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FADING OF LABOR AND TEACHER MEANING: PERFORMATIVITY, PLATFORMIZATION AND CONTROL IN THE PUBLIC EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN SÃO PAULO

O ESVAZIAMENTO DO SENTIDO DO TRABALHO E DA PALAVRA DO PROFESSOR: PERFORMATIVIDADE, PLATAFORMIZAÇÃO E CONTROLE NA REDE ESTADUAL DE EDUCAÇÃO DE SÃO PAULO

EL VACIAMIENTO DE SENTIDO DEL TRABAJO Y DE LA PALABRA DOCENTE: PERFORMATIVIDAD, PLATAFORMIZACIÓN Y CONTROL EN LA RED DE EDUCACIÓN DEL ESTADO DE SÃO PAULO

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ABSTRACT: The pressure to meet goals set in large-scale assessments and the monitoring of teachers through the use of digital platforms has been emptying the meaning of the profession and exacerbating control over their performance, causing physical and mental illness among teachers. We aim to present the assessment policies implemented in the São Paulo State Education Network and discuss the possible consequences and challenges for teaching work. The methodology uses a qualitative approach and bibliographic and documentary research. The implemented assessment policies, along with the standardized curriculum, have failed to achieve the much-desired quality of education. The platformization of education has reduced the teacher's role to that of a mediator, without autonomy to plan any aspect of their work. We also highlight that the platforms have elevated the control of teachers to another level, inciting real-time surveillance, punishment, and a loss of meaning in their work.

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KEYWORDS: Large-scale assessment. Teaching labor. Performativity. Platformization. Control.

RESUMO: *A pressão pelo cumprimento de metas estabelecidas nas avaliações de larga escala e o monitoramento dos professores pela utilização das plataformas digitais vem esvaziando o sentido da profissão e exacerbando o controle sobre sua atuação, provocando adoecimento físico e mental dos professores. Objetivamos apresentar as políticas de avaliação implementadas na Rede Estadual de Educação Paulista e discutir sobre as possíveis consequências e desafios para o trabalho docente. A metodologia utiliza a abordagem qualitativa e pesquisas de natureza bibliográfica e documental. As políticas de avaliação implementadas, juntamente com o currículo padronizado, não conseguiram alcançar a tão almejada qualidade da educação. A plataformização da educação tem reduzido o papel do professor a um mediador, sem autonomia para planejar qualquer aspecto do seu trabalho. Destacamos ainda que as plataformas elevaram para outro patamar o controle dos docentes, incitando a vigilância em tempo real, a punição e a perda de sentido do seu trabalho.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Avaliação de larga escala. Trabalho docente. Performatividade Plataformização. Controle.*

RESUMEN: *La presión para cumplir con los objetivos establecidos en evaluaciones a gran escala y el monitoreo de los docentes mediante el uso de plataformas digitales ha estado vaciando el sentido de la profesión y exacerbando el control sobre su desempeño, causando enfermedades físicas y mentales entre los docentes. Nuestro objetivo es presentar las políticas de evaluación implementadas en la Red de Educación del Estado de São Paulo y discutir las posibles consecuencias y desafíos para el trabajo docente. La metodología utiliza un enfoque cualitativo e investigación bibliográfica y documental. Las políticas de evaluación implementadas, junto con el currículo estandarizado, no han logrado alcanzar la tan deseada calidad de educación. La plataformización de la educación ha reducido el rol del docente al de un mediador, sin autonomía para planificar ningún aspecto de su trabajo. También destacamos que las plataformas han elevado el control de los docentes a otro nivel, incitando la vigilancia en tiempo real, el castigo y la pérdida de sentido en su trabajo.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Evaluación a gran escala. Trabajo docente. Performatividad. Platformización. Control.*

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INTRODUCTION

Large-scale assessment policies over the last decade have reached alarming levels, with harmful consequences for teachers, administrators, students, and the social function of schools, particularly affecting the teaching and learning of historical-critical scientific knowledge, art, and culture, which are fundamental to the inventive imagination of children and young people. The scenario observed in the São Paulo state school system is notable for its standardization, control, and culture of accountability. Local and international assessment rankings have come to exert a significant influence on administrators and teachers, based on the principle of social justice, which seeks to ensure equity in access to quality education. However, this assessment metric imposes a logic of accountability that often disregards the particularities of each school and its specific demands.

By using these assessments to understand how education is developing, the indicators could enable schools to reflect on results and could be used to promote quality education. However, it is important to note that these indicators do not, on their own, represent the full reality of students' academic performance or the quality of schools (Silva, 2016). Internal assessments are part of everyday school life and serve as a diagnostic tool for teachers, helping to reorganize teaching and continuously improve pedagogical practices. These assessments directly analyze the mastery of curriculum content and the learning progress of each student and class. Based on the data obtained, it is up to each school community to conduct a self-assessment, adjusting its practices and methodologies as necessary. However, the role of external assessment disregards these aspects.

Policies based on accountability are grounded in governance, shaping a new standard in society for what constitutes quality in education (Menezes, 2021). The private sector's interference permeates public management, implementing new standards of efficiency and effectiveness, as well as the logic of ranking schools based on their results. In this logic, we also observe the emptying of the meaning of the word teacher, who, with the implementation of digital platforms, slides, and control over their use, finds no time for reflection, listening, questioning, and sensitivity. As Silva Júnior (2025) warns us, "the word, which should be a space for invention and thought, is domesticated by the logic of performance" (p. 2).

The objective of this study is to present the assessment policies implemented in the São Paulo State Education System and reflect on the possible consequences and challenges for teaching work. The methodology uses a qualitative approach and bibliographic and documentary research. According to Minayo (2014), the qualitative research approach makes it possible to capture meanings, values, and interpretations developed by subjects and institutions, proving to be appropriate for investigations aimed at understanding more complex social phenomena. The analytical process will adopt as a reference the theoretical contributions relevant to the object of study. This analysis will be conducted from a perspective that incorporates,

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among other dimensions, historicity and contextualization, assuming that knowledge is constructed historically, situated in specific social contexts, and requires examination situated in the time and space of its production. This study is organized into three sections: a brief summary of the development of assessment policies in Brazil, with an emphasis on the state of São Paulo; the platformization of public education in São Paulo; and the control of workers in this state system. We conclude the text with final remarks.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF EVALUATION POLICIES

Since the beginning of Fernando Henrique Cardoso's first term (1994-1998) to the present, a political reconfiguration has been consolidated in the field of education, oriented by guidelines from multilateral agencies and private sector actors, whose purposes converge with market logic. In the wake of neoliberal thinking, priority is given to the homogenization of school curricula and the organization of educational processes based on the principles of adaptability, productivity, performance, merit-based evaluation, and goal orientation.

Studies such as that of Bonamino (2002) present the context of the development of assessment policies in Brazil. The author points out that, in the late 1980s, there was recognition of the lack of scientific research that more clearly showed the educational services offered to the population and their impact on student performance within the school system. It was against this backdrop that the first experiences of evaluating elementary and secondary education at the national level began.

In 1990, the Basic Education Assessment System (SAEB) was created, which assesses, every two years, a sample of students regularly enrolled in the 4th and 8th grades (6th and 9th years) of elementary school and in the 3rd year of high school, in public and private schools located in urban and rural areas. As Bonamino and Souza (2012) demonstrate, although the development of tests leads to the definition of what should be considered fundamental in terms of school learning, "[...] SAEB, because it is sample-based, had a low level of interference in the life of schools and in the school curriculum" (p. 377).

In 2005, SAEB was dismantled and the National School Performance Assessment (ANRESC), known as Prova Brasil, was created, which became a census-based assessment. Based on the literature studied, we were able to identify that the change aimed to increase the informational content of the assessment and its consequences for schools, as it allowed the notion of accountability to be added to the diagnostic perspective (Bonamino & Sousa, 2012). Two years after the creation of Prova Brasil, the Basic Education Development Index (IDEB) was also created, which weighs the results of Prova Brasil and the performance indicators captured by the school census (dropout, pass, and fail rates). This indicator ranges from zero to 10.0 and was used to establish goals for education systems (state and municipal) and schools. The authors cited above state that the Prova Brasil aimed to "assist **government officials in**

decisions about the allocation of technical and financial resources and in setting goals and implementing pedagogical and administrative actions," aiming to improve the quality of education (Bonamino & Sousa, 2012, p. 377, emphasis added).

Starting in 2009, the Anísio Teixeira National Institute for Educational Studies and Research (Inep) and the Ministry of Education (MEC) distributed two publications to all public schools: the *Matriz de Referência da Prova Brasil e do Saeb – Ensino Fundamental* [Reference Matrix for the Prova Brasil and Saeb – Elementary School] and the *Matriz de Referência do Saeb – Ensino Médio e Ensino Fundamental* [Reference Matrix for Saeb – High School and Elementary School], both with examples of items from previous editions with comments (Bonamino & Sousa, 2012). We consider these publications relevant because, at the beginning of large-scale assessments, they sought to identify the schools' curriculum for the preparation of tests. In 1997, the Curriculum Parameters were distributed, which serve as a guide for schools. It is based on the implementation of the Reference Matrix that schools will "determine" the curriculum, since, in order for schools to meet the IDEB goals, they must teach the content specified in these regulatory documents.

Bauer et al. (2015) recognize the usefulness of large-scale assessments in providing information for pedagogical replanning, but question the use of their results for management purposes. They cite as examples of management uses the criteria for allocating resources to schools with the best results, the definition of bonuses for teachers, the creation of rankings among schools, and their understanding as the sole and main indicator of teaching quality, among other aspects.

We highlight this last aspect mentioned by Bauer et al. (2015) because, after the creation of the IDEB and its widespread dissemination in the media with the ranking of results, this index was gradually identified as the sole and main indicator of teaching quality. This concept of market quality is based on an assessment approach that views education as something predictable, measurable, and one-dimensional, failing to consider the diversity of public schools and ignoring the impossibility of isolating or controlling all the variables that affect educational outcomes.

The implementation of IDEB as a determining index of educational quality has intensified pressure on teachers and students. Linking teachers' salaries to the results of these assessments fosters a culture of competition that can compromise the pedagogical nature of teaching (Jacomini et al., 2021). Teachers thus become mere reproducers of previously established content, distancing themselves from an educational practice that values critical thinking and the contextualization of knowledge.

Freitas (2007) makes several criticisms of this concept of quality, which does not take into account the socioeconomic conditions of students, the working conditions of teachers, and school infrastructure, among other aspects. Similarly, the author criticizes the creation of IDEB.

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the real limit to the universal improvement of school quality is the liberal meritocratic ideology itself. If evaluation is placed at its service, **then it will be limited to measuring merit and concealing social inequality in the form of "neutral" indicators** such as the Basic Education Development Index (IDEB) created by MEC. (Freitas, 2007, p. 971, emphasis added)

This perspective highlights the complexity of educational systems and invites reflection on the impacts of educational reforms. When we look at the transformations resulting from large-scale external assessments and their impact on schools, we see that the results can diverge significantly from the intentions of an assessment aimed at improving the quality of education (Perboni & Di Giorgi, 2025).

When large-scale assessment summarizes the quality of education without considering any other aspect, it is possible to highlight models of educational accountability taking shape. One of the consequences is the public and regulatory constraints that control and regulate the actions of teachers and administrators. The lack of information or changes in the conduct of agents can generate disagreements with the interests of students and families. Thus, providing independent information on school performance in key subjects would generate incentives for educators to focus on tasks that improve performance. If disclosure is not enough, rewards and sanctions are linked to schools based on this performance (Schneider & Rostirola, 2023).

After this brief presentation on large-scale assessments at the national level and the criticism they have attracted, we will now turn to their implementation in the state of São Paulo, which is the focus of this study.

Following the guidelines of the reforms promoted at the federal level during the FHC administration, the state of São Paulo also underwent changes in its educational policies. During the administration of Governor Mário Covas (PSDB), between 1995 and 1998, the State Secretary of Education, Teresa Roserley Neubauer da Silva, led the formulation and implementation of a comprehensive restructuring of the São Paulo public school system, promoting significant changes in the areas of school organization, management, and teaching.

In São Paulo, large-scale assessments began in 1996 with the creation of the State School Performance Assessment System (Saresp). According to SE Resolution No. 27, the objective of Saresp was:

Support the Secretary of Education in decision-making regarding educational policy; Monitor the performance of students in basic education to provide information to all levels of the education system **that supports the training of teaching staff; reorient the pedagogical approach of schools** in order to improve it, **enable the articulation of assessment results with school planning,** training, and the establishment of goals for each school's project. (São Paulo, 1996, emphasis added)

Although the stated objectives in the creation of Saresp pointed to a diagnostic assessment perspective, seeking to support teacher training, review the school's pedagogical proposal, and use the assessment results for school planning, studies conducted on this assessment indicate other directions and consequences of its implementation.

We also highlight the creation of the São Paulo State Education Development Index (IDESP) in 2007, whose composition considers the variables of performance in Saresp and school flow, through which short and long-term goals are defined for schools and linked to incentives in the remuneration of education professionals—popularly known as the bonus policy (Torrezan et al., 2018).

The implementation of IDESP as a determining index of educational quality in São Paulo has intensified pressure on teachers and students. Linking teachers' salaries to the results of these assessments fosters a culture of competition that can compromise the pedagogical nature of teaching (Jacomini et al., 2021). Teachers thus become mere reproducers of previously established content, distancing themselves from an educational practice that values critical thinking and the contextualization of knowledge.

The study entitled "20 years of scientific productions on SARESP (1996-2016): reflections on the developments in teaching practice and privatization" presents a summary of the works analyzed:

> use of results to plan and replan school work; **standardization and narrowing of the curriculum; direction and control of teaching work; limitation of teacher autonomy**; imposition of a single pace for learning; impact on assessment practices in schools and training of students for SARESP. (Torrezan et al., 2018, p. 1325, emphasis added)

We could detail various aspects of the research carried out, giving examples of how standardization, control, and limitation of teacher autonomy occurred. However, due to the limitations of the research itself, we sought to highlight the aspect of control that had already been happening with Saresp since 2008, after the implementation of the São Paulo Curriculum Proposal. Faced with the imposed restrictions, Jesus (2014, as cited in Santos & Sabia, 2015) observed the surveillance of teachers' work by the management team of the school where the research was conducted: "The pedagogical coordinator began to monitor teachers' classes, checking how they have applied the curriculum proposal in the classroom" (p. 378).

The São Paulo Curriculum Proposal is part of the *São Paulo Faz a Escola* Program (SPFE). Jacomini et al. (2021, p. 1) consider that the implementation of this Program is an attempt to remodel schools with a curriculum based on skills and competencies pedagogies. For the authors, these curriculum policies implemented in the State of São Paulo reproduce the "tripod of a new agenda" of public policies, based on accountability, control, and standardization, altering the meaning of quality education, reduced to the scope of "learning." It is important

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to note that, during the last 30 years (1995-2025) of the São Paulo government under the Brazilian Social Democracy Party (PSDB) and the Republicans Party, São Paulo's educational policy had two measures that had serious consequences on the organization of work in schools and teacher autonomy: external evaluation systems based on standardized tests and the adoption of standardized curricula. In the following sections, we will focus on the development of the most recent educational policies in São Paulo (2020-2025).

THE PLATFORMIZATION OF PUBLIC EDUCATION IN SÃO PAULO

Under the pretext of solving Brazil's low educational standards, the incorporation of new technologies into the Brazilian educational context is presented as a necessary tool for reconfiguring the world of work in the new millennium. These assumptions are in line with the principles and objectives of international institutions such as the World Bank and national organizations such as the Ayrton Senna Institute, the Lemann Foundation, and the Arcor Institute, among others.

We understand what constitutes an "educational crisis" as a project to weaken public education, used to justify the implementation of private company initiatives and the redirection of public resources to these entities. The influence of these companies has set the tone for educational policies in Brazil, promoting technological initiatives that expand forms of control and management based on market efficiency standards.

The education sector, already under pressure from changes in the configuration of the Secondary Education Reform (Law No. 13,145/17), suffered further implications with the advent of the covid-19 pandemic. As a solution to social distancing, the digital infrastructures of private companies found an opportunity to expand their profits, aligning themselves with the new forms of state organization. We witnessed an impressive acceleration in the digitization of education, and in a short time, teachers, students, and other professionals in the educational field had to adapt to the new requirements.

Amid an educational scenario characterized by learning gaps, student dropout rates, and illiteracy rates, the government of São Paulo began to adopt a set of digital tools for teaching in 2020. The initiative sought to complement in-person activities and minimize the impacts caused by the restrictions imposed by the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. In official discourse, these technological solutions were justified by the promise of raising the quality of education, based on the assumption that expanding the range of tasks would automatically result in improved indicators in the area.

As it concentrates the largest contingent of students in Brazilian public basic education—around 3.5 million students distributed across more than 5,300 schools, with a teaching staff of approximately 190,000 professionals—the São Paulo state school system plays a strategic role in setting the direction for education in the country. It is a real testing ground for public

education policies. As Venco (2016) observes, the restructuring of the state apparatus carried out by the federal government found fertile ground in states whose governments shared the same political orientation. Inspired by the principles of New Public Management (NPM), the richest state in the Federation deepened mechanisms for bringing public administration closer to market logic, favoring performance criteria and meritocracy.

In alignment with educational technology companies—known as EdTechs—the São Paulo state government acquired various digital services with the justification of optimizing the educational indicators of the São Paulo state school system. Among the pitfalls of digital platforms is the false belief that they offer a free support service to students, teachers, and administrators, in addition to promoting the optimization of results and indices. However, this service comes at a very high cost.

We will present some examples of digital platforms and their purposes. We begin with Khan Academy, a non-profit organization whose goal is to offer educational tools for teachers and students, with practical exercises, educational videos, and other resources. The platform is maintained by entities such as Bank of America, Ann and John Doerr, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and Lemann Foundation (Khan Academy, 2025; Fundação Lemann, 2025). Its ideological function is easily identifiable: its maintainers and sponsors belong to the upper echelons of the global bourgeoisie. In its advertisements, the ideal of bourgeois education is presented under the justification of useful training, based on a specific worldview. Without any mention of critical thinking, the platform promotes the offer of better academic development and, consequently, greater success in future professional life.

Another platform linked to a tech giant is Alura, a startup connected to Google (Alura, 2025; Google for Education, 2025). Among its partners are companies such as Mercado Livre, SulAmérica, Santander, Porto Seguro, Caixa, Grupo Globo, TOTVS, Samsung, Nubank, Itaú, and Stone. Its goal is to offer content on programming, data science, design, innovation, and artificial intelligence. The platform aims to develop "skills" that enable students to understand basic programming concepts in different areas, preparing them to become future professionals with unique opportunities in the job market.

Several other platforms are used in the São Paulo state school system, such as Matific and Me Salva!, as well as platforms directly linked to the government, such as Tarefa SP, Redação SP, Prepara SP, Elefante Letrado, among others. Platforms donated by their developers, such as Khan Academy and Me Salva!, represented, according to publications in the State Official Gazette, an estimated value of R$ 40 million reais for each, referring to the use of the material over an 18-month period. Alura was acquired for R$ 30.8 million for use over the same period (Mello, 2024). The Elefante Letrado platform, on the other hand, had a forecast bid of around R$ 17.3 million (Mattos, 2024).

In order to support the implementation of digital platforms, the São Paulo Secretariat of Education invested in the purchase of equipment such as tablets, laptops, and computers,

in addition to contracting private internet services and wireless network connections (Wi-Fi). At the same time, it refused to purchase books from the National School Book Program, a decision that resulted in the withdrawal of more than 10 million educational works at an estimated cost of approximately R$ 120 million (Mattos, 2023). Instead of printed books, the government announced that it would offer slides and materials from the state network, made available by the São Paulo State Secretariat of Education (Seduc-SP) in digital format. The teaching materials would come from donations from companies or be purchased by the state itself.

At the end of April 2024, Secretary of Education Renato Feder announced that he was evaluating the feasibility of using generative artificial intelligence techniques to correct student assignments, which would be required to be done through a digital platform. At the same time, the state government announced the use of a version of ChatGPT to produce digital lessons, which teachers would be required to use.

In light of these negotiations, it is clear that, in addition to the platforms being linked to powerful groups, equipment suppliers play a central role in the class dynamics involved in the organization of public education in the São Paulo state school system. The destination of the resources invested reveals a clear priority of the State Secretariat of Education, highlighting its conceptual and ideological alignment with the business institutions responsible for the platforms.

Thus, EdTechs, through their digital solutions—such as teaching platforms, educational software, assessment systems, and applications—have progressively established and imposed the competencies they consider central to the teaching, learning, and assessment processes in schools, directly affecting students and educators. These instruments have come to operate as devices for supervising and regulating teaching practice, expanding the possibilities for real-time monitoring by school management (Lu et al., 2021, as cited in Viegas & Lamb, 2025).

According to Williamson et al. (2022, as cited in Viegas & Lamb, 2025), the so-called platformization of education began in the late 1990s in the United States and other countries, when computerized data processing systems began to integrate policies focused on accountability, assessment, and performance-based comparison. In recent decades, there has been an expansion of these digital technologies in educational policies and practices, considering internal factors, such as the pre-existence of an oligopolistic structure of capital and education, and external factors, such as the intensification of the presence of these technologies in schools and educational systems. Examples of this expansion include the Digital Education Action Plan (2021-2027) pact, established in 2020 in the European Union, and the enactment of the National Digital Education Policy in Brazil in 2023.

Authors such as Palermo et al. (2020) point to four phenomena that accompany digitally mediated work in teaching activities: precariousness, appropriation of cognitive work, tension between autonomy and subordination, and blurring of the boundaries between the world of life and the world of work. This machinery has been changing the concept of teaching work,

as it has the capacity to alter the ways in which people perceive, think, and react. According to the authors, this has given rise to the concept of the "cyborg worker" (Palermo et al., 2020, p. 2).

The narrative of autonomy, progress, and technology-integrated education employed by EdTechs and the state government of São Paulo does not translate into practice. These proposals are unachievable precisely because their focus is on controlling pedagogical practice and establishing a new work dynamic. The strategies used by educational platforms are predominantly centered on the production of real-time data and indicators. It should be noted that the generation of this data is neither generic nor arbitrary, but is used objectively to reduce the pedagogical and intellectual autonomy of teachers.

For Woodcok (2020, as cited in Viegas & Lamb, 2025), contemporary mechanisms for monitoring teaching practices enable comprehensive and instantaneous monitoring of each professional's distribution of working hours. This information, processed in the form of algorithms, begins to operate as instruments for regulating, coercing, and modeling interactions in the school environment. In this context of reconfiguring teaching activity, the current precariousness of work, marked by the insertion of professionals into digital environments managed by platforms, proves to be inseparable from the algorithmic logic that sustains it.

According to Franco et al. (2010), the constant conditions of precariousness in the life of workers "are processes of domination that combine insecurity, uncertainty, subjection, competition, the proliferation of mistrust and individualism, and the hijacking of time and subjectivity" (p. 231). Algorithms not only allow for the monitoring of teaching work, but are also being used to rank teachers and schools.

Teachers are forced to manage student performance and supervise their access to platforms. By monitoring this access, the Secretariat of Education has instituted a teacher performance evaluation, which allows for targeted accountability. These measures have increased pressure on faculty and contributed to teacher illness, in addition to causing a curriculum gap, as teachers must prioritize time spent on these tools over teaching itself.

Consequently, the teaching role is gradually losing its right and autonomy to research, teach, disseminate, and discuss ideas and knowledge without external interference. What is required of teachers and school administrators is to achieve positive indicators that guarantee the permanence of these professionals in the system in the following year. In addition to the constant pressure for results, there is the promise of performance bonuses, which contributes to competition among teachers and schools, as well as the falsification of data, such as the manipulation of student attendance and activity completion rates. The conditions of temporary contracts, such as Category O, low salaries, and the political demobilization of the category facilitate the actions of the secretary.

However, the reality of state public schools continues to be marked by high dropout rates, lack of maintenance, and constant illness among teaching staff. Digital materials and

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platforms ignore issues of accessibility and inclusion for students with disabilities and learning deficits. Achieving these goals may seem impossible for many schools, but this has not prevented the Secretariat from continuing to demand compliance.

In order to sustain this standardized view of teaching, it is necessary to build an abstract model of the student, that is, an ideal reference that ignores the multiplicity of bodies, trajectories, and contexts present in an extensive and diverse school system such as São Paulo's. This fictional student ends up representing only a limited portion of the real young people who occupy classrooms. As a result, those who do not fit this idealized profile often face greater demands or are progressively excluded from the educational path.

This change in teachers' working conditions, reduced to the role of mere mediators or facilitators, is consistent with the concept of a private digital education system that offers: the curriculum; pedagogical planning; lesson plans; content; support materials; exercises, tests, and exams with automatic corrections; personalized plans for each student, according to their needs identified by the system; and assessments of student and teacher performance and engagement on the platforms (Seki, 2025). In this system, in which the company determines the content and pedagogical methods of the school process, what specific intellectual functions remain under the responsibility of the teacher?

We have gathered sufficient evidence to demonstrate that educational policy is subordinate to the interests of capital, which defines which teaching skills should be acquired or improved. In this context, the notion of continuing teacher training is not guided by the real needs of pedagogical practice, but responds to the demands of the corporate market in its pursuit of profitability. This dynamic engenders an environment marked by the precariousness of the teaching career, in which fear, instability, and insecurity intensify in the face of the weakening—if not the absence—of consolidated labor rights.

CONTROL OF WORKERS IN THE SÃO PAULO STATE SYSTEM

As discussed in previous sections, the state education system in São Paulo has undergone significant changes in recent decades, marked by the increasing use of large-scale assessments. Through the results of these assessments, accountability policies promote a culture of responsibility that redefines teaching practice, subjecting it to the criteria of efficiency and productivity typical of the private sector. This dynamic, analyzed in light of the contributions of modern philosophy and other recent studies on educational policies, reveals a scenario in which control over teaching work is exercised through surveillance devices, pressure for performance, and curriculum standardization, with profound implications for quality public education.

This is consistent with Foucault's (2011) thinking, since the author shows how, from the 18th century onwards, criminal justice abandoned spectacular and violent punishments in

favor of more refined techniques of control, such as imprisonment, which not only punishes but also disciplines, corrects, and normalizes individuals. The massive collection of data from school environments can be interpreted as an extension of disciplinary technologies, in which metrics and statistics serve not only to describe but also to shape behavior. The panopticon, as an architectural and metaphorical model, illustrates how constant surveillance internalizes control, causing individuals to self-regulate, even in the absence of a direct observer.

In more recent models, Bauman (2014) demonstrates the liquefaction of this model. For the author, life today is configured in a post-panoptic model. The central inspector does not need to be present, considering that he reaches unattainable domains (Bauman, 2014). The mutual engagement between watcher and watched dissolves. In this new paradigm, physical architecture becomes redundant: "the architecture of electronic technologies through which power asserts itself in today's changing and mobile organizations makes the architecture of walls and windows largely redundant" (Bauman, 2014, p. 8).

Deleuze, quoted by the author, describes this new configuration as a "control society," where surveillance grows less like a rigid tree (the panopticon) and more like weeds (Bauman, 2014, p. 7), infiltrating in a capillary and diffuse way. This logic can be applied to contemporary digital surveillance technologies, such as productivity monitoring software or social credit systems, which operate under the same premise: the threat of permanent observation modifies behavior without the need for physical punishment.

Silva and Carolei (2024), in their report "Education in a platform and data economy scenario: problems and concepts", present a critical analysis of the growing impact of digital platforms on education, highlighting the challenges that affect the autonomy of students and teachers. The "surveillance capitalism" described by the authors is a way of monitoring user behavior and employing artificial intelligence algorithms to predict and influence their actions, which can compromise the freedom of choice and autonomy of students and teachers. In addition, there is the possibility of creating technological dependence, which tends to hinder the development of local solutions, increasing the subordination of companies that provide such programs. These tools, although justified as necessary for efficient management, function as instruments of panoptic control, in which the mere possibility of constant surveillance is sufficient to induce compliant behavior. As Mendonça Neto et al. (2015) point out, technology, in this context, serves not only to facilitate teaching work, but also to make it measurable and, therefore, subject to evaluation and punishment.

Linking salary bonuses and awards to Saresp and IDESP results (São Paulo, 2024a, 2024b) reinforces the logic of the "performance society" described by Han (2019). From this perspective, teachers are led to internalize the demand for productivity, transforming it into a moral obligation. The creation of the *Prova Ouro* and *Provão Paulista* tests, which award students and teachers based on Saresp results, reinforces the meritocratic idea of valuing the teaching career.

Han's (2019) "performance society" operates through a subtle and internalized logic that wanting is enough to achieve. At the heart of this transformation is the shift from external exploitation to self-exploitation. In contemporary neoliberalism, individuals are called upon to see themselves as "entrepreneurs of themselves," responsible for their own success and failure. This meritocratic narrative, which seems empowering, actually creates constant pressure for performance, productivity, and optimization in all spheres of life. The subject of the performance society no longer needs someone to watch over them, as they become their own overseer, internalizing the demands of the system and developing an obsessive relationship with goals and results.

Almeida (2021) points out that the dissemination of results has always been an essential element in state assessment policy, even before its formal consolidation, as indicated in the official documents that provided its basis. This transparency was aimed both at holding public officials accountable for results and at providing society with access to information about state schools. According to publications by Seduc, this process would contribute to improving the quality of education in the state. The way in which Saresp was disseminated, both in the official media—first through printed reports and later through digital platforms—and in the mainstream press reinforced a recurring association between the results and expressions such as "low quality of education," "precariousness of elementary education," and "school failure" (Almeida, 2021, p. 98). This approach, disconnected from a critical analysis of the historical and social factors that influence school performance, contributed to consolidating in the collective imagination the perception that public education in São Paulo faces a chronic crisis.

Projects such as the *Prêmio Excelência Educacional* [Educational Excellence Award] (São Paulo, 2024c) promise recognition and financial resources to schools and professionals who achieve pre-established goals, but in practice, they create a cycle of self-exploitation. The discourse that teachers can achieve the expected results through a meritocratic approach masks the coercive nature of these policies, because while it praises teacher autonomy, it imposes a competitive regime that disregards the material and social conditions of teaching. When goals are not achieved, the blame falls on teachers, generating feelings of failure and exhaustion.

For Han (2019), this feeling is a reflection of neoliberalism, which creates a pathology of exhaustion in society. Teachers, for example, are led to compete with themselves and their peers, pursuing performance goals that are often disconnected from real educational needs. The seemingly neutral discourse of quality and efficiency hides a rationality that transforms educational practice into a game of numbers, where what cannot be measured loses value. Hyperactivity replaces pedagogical reflection, and chronic fatigue becomes a symptom of a system that always demands more, without ever questioning the basis for these demands. In other words, the responsibility for achieving goals is outsourced to the teachers themselves.

However, by concentrating resources exclusively on high-performing institutions, the measure accentuates educational inequalities and promotes a steady decline in the quality

of education, since schools in vulnerable contexts, which are already marked by a lack of infrastructure and support, are further marginalized. Furthermore, conditioning student participation on the fulfillment of goals (São Paulo, 2024d) reduces the student's presence to a tool of control, emptying its potential as a space for political education and emancipation. In joint operation, schools, which receive fewer and fewer resources, are unlikely to achieve the established goal.

FINAL REMARKS

The purpose of this study was to present brief considerations on the assessment policies implemented in the São Paulo State Education System and to reflect on the consequences and challenges for teaching work that are emerging at the dawn of this new era. The data and analyses presented in this research invite us to consider the failure to achieve the much-desired quality of education in these 30 years of assessment policies. Aligned with a standardized and platform-based curriculum, these measures restrict and reframe the concept of quality education to quality learning. Understanding how this neoliberal model has affected education is necessary for researchers, associations, unions, and organized social movements to seek ways to review these policies and their devastating effects.

The purpose of school goes beyond the cognitive dimension, precisely because it cannot only value restricted content in Portuguese and mathematics, but must also guarantee the time, space, and tools necessary for the development of values, awareness of rights and duties, and the emancipation of individuals. In short, students have the right to a humanistic education, and it is up to the school and its professionals to ensure that this prerogative is fulfilled. In this sense, we also advocate for another quality for public schools that contrasts with the market-based quality identified in quantitative indicators such as IDEB/IDESP. We refer to social quality, which encompasses the following dimensions: Access and Permanence, Ethics and Values, Diversity/Difference, Interpersonal Relationships, Pedagogical Work/Pedagogical Practice, Collective Work, Knowledge, Critical Thinking, Participation, Self-organization of individuals, and the school's Social Commitment (Bertagna et al., 2020).

Regarding the consequences for teaching work, studies show their harmful effects. The platformization of education in the São Paulo state network has reduced the role of teachers to that of mediators or facilitators, without the autonomy to think about and plan any aspect of their work, since everything has already been thought out and planned by the private companies that sold their products and services to the state government. We also highlight that the use of such platforms has taken the control of teaching work, which began with external evaluations, to another level. What we can see is that surveillance happens in real time, punishment becomes increasingly intense, and the loss of meaning in teaching work intensifies with the illness and exhaustion of teachers, who are constantly required to produce results to

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the maximum instead of considering the quality of education from a perspective other than neoliberal metrics.

It is necessary to contrast the evaluated, multifunctional, and disqualified teacher with the thinking teacher, a historical subject inserted in relations of power struggle and class struggle. It is not about increasing the number of digital educational technologies for performing tasks, but rather about promoting in teachers a deep understanding of the social and historical conditions that determine the school and the educational process in which students and educators are currently inserted as historical subjects.

We consider the use of large-scale assessment results and their limited meaning in terms of quality, combined with platformization, to be challenges that require us to reconstruct the meaning of teaching work. The search for quantifiable results has made it impossible to listen, question, and be sensitive. To paraphrase Silva Júnior (2025), only when teachers' speech regains its power to name the world—even if stumbling, even if hesitating—will it be possible to inaugurate other ways of existing and thinking in the captured school.

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