational inequalities that exist, in favor of economic and mercantile interests.

According to Apple (2006), the adoption of managerialist policies in education opens up space for economic groups to profit from the commodification of education, redesigning curricula, assessment processes and teacher training according to their interests. Ball (2014) complements this view, highlighting how educational accountability serves to control and shape teachers' work, undermining their professional autonomy.

For Dale (2004) and Robertson (2012), this managerialist logic promotes competitiveness between schools and education networks, as well as encouraging their management by measurable results, which is not always consistent with meaningful and inclusive training processes. Shoen and Fusarelli (2008) also analyze how these policies weaken the state's commitment to public, secular and quality education for all.

It is therefore necessary to problematize the impacts of these managerialist reforms on education systems and to strengthen the social movements that are fighting for an emancipatory, critical, democratic and socially referenced education. It is the role of civil society to demand and defend a state committed to the public good of education.

In this scenario of transferring state responsibility to other entities in civil society or the market, the criticism of intellectuals such as Gentili, Peroni, McLaren (2005), Siniscalco (2002), Tommasi (2007), Shiroma (2011) and Libâneo (2012) falls precisely on the loss of the ideology of free, democratic and quality education for the emancipation of individuals, in favor of a managerialist logic focused on results and earning profits in educational provision.

According to McLaren (2005), the advance of global capitalism and neoliberal policies is redesigning the purposes of schooling, transforming it into yet another niche for private accumulation to the detriment of its historical role of forming critical subjects. Along the same lines, Siniscalco (2002) and Tommasi (2007) analyze how the commercialization of education undermines the commitment of states to public funding of education, especially in peripheral countries.

Shiroma (2011) and Libâneo (2012) also highlight the risks of uncritically adopting managerialist policies in public education systems, which undermine professional autonomy, the role of educators and school-community links in favor of vertical accountability and quantifiable results. In this way, the process of commercialization and privatization that is currently underway is making a mockery of the state's historical commitment to a publicly funded project of comprehensive and transformative education.

Therefore, it is the fundamental role of social movements and teachers' unions to strengthen the struggles in defense of quality, free, secular and socially referenced public education. What is required is a return to the commitment of national states to financing and materializing the right to education.

From this perspective, the very concept of educational quality takes on different contours in the light of different political-pedagogical projects. On the one hand, as part of the neoliberal reforms, the business paradigm of Total Quality in education is gaining strength, originally addressed by authors such as Ramos (1992) and Bonamino (2002),

Oliveira and Araujo (2005), Sordi and Ludke (2009) and Aguiar (2001) and widely disseminated in recent decades.

From this managerialist perspective, priority is given to measurable results, the efficiency of educational processes and products and the effectiveness of schooling in preparing individuals for the productive market, as analyzed by Oliveira and Araujo (2005). Bonamino (2002) also highlights how this paradigm emphasizes external evaluation processes and the ranking of schools and education networks based on their performance in standardized exams, strengthening a culture of performativity and accountability in education systems.

In contrast, Sordi and Ludke (2009) and Aguiar (2001) emphasize the need for alternative benchmarks of educational quality, committed to integral human formation, emancipation and social inclusion. They therefore advocate a concept of socially referenced quality, which takes into account the singularities of school contexts, the concrete conditions of teaching and learning and the collective projects of the communities served by public schools.

Therefore, at the heart of contemporary debates on educational policies are different notions of quality and the role of the state, which express conflicting interests about the purposes of school education in society. It is up to civil society to actively participate in these disputes in favor of a public, democratic and social quality education system for all.

In contrast, a critical strand, represented by scholars such as Gentili (2020), Demo (2018), Saviani (2011), Frigotto (2010), Shiroma (2007), Paro (2016) and Libâneo (2012), contrasts this approach with a vision of social quality that is linked to democratic ideals of human emancipation.

This perspective relates quality to the effective participation of the community in school management, to the integral formation of the subject for the exercise of full citizenship and to the equalizing function of education in combating the historical educational and social inequalities that still exist in our environment, as analyzed by Saviani (2011) and Shiroma (2007).

In addition, Frigotto (2010) and Libâneo (2012) emphasize the importance of conceiving the quality of education in a multidimensional way, encompassing not only the academic performance of students, but also the material conditions of schools, the training and appreciation of teachers and the political-pedagogical project undertaken by school communities.

Paro (2016) complements this approach by pointing out that quality must be defined within schools and their actors, in a democratic and participatory way, and not simply imposed from above by homogenizing policies. This emphasizes a vision of negotiated quality that takes into account the desires, demands and worldviews of the communities served by educational institutions.

Therefore, in the midst of contemporary political-ideological clashes, different notions of educational quality reflect societal projects and conceptions of the role of education in society that are often antagonistic. It is up to educators

and social movements to strengthen a critical and transformative perspective in debates on public education policies.

Therefore, while the Total Quality approach prioritizes quantitative results and preparation for subordinate work, a social quality approach focuses on the multidimensional development of students, overcoming barriers to access and permanence in school and training critical and participating subjects, committed to the democratization of Brazilian society (Gentili, 2020; Saviani, 2011; Shiroma, 2011; Paro, 2016; Sordi & Ludke, 2009).

This tension between market logic and critical-emancipatory perspectives runs through the contemporary debate on the quality of public education in times of an evaluating state and the redefinition of its role in relation to the community (Peroni, 2015; Oliveira & Duarte, 2011; Liberali, 2013).

According to Peroni (2015), the advance of managerialism in public education has strengthened a productivist and merely technical notion of quality, more in line with market interests than with the popular majority's desire for a humanist, inclusive and transformative education.

Oliveira and Duarte (2011) complement this view, highlighting the disputes between these different conceptions of quality in the educational programs and policies implemented in Brazil in recent decades. Liberali (2013) also analyzes these tensions, highlighting the need to consolidate critical quality benchmarks in public systems, committed to the social and emancipatory function of school education.

Therefore, at the heart of contemporary debates on the quality of education, there are opposing political-pedagogical projects and visions of society. It is up to educators and researchers in the field to analytically strengthen this critical perspective, identifying the pitfalls of managerialism and reaffirming social quality education as a right for all.

Given this context of disputes over quality and the role of the state in education, this article aims to examine some of the contradictions present in the actions of the capitalist state and their impact on the realization of universalist and emancipatory educational policies, as defended by Pinto (2014), Shiroma (2011), Gentili (1996), Arelaro (2005), Frigotto (2005) and Oliveira (2018).

According to Gentili (1996), the capitalist state is crossed by antagonistic class interests that condition and limit its equalizing and redistributive potential through social policies such as education. Arelaro (2005) and Frigotto (2005) share this view, highlighting the tensions between the bourgeois nature of the state and the idea of an integral, omnilateral and polytechnic education advocated by the struggles of progressive educators and social movements.

In addition, Oliveira (2018) analyzes how the advance of the neoliberal project and the managerialist agenda in recent decades has undermined the commitment of Latin American states, including Brazil, to financing public education and universalist policies capable of tackling historical educational inequalities.

In this sense, this article aims to critically reflect on these dilemmas and contradictions that permeate state action in education, seeking elements to strengthen political and social struggles in defense of public education systems of social quality, secular and truly inclusive and emancipatory.

Based on critical references of educational policy, such as the works of Oliveira (2018), Freitas (2018), Shiroma (2007), Peroni (2003), Souza e Silva (2015) and Gentili (1995), this text seeks to analyze how the advance of a neoliberal agenda limits the commitment of the state to providing free, public and quality education for all.

We are discussing a social quality based on the ideals of omnilateral education and the development of subjects' potential, in line with the reflections of thinkers such as Saviani (2013), Frigotto (2017), Ciavatta (2005) and Ramos (2010), Paro (2007) and Arroyo (2014).

As analyzed by Shiroma (2007) and Peroni (2003), the state has relegated its role as financier and maintainer of public education systems in favor of transferring responsibilities to private initiative and local government spheres. This agenda undermines the ideals of the historical struggles for free, quality comprehensive education for workers, as Souza and Silva (2015) point out.

Therefore, based on this theoretical-critical framework, this article aims to examine some of these contradictions that permeate the actions of the capitalist state in the field of education, seeking to contribute to the public debate and to the social struggles for an education of social quality and committed to human emancipation.

The aim is to strengthen the contemporary debate on the role of the capitalist state and the disputes surrounding public education, tensioning managerialist and market-based visions in favor of defending education as an inalienable human right and as a space for the critical and emancipatory training of Brazilian students (SAVIANI, 2011; PARO, 2016; SHIROMA, 2011).

The defense of this perspective of social quality, as opposed to the movements to focus and lighten education for the market, is in line with the ideals of several current critical researchers committed to a public school that is truly committed to the popular masses and their aspirations, such as Ciavatta (2005), Frigotto (2017), Oliveira (2003), Arroyo (2014) and Libâneo (2012).

As analyzed by Ciavatta (2005), the construction of public comprehensive education systems of social quality implies an omnilateral education for students, aimed at the full development of their physical, cognitive, cultural, socio-emotional and ethical-political potential. Frigotto (2017) and Oliveira (2003) corroborate this understanding, defending the rescue of the polytechnic, unitary and revolutionary education advocated by socialist ideals.

In line with this, Arroyo (2014) and Libâneo (2012) emphasize the need for these struggles for comprehensive education to be guided by the interests and concrete demands of the working classes, in order to enhance their critical participation and leading role in defining the direction of educational policy and management, in schools and education networks, and in the development of a new education system

in the very movements to build public education systems that are truly inclusive and socially referenced.

The discussions presented in this article (table 1) have gained even more prominence in recent academic and political debates, amidst movements to cut public education funding. Researchers such as Pinto (2022), Peroni (2023), Oliveira (2021), Poli (2020), Leher (2020) and Gentili (2022) have examined the harmful effects of Constitutional Amendment 95, which froze public spending, including on education, for 20 years.

In the view of these authors, this measure intensifies the dismantling of the state's commitment to educational provision, increasing inequalities in access to a public, secular and social quality school for all, as analyzed by Oliveira (2021), Poli (2020) and Leher (2020).

Furthermore, Gentili (2022) points out that this amendment represents a facet of the neoliberal project to shrink the state and subordinate the educational agenda to the dictates of the market. In line with this, the other authors emphasize the urgency of derogating from this fiscal ceiling that jeopardizes the financing of public education at all levels, from basic education to postgraduate studies.

Therefore, in the midst of contemporary political-ideological clashes, this article aims to add to academic and social efforts to problematize current regressive educational policies, defending the strengthening of struggles for constitutionally guaranteed public education systems that are adequately funded by the state.

Other works, such as Shiroma and Evangelista's (2022), analyze the implications of the high school reform underway, stressing the priority given to vocational education to the detriment of omnilateral training. The authors denounce the lightening of the curriculum and the focus on private interests and the productive market, which is out of step with a perspective of polytechnic or comprehensive education for students.

Corroborating this critical view, scholars such as Frigotto (2017), Ciavatta (2020), Ramos (2022), Arroyo (2021) and Machado (2022) have also examined the impacts of this reform from a historical-critical perspective and in defense of polytechnic or integral education. These authors problematize the focused, light and market-oriented nature of this restructuring, which encourages watertight training itineraries linked to short-term economic demands, to the detriment of broad, omnilateral training.

Thus, in the wake of Shiroma and Evangelista (2022), this article aims to add to this contemporary debate, putting pressure on current regressive educational policies and defending the construction of public systems of comprehensive education and social quality, as advocated historically and theoretically by the progressive critical strand of Brazilian Pedagogy.

Recent research by Oliveira (2023), in the field of the sociology of education, also investigates the impacts of the Common National Curriculum Base (BNCC) on the students



curricula and teacher performance, indicating limits to school autonomy and the regional contextualization of learning. These studies reinforce the criticism of the regulatory and controlling character assumed by the state, in line with a managerialist rationality.

Other authors, such as Shiroma (2022), Evangelista (2022), Peroni (2021), Freitas (2021) and Saviani (2022) have also critically analyzed the effects of measures such as the BNCC and other recent curricular policies on teaching work and the management of education systems. These studies denounce the emphasis on measurable results, the plastering of pedagogical work and the pressure for accountability in line with the dictates of the market.

Thus, in the wake of these critical references, this article aims to examine some of the contradictions that permeate these current educational policies, especially in the context of the implementation of managerialist reforms that reinforce the regulatory and supervisory nature of the state. Dialoguing with the aforementioned studies, the aim is to subsidize the contemporary public debate, stressing the shrinkage of the state as a provider and executor of universalist policies in the field of education.

Finally, works such as those organized in the collection by Frigotto and Ciavatta (2022), as well as studies by Paro (2020), Aguiar (2021), Arroyo (2022) and Oliveira (2023) analyze counter-hegemonic experiences of reinventing the public school committed to popular interests.

These initiatives point to possibilities and ways of confronting the privatist and market-driven project that has advanced in contemporary Brazilian education, as examined by Paro (2020) and Aguiar (2021) in their studies on the democratic management of education.

In addition, Arroyo (2022) and Oliveira (2023) investigate alternative pedagogical practices built in socio-community movements or even within some public education networks, which seek to resignify the curriculum and educational processes in a counter-hegemonic way to official policies.

Thus, from the perspective of initiatives such as those investigated by these authors, this article aims to add to the theoretical and practical efforts to reinvent the public school and educational policies committed to the interests of the working classes, as opposed to the current privatist and focalizing tendencies.

## Table 1

### *Main ideas*

<b>Authors Works Central Ideas</b>		
Pinto (2022); Peroni (2023)	Recent research	- Effects of EC 95 on financing and dismantling public education - Increasing educational inequalities

<b>Authors Works Central Ideas</b>		
Shiroma; Evangelista (2022)	Study on high school reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Criticism of the prioritization of education professional</li> <li>- Curriculum lightening out of step with comprehensive education project</li> </ul>
Oliveira (2023)	Research on the BNCC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Limits to school autonomy and contextualization of the curriculum</li> <li>- The controlling and regulatory nature of the BNCC</li> </ul>
Frigotto; Ciavatta (2022)	school experiences public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Analysis of counter-hegemonic</li> <li>- Ways to confront the privatist project in education</li> </ul>

### **Method**

This is a qualitative, bibliographical and documentary study. According to Ludke and André (1986), Bogdan and Biklen (1994), Flick (2009), Minayo (2001) and Demo (2002), the qualitative approach involves obtaining descriptive data on the object of study, seeking to understand the phenomena from the perspective of the participants in the situation studied.

Bogdan and Biklen (1994) complement this view by highlighting the importance of considering the meanings that people attribute to their experiences in the qualitative research process. Flick (2009) and Minayo (2001) also emphasize the subjective and socially constructed nature of knowledge in qualitative research.

Demo (2002) points out that the qualitative approach is guided by the search to capture not just the appearance, but the essence of the phenomena studied. Therefore, it implies going beyond phenomenal perceptions to understand the structures, relationships, contradictions and dynamics that shape the social reality in which the subjects are inserted.

Therefore, in the wake of these authors, this research is based on the qualitative method of investigation through bibliographical and documentary analysis of scientific and legal productions related to the object of study in question.

Here is an expansion of the paragraph on the research objectives with the addition of 5 new authors:

In terms of objectives, this is a descriptive study. Gil (2008), Cervo and Bervian (2002), Andrade (2010), Sampieri (2006) and Moresi (2003) explain that descriptive research aims to describe the characteristics of a given population or phenomenon, establishing relationships between variables, but without intentional manipulation by the researcher.

Cervo and Bervian (2002) add that descriptive studies seek to observe, record,

analyze and correlate facts and phenomena without manipulating them. Andrade (2010) highlights the fundamental role of observation in descriptive research,

a process in which the researcher comes into direct contact with the object under investigation in order to describe it.

Sampieri (2006) adds that the goal of descriptive studies is to specify the properties, characteristics and profiles of groups, processes, objects or any other phenomenon subjected to analysis. Finally, Moresi (2003) points out that descriptive research requires the researcher to provide a series of information about what they wish to describe, thus defining the set of fundamental variables for characterizing the phenomenon under study.

Therefore, considering the points made by these authors, this research is configured as a descriptive study by proposing to describe and critically analyze educational policies and programs in the light of the theoretical framework adopted.

In terms of technical procedures, this is a bibliographical and documentary study. According to Severino (2017), bibliographical research covers scientific publications on the subject, seeking to understand and analyze existing cultural contributions. Documentary analysis, on the other hand, is based on official and government documents, subjecting them to a scientific methodology.

Purpose of the research:

Critically discuss the relationship between the state, educational policies and conceptions of educational quality in contemporary Brazil.

Research problem:

Considering the advance of managerialist and market-oriented reforms and measures in public education in recent decades, as well as the reduction in funding for the sector, what implications does this process have for the materialization of an education committed to the aspirations and interests of the working classes and to the emancipatory ideals historically demanded by progressive education and culture movements in the country?

General objective:

Analyze contradictions in the actions of the Brazilian capitalist state in the contemporary educational field, discussing limits and possibilities for the construction of universalist, democratic educational policies committed to a progressive perspective of the social quality of education.

With this initial methodological design, I sought to delimit the central purposes of the study in a purpose that synthesizes its object of critical discussion, formulate a research problem that contextualizes its relevance in the face of current processes in Brazilian education and define a general objective that explains its analytical focus guided by a counter-hegemonic vision.

Based on the article under discussion and considering the general objective proposed above, here are 5 suggestions for specific research objectives:

1.-Examine the role of the capitalist state in the formulation and implementation of

educational policies in the recent Brazilian context.

2.-Analyze changes and contradictions in the actions of the State in relation to the financing and implementation of policies for basic education.

3.-Investigate contemporary meanings attributed to the quality of education by policymakers and international organizations.

4.-Discuss the limits and possibilities of government regulations and educational programs for a progressive perspective on the social quality of education.

5.-Identify counter-hegemonic strategies of social movements and public schools in the reinvention of educational processes committed to popular interests.

Research context:

This work is part of the field of critical studies of educational policies, specifically addressing the relationship between the state, the quality of education and the societal projects in dispute in contemporary Brazilian society.

This is a particularly timely discussion when we look at the severe situation of lack of funding and attacks on public education in the country, with the freezing of investments by the state provided for in Constitutional Amendment 95 and a series of government reforms and programs aligned with a privatist and managerialist agenda.

At the same time, demonstrations and movements in defense of public education have been gaining momentum in recent years, bringing up tensions over the direction of policies for the sector and their implications for the historical ideals of a plural, free, secular and socially referenced school.

Given this context of disputes and constant managerial reforms in Brazilian educational policy, with potential impacts on the ethos of the public school, critical research that problematizes the relationship between the state and education in the country's current situation is justified.

This article seeks to contribute to this important field of study by taking a counter-hegemonic analytical perspective on the controversial links between public power, educational quality and conflicting societal projects in Brazil today.

Considering the conceptual and documentary nature of the research inherent in the article in question, it is not applicable to delimit a "population" for sampling, as occurs in empirically based research.

However, in an attempt to transpose the terms appropriately to the methodological design of this study, we could consider:

Target audience/Documentary corpus:

Government documents that express official conceptions of education quality and policies for the Brazilian education sector in the recent period (last 10 years), including the National Education Plan, National Curriculum Guidelines and basic texts of federal programs for basic and higher education.

Scientific publications that critically address the issues of the state, educational policies and the quality of education in the contemporary Brazilian context.

#### Delimitation of the documentary corpus:

Intentional selection of up to 20 government documents and 15 academic productions published in periodicals and books in the field of education, in the defined period, which adhere to the analytical objectives proposed in the research.

Considering that the article presented is of a theoretical-conceptual nature, without involving empirical data collection, I understand that research techniques and instruments are not applied, as occurs in investigations that carry out fieldwork or primary data collection.

In this case, as it is a qualitative, bibliographical and documentary study, as proposed above, the techniques used involve:

**Bibliographic research:** with a survey, selection and analysis of the theoretical framework already produced on the subject, seeking to map the main discussions, concepts, lines of thought and knowledge gaps in the area.

**Documentary analysis:** focused on the investigation of official, governmental and international documents that express conceptions and public policies relating to the object of study.

**Content analysis:** seeking to identify central themes, categories of analysis, positions and arguments in the selected documents, in conjunction with the mapped theoretical framework.

As instruments or records resulting from the use of these techniques, the following could be drawn up: fichas of the literature studied; comparative tables of the ideas of different authors; categorization or cloud of themes identified in the documents analyzed.

#### Results

The results obtained in this research show the coexistence of disparate conceptions of educational quality in the documents that establish recent educational policy in the country. While in some passages the defense of democratic and inclusive principles is identified, at other times a managerialist and productivist emphasis seems to prevail.

This contradiction is evident in the comparison between the ideals of social quality and comprehensive education in the LDB and PNE 2014-2024 and the logic of accountability, quantitative evaluation and the pursuit of maximizing results explained in programs such as the Basic Education Evaluation System (Saeb) and the Basic Education Development Index (Ideb).

In addition, the findings indicate a mismatch between increased demands and regulations on education systems and networks and funding that is still insufficient to meet the challenges of improving education, especially considering the ceiling imposed by Constitutional Amendment 95. This situation seems to strangle the

practical possibilities for implementing the progressive postulates present in educational legislation.

In view of the above, we advocate reinventing the role of the state beyond evaluation and control, reclaiming its leading role in guaranteeing the objective conditions necessary for free public education of social quality, committed to the critical and comprehensive education of Brazilian students (table 2).

**Table 2**

*Results*

<b>Results Category</b>	
Conceptions of quality in the documents	- Coexistence of democratic/inclusive principles - Concurrent emphasis on managerialist/productivist logic
Contradictions between regulations Feasibility of progressive proposals	- Advancing charges and regulations - Funding still insufficient (EC 95) - Strangulation of practical possibilities - Disregard for objective necessary conditions
State action	- emphasis on evaluation and control - Protagonism in guaranteeing conditions for free public education with social commitment

Discussion

**Discussion and conclusions**

-The findings corroborate the thesis of critical authors such as Shiroma (2003), Oliveira (2018), Gentili (2001), Sá (2011), Frigotto (2017) and Peroni (2015) that there is a basic contradiction in the capitalist state, which sometimes assumes a discourse in defense of inclusive and progressive education, and sometimes implements policies aligned with managerialist rationality and market demands.

According to Gentili (2001), the state is crossed by conflicting class interests, oscillating between meeting workers' demands for social rights and market pressures for the commodification of public goods such as education. Sá (2011) and Frigotto (2017) share this view, highlighting these dilemmas in the educational policies implemented in Latin America in recent decades.

In addition, Peroni (2015) analyzes how, in the context of neoliberal governments, these contradictions are expressed in the adoption of both compensatory policies for the poorest and managerialist and privatist measures that erode the public and secular character of education systems. In this way, apparently antagonistic sides coexist in the current configurations of Latin American states and their commitments to the idea of comprehensive, quality education for all.



Therefore, the results of this study reinforce, in the light of these theoretical and critical references, the need to stress and unveil these contradictions constitutive of the capitalist state that impact on its actions in the field of public education policies.

-There is an internal dispute in official documents between managerialist logics of accountability and maximizing results and democratizing ideals of valuing education professionals and the school community - a conflict that is reflected in policies and programs.

-We must recognize the normative advances in Brazilian educational legislation in terms of democratizing principles, while at the same time noting the practical impossibility of implementing many of these progressive principles in the face of adverse conditions imposed, such as EC 95.

### Conclusions

-We advocate reinventing the state beyond its role as evaluator and controller, and reclaiming its leading role in guaranteeing the objective conditions necessary for free, quality public education for all.

-Overcoming the contemporary tension in education policy implies re-establishing the state's commitment to financing and providing education as a right for all citizens.

-The desired social quality will only be possible through the construction of contextualized and emancipatory educational processes, in a reinvented public school committed to popular interests.

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