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Ganhando o Mundo Diretor Program: internationalization or managerialism in Paraná's school management

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Abstract: This research aims to examine the developments of the *Ganhando o Mundo Diretor* Program, from the state of Paraná, launched in 2024, two years after the creation of the *Ganhando o Mundo* Program for students from public schools in Paraná. The study is grounded in a theoretical framework based on documentary and bibliographic research of a qualitative nature, including the mapping of publications related to the program available on the official websites of the State Department of Education of Paraná (Seed). For the analysis, we are theoretically and methodologically grounded in Ball's Policy Cycle (1998), which takes into account the contexts of influence arising from the history of meritocratic programs and actions, considering the particular circumstances that preceded the *Ganhando o Mundo Diretor* Program in its contexts of text production — that is, through the study of the document that established the program — and the context of practice, in which the developments in school management are envisioned. We conclude that there have been changes that led to a shift from a perspective of democratic management to that of New Public Management (NPM), which intensifies the implementation of merit-based policies for the principals of public schools in the state education system of Paraná.

Keywords: Education; school management; internationalization; managerialism; *Ganhando o Mundo Diretor* Program/Paraná.

1 Introduction

Addressing the topic of management has become a major challenge in recent decades, as noted by Bortolini and Ferreira (2023), especially when we understand that these issues arise from broader political and economic decisions, which have an impact on school education and, consequently, on school management. This challenge becomes concrete when we consider the spatial focus of this research: school management in the state of Paraná, particularly in the post-pandemic period (Covid-19), when the perspective of business-oriented management is strongly reinforced, especially in the education provided by the state public school system. The business



management perspective in Paraná's school management is primarily linked to achieving targets in external assessments (Paraná Exam¹, Basic Education Development Index – Ideb²), to the monitoring of teaching work (Pasini, 2023), and to the implementation of merit-based policies adopted by the state.

In a context where the legal provision for democratic management in public education exists, as established by the 1988 Federal Constitution (Brazil, 1988) and the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (LDB), Law No. 9394 (Brazil, 1996), the organizational guidelines in the state of Paraná indicate an explicit contrast with these legal principles, as we will discuss in this study. However, the presence of policies based on competition and meritocracy³ is not new in Paraná's educational context and permeates school management, including the work of professionals serving as school principals. Moreover, starting in 2019, educational policies began to be interpreted as demands placed on teachers, pedagogical coordinators, and also on school principals. The implementation and guidance of educational policies and directives in the state of Paraná emphasized adopted managerial⁴ principles, focusing on the results of Ideb and Paraná Exam. We highlight how this strategic focus generated merit-based competitions, manifested as awards and bonuses for school principals whose institutions achieved the highest educational indicators.

One of the initiatives implemented as part of the managerialist approach in Paraná's school administration is the *Ganhando o Mundo Diretor* Program, created in 2024. It consists of a set of actions that include merit-based certification for school principals and an exchange trip for experiences referred to as “inspiring in the scope of management”. The Program was described by the government of the state of Paraná as an exchange program: an internationalization initiative in which awarded

¹ Information about the program can be accessed on the Paraná Exam - Diagnostic Assessment page on the government website: Paraná ([2019? a]).

² The Basic Education Development Index (Ideb) was created in 2007; it is an indicator that combines two important concepts for the quality of Basic Education: school progression and the average performance on assessments from the Basic Education Assessment System (Saeb), administered in odd-numbered years to the final grades of each educational stage.

³ Meritocracy is based on processes focused on merit and financial rewards. Meritocratic policies originated in central capitalist countries, such as the United States of America and England; they spread these policies to other countries in the 1980s, and they reached Brazil with the neoliberal policies of the 1990s. From a neoliberal ideological perspective, educational systems experienced significant and disorderly expansion and, consequently, went through a deep crisis of efficiency, effectiveness, and quality, resulting from the unproductivity of teachers and school administrators, as discussed in Afonso (2009, 2013), Araújo, Leite, and Andriola (2019), and Gentili (1996).

⁴ We understand that managerialist administration focuses on the principles of New Public Management (NPM), which will be defined later in the text.

principals are granted trips to countries that were pioneers in implementing meritocratic policies. In the 2024 edition, the country selected for the school principals' visit was Chile, a pioneer in implementing policies and programs focused on performativity, efficiency, and the monitoring of educational data, driven by economic and political measures guided by the neoliberal agenda⁵.

Based on the issues observed with the implementation of these actions by the government of the state of Paraná, we define the general objective of this research as examining the developments of the *Ganhando o Mundo Diretor* Program. Our temporal focus is the period of the state government led by Carlos Roberto Massa Júnior, popularly known as Ratinho Júnior, affiliated with the Social Democratic Party (PSD), who began his first term as governor of Paraná in 2019 and is currently serving his second term (2022-2025).

We are theoretically and methodologically grounded in Ball's Policy Cycle (1998) to analyze the program and its developments in Paraná's education system, as well as in Mainardes (2006) and Bowe, Ball, and Gold (1992). For this purpose, we use the following contexts: influence, text production, and practice. According to Bowe, Ball, and Gold (1992), these contexts are interrelated, do not have a temporal or sequential dimension, and are not linear stages. In this way, political and government discourses gain legitimacy and form foundational statements for the political conceptions in which influence can be exerted, among other means, through the role of the media in creating consensus — such as consensus on the sale of educational solutions and/or the implementation of managerial solutions in education — or through the influence of international organizations in the program's implementation (Mainardes, 2006). Thus, we understand that within each of these contexts, as presented by Ball (1998), Mainardes (2006), and Bowe, Ball, and Gold (1992), there exist arenas, spaces, and interest groups that involve disputes and conflicts in the formation of educational policies, particularly in school management.

In addition to this introduction, the following section is organized to discuss the concepts of Democratic Management and New Public Management in the first section

⁵ Neoliberalism is seen as an ideology purportedly offering a solution to the crises of capitalism; it is presented as a remedy for the risks inherent in the social order of capitalism, as well as a resolution to the system's own problems. It can be understood as a theory of political-economic practices that, based on the premise of population well-being, emphasizes individual freedoms and entrepreneurial capacities within a framework that strongly upholds property rights, as discussed in Harvey (2013).

of this study — which delineates the boundary regarding the possibilities of implementing the legal principle of Democratic Management established in the 1988 Federal Constitution, which, in practice, was transformed into New Public Management in the 1990s, shaping management policies, including those in the state of Paraná, in contemporary times. Furthermore, in the third section of the study, we discuss the context of influence, presenting the set of programs and actions of the State Department of Education (Seed) used to implement merit-based policies for school principals in Paraná, with guidance and funding from international organizations (Pasini, 2020a; Iijima; Zanardini, 2022). The context of influence is directly related to ideological and doctrinal interests; in the case of Paraná, many merit-based programs focused on the efficiency of school principals were implemented, consolidated, and refined up to the creation of the *Ganhando o Mundo Diretor* Program.

In this regard, in the fourth part of this article, we present the analysis of the context of text production and the context of practice. Concerning the context of text production, we examine the legal document that establishes the program and its intent, which frames it as an exchange/internationalization program and proposes the training and immersion of school principals in the Chilean school management model, aiming at experience sharing and improvements to the model in place in the state. The context of text production is where the policy moves from the phase of textual creation — the development of the program or policy to be implemented — to generating real consequences for education professionals, that is, effects that resonate in the context of practice.

Regarding the context of practice, the study addresses issues that impact the practical setting, that is, the school environment, the work of school administrators, as well as merit-based policies, curriculum standardization, monitoring of pedagogical work, and results- and performance-oriented practices. We understand this context to be important because it is within schools that policies are implemented, enacted, and interpreted by education professionals. As noted, “the professionals who work in the practical context [schools, for example] do not approach political texts as naïve readers; they bring with them their histories, experiences, values, and purposes” (Bowe; Ball; Gold, 1992, p. 22, our translation).

2 Democratic Management and New Public Management: conceptual issues

In order to understand the directions of educational policies in the state of Paraná, with a focus on the *Ganhando o Mundo Diretor* Program, launched in 2024, it is necessary to explore the concepts of Democratic Management and New Public Management (NPM). The clarification of these concepts, without the intention of fully covering them, engages in a dialogue and reveals the flexibility with which they are employed by the Paraná state government, even presenting them as if they shared the same management perspective, thereby highlighting their connection to NPM.

The 1988 Federal Constitution legally establishes democratic management, ensuring it as one of the guiding principles of public education, according to Article 206, item VI: “[...] democratic management of public education, as established by law” (Brazil, 1988, Ch. III, Art. 206, item VI). This principle is reinforced by the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (LDB), in its Article 3: “Education shall be provided based on the following principles: [...] democratic management in public education, in accordance with this Law and the legislation of the respective States, Municipalities, and the Federal District” (Brazil, 1996, Title II, Art. 3, item VIII).

From this legal perspective, Paro (2003) highlights a key point and points out that the LDB text assigns responsibility for implementing democratic management of public education to the state and municipal education systems. This situation allows for different possibilities regarding how it will actually be carried out, potentially diverging from what democratic management ideally entails, which presupposes, among other elements, collective participation in decision-making through collegiate bodies, autonomy in organizing pedagogical work, and community involvement. Furthermore, according to Paro (1998), democratic management is characterized as a process of mediating the means to achieve certain ends, which, in the school context, are identified with the appropriation of knowledge.

In the process of understanding management as mediation, all activities that deviate from its purpose are excluded, becoming bureaucratized practices, labeled as useless when considering the intended ends (Paro, 1998). In the context of educational policy, within which school management is situated, “[...] this bureaucratization of the means has often been used, sometimes intentionally, to prevent the declared ends from being achieved” (Paro, 1998, p. 304). Paro (1998) further asserts that, due to the

mediating nature of management — not being an end in itself — it can be aligned with multiple objectives, whether or not connected to an educational project aimed at the holistic development of individuals, or, conversely, to a project that seeks a society dominated by inequality, including educational inequality. This latter approach is currently being implemented in the state of Paraná, guided not by the concept of democratic management but by what we identify as NPM, as we will define.

School management from a democratic perspective, understood as embedded in the broader context of educational organization, considers the role of the school administrator a key element in overcoming problems and promoting improvements in the educational process. It is emphasized that democratic management should guide the principal's work in collaboration with the school community, embodying “[...] at the same time, transparency and impartiality, autonomy and participation, leadership and collective work, representativeness and competence” (Cury, 2005, p. 18). This means asserting that the work of school management, which encompasses both action and engagement with the school community, is essential for the school to operate on multiple fronts in ensuring the right to education, aligned with the ultimate purpose of education. As Paro (1998) points out, this involves fostering the critical emancipation of the individuals who make up the school.

As Paro (2003) points out regarding legal vulnerabilities, the establishment of democratic management in public education is the result of struggles carried out during Brazil's re-democratization following the civil-military dictatorship (post-1985). The legal incorporation of democratic management was only made possible through the efforts of various movements, particularly those of educators and intellectuals involved in education. However, this achievement emerged precisely at a time when Brazil, despite legal advances — especially in social rights enshrined in the 1988 Federal Constitution — began to shape its economic policies based on the neoliberal agenda. Consequently, this political and economic project of society is reflected in social policies, including those related to education.

In the context presented, the economic orientation introduced in the 1990s was intensified under the government of Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1995-2003), notably through the work of Luiz Carlos Bresser Pereira (1999), who served as Minister of Federal Administration and State Reform (1995-1998). This ministry developed the

1995 Master Plan for the Reform of the State Apparatus (Pdrael), which, among other elements, introduced a managerialist model of administration in the public sector.

According to Drabach (2018), managerialist administration is based on the principles of NPM, which, in turn, involves reforms in the public sector (Verger; Normand, 2015). Regarding managerialist management in Brazil, from the 1990s onward, business management models were applied. They emphasized efficiency, measurable results, and accountability. This approach was extended to various sectors, including education — which, even today, is presented as an innovation capable of solving problems and improving the quality of teaching, although its implications and the very concept of quality remain contested.

In this context, educational and school management, as well as the organization of pedagogical work carried out in schools with the aim of student development, are grounded in NPM and redefine teachers' work through new forms of monitoring — using educational data that are translated into goals, performance, and control (Seki, 2025). In the state of Paraná, this approach is implemented in educational and school management based on the principles of NPM: centralized decision-making, individualized performance targets, evaluation, and accountability — as we will examine in the *Ganhando o Mundo Diretor* Program in the following discussion.

3 Paths toward a merit-based policy for school administrators in Paraná

In order to address the context of influence, it is necessary to consider the period of the Covid-19 pandemic, a time when education — particularly public education — underwent significant changes, notably the widespread use of technologies and digital platforms to ensure access to schooling amid social distancing measures. Regarding the integration of educational technologies in schools, especially in teaching practices, Seki and Venco (2022) highlight the operationalization of work through digital platforms:

These “brand-new” educational technologies facilitate the expansion of pressures on teaching work, as their focus lies within the specifically intellectual and socio-pedagogical functions of teachers (assessment of teaching and learning, observation, record-keeping, planning, curricular and pedagogical organization, and teaching content). This emphasis also appears to support the hypothesis that the widespread dissemination of educational technologies and digital platforms in education inherently presupposes the standardization of teaching-related activities and, consequently, of teachers' work (Seki; Venco, 2022, p. 2).

Hence, the technologies and digital platforms that were initially implemented to address the impossibility of in-person teaching quickly became central in schools in the post-pandemic period, from the perspective of New Public Management (NPM). In the case of the state of Paraná, despite its specific characteristics, this process unfolded intensely:

In order to operationalize the **managerialist approach to school management**, oriented toward market logic, the State Department of Education employs a range of actions: **continuous professional development for school principals (administrators); monitoring of schools by the Pedagogical Tutoring of the Regional Education Centers; tracking of school performance results through reports**; and the implementation of Law No. 20,935, of December 17, 2021, which establishes **a tiered monthly incentive bonus and a learning achievement bonus for principals and assistant principals** in the state's basic education institutions (Tramontin, 2023, p. 39-40, emphasis added).

In a context where, historically, the remuneration of teachers and school principals has been undervalued, adopting practices aligned with a business management perspective — managing, producing results, and being accountable for school performance — has become part of the principal's work. In this sense, the principals' responsibilities include classroom observation, monitoring the use of digital platforms, implementing the *Aluno Monitor* Program, and ensuring student participation in the projects and programs of Seed (Paraná, 2021a). Failure to fulfill these responsibilities, as defined by Resolution No. 2857/2021-GS/Seed (Paraná, 2021a), may result in the principal being replaced at any time.

In another guidance document, entitled “Guide for Monitoring Full-Time Education Principals” (Paraná, 2021b), principals are included in the Pedagogical Monitoring Index (IAP), through which a scoring scale is assigned according to their performance. The scale ranges from 0 to 10. Some of the key indicators for the principal's score include: “1. student attendance; 2. Paraná Writing Platform; 3. Participation in *Prova Paraná*” (Paraná, 2021b, ch. 7). Therefore, the document shows that the principal's performance is linked to two interconnected elements: the use of educational technologies and the scores in *Prova Paraná*, highlighting the need for student participation in the assessment.

The government of the state of Paraná, in its announcements and through various forms of allocating public resources to the private sector for the implementation

of educational technologies, indicates, based on the statements of Governor Carlos Massa Junior:

No one can replace the teacher; they are a key element for quality education. What we are doing with this technology is providing more tools so that they can perform even better in what they already do in the classroom, making their work easier (Paraná, 2025).

Nonetheless, digital platforms are used not only for the standardization and mechanization of the teaching and learning process but also for controlling content, monitoring pedagogical work, tracking teacher attendance and performance, and overseeing results through programs and platforms. Thus, these are actions that bureaucratize both teachers' and school administrators' work, as indicated in the Government Plan of the first term (2019-2022): "More effective control mechanisms will be created, and the codes of conduct for public officials and senior state administration will be revised" (Paraná, [2020?a], p. 13).

We highlight the inspiration drawn from the principles of rationality, efficiency, and productivity, as well as the technical focus characteristic of NPM, which, according to Freitas (2018), has long sought to define the educational process as objective and operational, influencing the work of teachers, students, and contemporary school administrators alike, using educational technologies as tools. Included in this framework is the work of school administrators, who, through these tools, can be rewarded, incentivized, or penalized, just like teachers, depending on the goals achieved in the Ideb and *Prova Paraná*.

Based on the above, there is fertile ground for the implementation and expansion of merit-based policies and regulatory guidelines in Paraná, aimed at teachers and school administrators. Table 1 presents programs related to the role of the school administrator.

Table 1 – Programs on school management implemented between 2019 and 2024 in the state of Paraná

Year	Program	Stated Objective	Participation Criteria
2019	Gold and Diamond School Certificate	Honoring the schools that achieved the highest performance in Ideb.	Schools with the greatest progress that achieved the highest Ideb score in 2017.
2021	<i>Escola Bonita</i> Program	Transfer of up to 33,000 reais in direct school funding for improvements and engineering services.	School with a minimum of 80% in-person attendance or the October average; An increase of 20 percentage points above the attendance at the end of September; Must be a Gold or Diamond certified school.
2022	Tiered Monthly Incentive Bonus (Giem)	Payment of a bonus for performing the function of monitoring and increasing student attendance.	Maintaining student attendance between 90% and 95%; Increasing the Ideb score, achieving a result above the state average.
2023	Bonus Program for Principals and Assistant Principals (Grap)	Rewarding administrators based on the reduction of school dropout rates with a view to improving evaluation indicators.	Having more than 150 students; Increasing scores in the assessments of the Paraná Basic Education Assessment System (Saep) and Saeb.
2024	<i>Ganhando o Mundo Diretor</i> Program	On-site experience, alongside principals from other local, national, and international locations; Carrying out pedagogical management; Improving student learning; Implement good pedagogical management practices in their educational institutions.	Being affiliated with the <i>Diretor Formador</i> Study Group; being a principal of an institution whose Ideb for 2021 is above the state average in Paraná, with the exception of principals of the State Center for Basic Education for Youth and Adults (Ceebja). For classification, the following are considered: a) highest Ideb in 2021; b) highest Paraná Development Index (IDPR) in 2022 (calculated from the results of <i>Prova Paraná Mais</i> with pass rates for Elementary and/or High School); c) highest average school attendance rate in 2023, according to the State School Registration System (Sere).

Source: The authors (2025).

In Table 1, we observe certain programs — among many others — that have been implemented since 2019. Notably, we highlight the awarding of the Gold and Diamond School Certificate, created by Seed to honor schools that achieved the highest performance in the 2019 Ideb; the award was given in 2021 (Paraná, 2021c). The *Escola Bonita* Program provides financial transfers to schools that reach school attendance targets above 80% or achieve a 20-percentage-point increase; furthermore, institutions already recognized as Gold and Diamond receive an additional 60% of the funding (Paraná, 2020a, 2021d).

There is also the Bonus Policy for administrators, contingent upon maintaining student attendance between 90% and 95%. Monitored through online attendance records, the program was implemented in 2022 (Paraná, 2022a). In 2023, the government launched the Tiered Monthly Incentive Bonus (Giem) for principals who reduce school dropout rates, with the aim of improving educational indicators (Paraná, 2023a); these are monitored through digital platforms by Seed, as described in Seed/PR Resolution No. 2006 (Paraná, 2022b). In the same year, the governor announced a bonus of 3,000 reais for all school staff who exceed Ideb targets (Paraná, 2023b), which was implemented through the Bonus Program for Principals and Assistant Principals (Grap).

In 2024, the state government announced the *Ganhando o Mundo Diretor* Program, which is an expansion of the *Ganhando o Mundo* Program. The *Ganhando o Mundo* Program, in turn, was created in 2019, targeting students in the state public school system. The announcement aimed to provide cultural and educational experiences in countries designated as partners, proposing that students commit to sharing their experiences with their schools upon returning. The Program sets out the following objectives:

[...] broadening cultural and academic knowledge; providing experience and immersion in the reality of other countries; building a network of young leaders who will work in the state public school system of Paraná; and enhancing the development of autonomy and improve proficiency in the English language (Paraná, [2019?b]).

For the *Ganhando o Mundo* Program, the prioritized countries are English-speaking, and participating students must be between 14 and 17 years old. Selections are held annually; in the 2020-2022 editions, the country chosen by the state government was New Zealand. In 2023, Australia, Canada, the United States, and England were added to the list of eligible countries. In 2024, two more countries were included: Ireland and the United Kingdom. Each call offers 100 spots. Participation criteria include: attendance above 85% in each curricular component and the sum of the averages of all curricular components. Selected students spend one academic semester in the designated country and receive a monthly scholarship of eight hundred reais (Paraná, [2020?b]).

Nevertheless, to participate in the Program, in addition to the criteria established in the calls, students must also meet the requirements set forth in Decree No. 4,166,

of March 3, 2020, which states, in Article VI, that the student must “[...] have participated in *Prova Paraná Mais*” (Paraná, 2020b, Art. 1º, item IV). *Prova Paraná Mais*, in turn, was created in 2019; it is administered in the third trimester to students in the 5th and 9th grades of Elementary School and the 3rd year of High School (similar to *Prova Brasil* and Ideb). The exam assesses only Portuguese language (reading and interpretation) and mathematics (problem-solving) content. The results are analyzed by the team of the Regional Education Center (REC), the school administrator, and the pedagogical team, with a focus on preparation for Ideb. Currently, the results of the state assessments are analyzed through the Business Intelligence (BI) platform, which provides a set of data to monitor outcomes and targets to be achieved. In summary, Seed’s role has been increasingly limited to acting exclusively

based on targets and index spreadsheets (student attendance rates, promotion, and failure rates), maintaining oversight of schools, and providing the results achieved by students through School Attendance Reports (*Programa Presente na Escola*); diagnostic assessments (*Prova Paraná*, *Prova Paraná Mais*, and *Prova Brasil*); quarterly academic performance results; and performance on digital platforms, which are implemented in the school network following the corporatization model of education, with control over school work and teacher performance (Tramontin, 2023, p. 47).

As noted by Tramontin (2023), Pasini (2020b), and Cossetin, Guerra, and Figueiredo (2022), the alignment between Paraná’s educational policies and the corporatization model of education is not recent. This is due to its connections with international organizations, especially Unesco and the World Bank. These initiatives focus on the training of students, teachers, principals, heads of Regional Education Centers, and technical teams. In other words, it directs an education project linked to international economic and ideological policies, aiming to adapt education to the demands of capital. This is evident in the Government Plan (2019-2022), which states that public administration has the function of guiding, regulating, coordinating, and facilitating the production of services, as well as promoting “cooperation among the entities of a network connecting public and private institutions and individuals” (Paraná, [2020?], p. 11).

The partnership between Seed and private actors has existed since the 1990s, with the implementation of a state-specific assessment system in Paraná, continuous professional development for teachers and administrators, production of teaching materials, outsourcing of lesson planning, and more. Put differently, for decades the

aim has been to distance both teachers and administrators from their actual roles within the school context, turning them into tools within a managerial model of education. According to Braga (2016), managerialism, initially

[...] manifests as a dispersion of power, assigning to various entities — from individuals to corporations — the responsibilities that previously belonged to the State. Secondly, it is committed to the transparency of its governance — a critique often directed at the bureaucratic model. Thirdly, it establishes clear goals and objectives to be achieved, creating the perception of effectiveness, since both society and the government can verify whether these objectives have been met. Fourthly, it conveys the idea of the individual as an important member of society who must be respected and served [...]. In addition to these aspects [...], managerialism, or managerial management, is also characterized by the reduction and control of public spending and by a performance-based evaluation model (Braga, 2016, p. 50).

The managerial model has been implemented in Brazil's public administration, especially since 1995, with the State Apparatus Reform Master Plan (Brazil, 1995), which aims to introduce modern management culture and techniques into public administration, with the goal of increasing efficiency and productivity while reducing costs. The same occurs in the state of Paraná, based on the current government's Management Plan (Paraná, [2020?a]), which defines public governance as shared and modern management, through the establishment of "a policy of goals and results for public managers, professionals with recognized technical and political capacity, who will implement collaborative management models between the government and society" (Paraná, [2020?a], p. 13). According to the state governor, the management model would be one that advances and advocates Paraná's strategic projects in ministerial offices, the National Congress, and international investment and financing organizations (Paraná, [2020?a]).

In this context, educational policies in Paraná have incorporated external assessments as a tool for management, control, regulation, and performance measurement:

External assessment as an instrument of educational management is valued because, instead of relying on control through rules and regulations, it provides the State with more sophisticated means of regulating and administratively controlling education systems and schools, in addition to subjecting them to competition (Carvalho, 2020, p. 164).

In this way, it would mean the "[...] establishment of parameters for comparing and ranking performances, incentives through rewards, and the possibility of public oversight of the school system's performance" (Afonso, 2000 *apud* Carvalho, 2020, p.

164). With the implementation of external assessment, numerous control mechanisms were created. The value of these mechanisms is embedded in Paraná's education system through a policy of meritocracy and competition among educational institutions, based on awards and financial bonuses.

The management area will be developed in collaboration with municipalities and will include six basic components: **governance, monitoring and evaluation, competition and collaboration, management culture, communication, and alignment of pedagogical content, which will be addressed from the curriculum to teaching materials, reaching the training of teachers and school principals.** A quality of education index will be created, taking into account a combination of different indicators. Through mechanisms of **competition and collaboration, it will be possible to recognize the best schools, which will serve as partners in guiding other schools** to a higher standard (Paraná, 2019, p. 31, emphasis added).

Through these actions, meritocracy is materialized; that is, the roles of teachers and school principals are valued based on results, assessed by individual performance. It reinforces individualism and distances the work from the collective nature of pedagogical practice, the school reality, working conditions, and investments in education.

Amid the pursuit of results, the historical construction of education as a public good and a social right is gradually lost, and as such, it cannot be regulated as a commodity, product, or measurable outcome entrusted to specialists in metrics and numbers (Oliveira, 2015, p. 17).

In this sense, schools become directly affected by the state's managerial model, as the need for such measures is evidenced by the emphasis on the efficiency of the state apparatus. As stated in Ratinho Junior's Government Plan, "meritocracy will be valued with bonuses linked to the achievement of results" (Paraná, [2020?a], p. 52). Hence, upon its announcement, the *Ganhando o Mundo Diretor* Program reinforces this efficiency-driven policy, characterizing itself as a program in which school principals, in addition to earning merit for standing out in state school rankings and being certified as Diamond or Gold Directors, also "gain the world" through an exchange experience with administrators from other countries, which promotes the sharing of experiences and "inspiring" practices. In the next section, we will analyze the legal frameworks that establish the program and its implications for implementing a managerial and merit-based policy for school principals in the state of Paraná.

4 Internationalization or managerialism of school principals in Paraná

The context of text production is addressed in this section in order to present the analysis of the documents regulating the implementation of the *Ganhando o Mundo Diretor* Program. The context of practice, in turn, is examined through the effects of this program on contemporary school management in Paraná. From this theoretical perspective, we highlight the program, created in 2024, with the first selection based on Public Notice No. 48/2024-GS/Seed, which established the criteria and guidelines for school principals. The first point that draws our attention is the fact that the calls for the program aimed at students and teachers are predominantly for European countries, whereas for the program targeting principals, the chosen country is a Latin American nation: Chile.

Chile can be considered a “laboratory of successful experiences by International Organizations”, taken as “inspiration” for Latin American countries seeking to build new arrangements between public policy and the private sector. Alves and Nucci (2021, p. 2) argue that “[...] educational management is a pathway for building a quality public school and a space of citizenship, and that there are different conceptions and ways of practicing it”. In this sense, by selecting Chile as a reference country for school principals to gain internationalization experiences, we observe an alignment between the management in the state of Paraná and the policies implemented in Chile.

In the case of Chile, one of the pioneering countries in linking policy with educational management and market-based managerial principles, this approach led to the promotion of social policies that were no longer the exclusive responsibility of the State, with their implementation being transferred to civil society (Alves; Nucci, 2021, p. 3).

According to the authors’ research, Chile shares many similarities with the Brazilian and Paraná state conceptions of educational management, especially as it is a “centralized State that grants resources to the market for provision and participation in education” (Alves; Nucci, 2021, p. 6). Furthermore, one of the focuses of the *Ley General de Educación* (LGE) (Chile, 2009), legislation that maintains the market framework, is the creation of a new “[...] institutional matrix — the Superintendence and the Education Quality Agency — which establishes a system for evaluating, monitoring, and classifying schools according to their performance level and publishing the results” (Falabella, 2015, p. 712, our translation). In other words, the

implementation of results- and performance-based educational management in Chile is also observable in Brazil, particularly in the state of Paraná, when managerialist orientations in educational administration are considered.

In the case of the state of Paraná, the participation of the private sector in the continuing training of teachers and school administrators, as well as in the allocation of resources and programs, is highlighted by Tramontin (2023), who analyzes policies and programs focused on the new training and profile of school principals in Paraná. Tramontin (2023) emphasizes the *Formação e Ação* Program, created in 2020, initially aimed at teachers, and expanded to pedagogues, principals, and assistant principals starting in 2022. The purpose of the program is to contribute to strengthening student learning and, in the case of principals, aims to

[...] equip the team to exercise leadership in monitoring, implementing, and evaluating pedagogical actions within the school context; such as strategies for tracking student attendance and learning through management tools; supporting teachers during activity hours; classroom observation aimed at developing contextualized lessons based on the curriculum; and strategies for exercising pedagogical leadership and implementing educational tools (Tramontin, 2023, p. 83).

The objectives of the program reflect the managerial nature and efficiency model that school management is expected to adopt. In order to participate in the *Ganhando o Mundo Diretor* Program, in addition to attending the *Formação e Ação* training sessions, the principal must also take part in the *Diretor Formador* Study Program (Paraná, 2023c), whose responsibilities include:

- 4.7 Conduct weekly formative meetings with their group.
- 4.8 Guide the participants on the training dynamics and monitor the progress of activities in their group.
- 4.9 Facilitate the activities, using as a reference the content specifically designed for administrators of state public network institutions.
- 4.10 Submit, guide, and evaluate the activities proposed in the training, **following the instructions provided in the Training Guides issued by the DAP** (Paraná, 2023c, p. 4, emphasis added).

In this regard, the school administrator acts as the implementer of the state's training policy, since the guidance and content of the training programs are not developed by them. Selection for the *Ganhando o Mundo Diretor* Program allows a principal to participate in pedagogical training in Chile. It applies if they are linked to the *Diretor Formador* Study Group, either as a trainer or participant. They must also serve as the principal of a school whose Ideb for the offered education stages in 2021

was above the Paraná state average. Principals at Ceebja are excluded. The experience offered to administrators is structured as follows:

- a) synchronous and asynchronous online preparatory classes, taught by professors from a Chilean higher education institution, over a period of two weeks, totaling 30 (thirty) hours.
- b) In-person classes at a Chilean higher education institution, over a period of 2 (two) weeks, totaling 64 hours, distributed as follows: opening — 4 (four) hours; three in-person modules at the university — 60 hours; and closing — 2 (two) hours.
- c) experience in two Chilean public secondary schools for observation of leadership and teacher evaluation practices, 4 (four) hours at each school, totaling 8 (eight) hours, integrated with 8 (eight) hours of asynchronous activities to study the context of the institutions to be visited.
- d) synchronous online classes, after the return from the in-person course, for the completion of the Integrative Project portfolio, totaling 20 (twenty) hours, taught by professors from a Chilean higher education institution, over a period of 2 (two) weeks.
- e) personalized mentoring of 6 (six) hours by university professors, with groups of up to 4 (four) participants, according to the topic and regional conditions, for planning the implementation described in the Integrative Project (Paraná, 2024, item 1, subitem 1.2).

As a training program offering both in-person and online exchange experiences, the *Ganhando o Mundo Diretor* Program serves as an internationalization initiative for school principals. The concept of internationalization can have different meanings; research conducted by Nez *et al.* (2024, p. 10) indicates that there is

[...] complexity and ambiguity in the concept of internationalization, as well as the actions that institutions have undertaken to foster an intercultural environment among their students, allow them to engage with multiple languages. Curricular flexibility stands out, as it enables students and teachers to transcend economic barriers to access both remote and in-person experiences through exchange programs and academic mobility.

According to the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (Capes), an internationalization program should include aspects such as:

[...] infrastructure; use of foreign languages; an international relations office; projects to host foreign students and researchers; training of technical staff; and the application of knowledge acquired by the scholarship recipient upon returning to the country, among other actions (Capes, 2017, p. 7).

Although there is a diversity of internationalization models, each institution will define the objectives it wants to achieve. In the case of Paraná, through the *Ganhando o Mundo Diretor* Program, we can observe issues related to infrastructure and the coordination between the state education offices and the international office — which already work in an articulated manner, considering that part of the training is offered

online and part in person — as well as the trips of selected principals from Paraná state schools to partner institutions in Chile. After the experience of school administrators in Chile, we also observe a leadership training perspective, a purpose present in internationalization policies. It should be understood as a commitment of leaders — both as an institutional education policy (for state schools) and as part of educational management (a project of the state management in Paraná).

Ramalho (2023), in analyzing the Internationalization of Higher Education, presents categories that comprise strategies for comprehensive internationalization, which we can identify in the program under analysis. The categories are: Articulated Institutional Commitment — the commitment of leaders; and Administrative Leadership — both structural and professional. For the process to impact the state education system, teachers, students, pedagogues, and school administrators must be proactive, playing “[...] a leadership role to reinforce the organizational culture of internationalization and provide a framework for this proactivity” (Ramalho, 2023, p. 26).

Another component is the curriculum, co-curriculum, and learning outcomes — in this case, we identify that one of the criteria for participation in the program is that the principal/school administrator is familiar with the National Common Curricular Base (BNCC), the current curriculum for basic education. Another category involves teaching policies and practices — in this case, those of the principals, which also includes teachers, who now have the *Ganhando o Mundo Professor* Program as well. These are all well-coordinated and planned programs that encompass teachers, students, and principals/school administrators. These aspects are highlighted as motivators for achieving the success of the programs, considering that school administrators “[...] must be motivated through institutional policies that develop skills such as increased knowledge and international experience” (Ramalho, 2023, p. 26), thereby positively impacting student learning and the global culture of schools. Moreover, another category of internationalization involves mobility — which was selected by the program for school administrators, as it encompasses policies coming from abroad to Brazil, in this specific case, to Paraná. The category of collaboration and partnerships, fundamental for an internationalization project or program, is reflected in ways of providing international experiences to school principals, who, upon returning from the

Ganhando o Mundo Diretor Program, will give greater visibility to their institution, which will become a reference in the regional context.

The Program includes a stage called pedagogical training, which is mandatory and consists of modules offered to school principals covering the following topics: pedagogical management and leadership; teacher professional development; management, leadership, and innovation; and teacher evaluation and integrative project: portfolio of management practices. These topics allow us to highlight the profile established for the New Management of State Schools in Paraná, that is, they act as facilitators within the school setting to implement actions that enhance “[...] attendance and learning rates in Paraná’s educational institutions” (Paraná, 2024, item 1, subitem 1.4) and focus on “[...] actions that strengthen their pedagogical leadership and provide a differentiated form of evaluation for the teachers in their institution, beyond institutional evaluation” (Paraná, 2024, item 1, subitem 1.5).

In light of the above, the immediate effects that can be inferred from this new model in the context of practice are: competition among schools; the distancing of the school principal’s role from the perspective of democratic management toward the New Public Management (NPM) model; work focused on results and student performance in external evaluations, rather than on learning and the critical development of students; the principal acting as a supervisor and monitor of teacher activities while simultaneously being monitored by the Regional Education Centers (REC) and the State Department of Education (Seed); the principal assuming the role of executor of the NPM, rather than an articulator and leader focused on the collective interests of the community; the implementation of a merit-based policy that distorts the social function of the school and pedagogical work; and the reproduction of performative models, as exemplified by the experience offered through the *Ganhando o Mundo Diretor* Program, with activities coordinated between the schools and Chilean universities.

Contrary to the identified effects, it is understood that the school principal needs to exercise leadership within the school community while addressing the bureaucratic demands of the administrative position; however, it is necessary to rely on democratic management practices, inspired by

[...] reciprocal cooperation among individuals, aiming to cultivate, within the school, a new collective worker who, free from the constraints of capitalist

management and the inhumane fragmentation of labor, emerges from the cooperative work of all those involved in the school process, guided by a “collective will” toward achieving the school’s truly educational objectives (Paro, 1991, p. 160).

For the “collective will” to be realized, school management must create conditions for the participatory autonomy of all stakeholders, including the State, prioritizing the collective perspective and considering the school’s reality and its specific issues — socioeconomic, cultural, social, and learning aspects, working conditions, collective interests, among others. It is essential to understand the concept of school management and its organization within/for the school, noting that “*Leadership is built and legitimized through participation, the exercise of democracy, and the competence in collectively constructing the pedagogical project that reflects the vision of the kind of individuals and society one seeks*” (Ferreira, 2013, p. 137), since

our management practice, committed to the formation of strong Brazilian men and women capable of guiding their own destinies, those of the nation, and those of the world, must embody *the power of knowledge-emancipation, which enables balanced emotional relationships, competence in all activities, and the steadfast moral character that guides our actions* (Ferreira, 2013, p. 138).

In this understanding, the management model is not tied to meeting targets or fostering competition between schools; rather, it is committed to all segments of the school and to the implementation of public policies aimed at improving the quality of education. This quality cannot be reduced to the achievement of targets but is linked to guaranteeing human rights and promoting emancipatory education. In order to achieve this, it is necessary to create political and cultural conditions that enable the school community to engage in a new school project, giving members of the community the opportunity to participate not only in administrative or pedagogical meetings but also in a project for the democratization of school management:

The democratization of management is advocated as a means to improve the pedagogical quality of the educational process in schools, to build a curriculum grounded in local reality, and to foster greater integration among all school stakeholders — principals, teachers, students, coordinators, administrative and technical staff, security personnel, and support staff — while promoting the active participation of the community as a contributor and key agent in the development of school work (Dourado, 2006, p. 81).

The participation of teachers and the school community is fundamental for school management to operate from the perspective of democratic management, as

in this scenario “[...] the potential of a transformative school is directly linked to changes in the system of authority and the distribution of work within the school” (Militão; Leite, 2012, p. 3039). Hence, democratic management in schools becomes a space for participation, decision-making, social transformation, and the transformation of the school environment itself in ensuring the right to education and the quality of education.

5 Final Considerations

Although advances have been observed in public schools over the past decades — such as expanded access and the creation of support mechanisms (school meals, transportation, among others) — the legal declaration of democratic management as a principle of public education still faces numerous educational challenges. These challenges undermine the potential for consolidating a socially equitable quality education, as is evident in the case of school management constrained by non-democratic directives. In this regard, the context of influence indicates that, gradually, a merit-based policy for school administrators has been consolidating in the state of Paraná since 2019. Over this six-year period, five programs were created: the Gold and Diamond School Certificate; the *Escola Bonita* Program; the Tiered Monthly Incentive Bonus (Giem); the Bonus Program for Principals and Assistant Principals (Grap); and the *Ganhando o Mundo* Program.

In the various implemented programs, the role of the school administrator is given central importance, along with the monitoring of student attendance, teachers’ access to digital platforms, and student performance results, all overseen by Seed and the REC through Saep outcomes (*Prova Paraná*, *Prova Paraná Mais*, Saeb, and Ideb). In the current state government’s Management Plan (2019-2022), there is a clear emphasis on concern for the quality of education, measured through results from external assessments. Consequently, there is a significant pursuit of efficiency and effectiveness and their integration into school management strategies, which are aligned with the contemporary state government and guided by the directives of international organizations, such as the World Bank, particularly regarding the accountability of school administrators for educational outcomes.

The text production context, characterized by the analysis of the *Ganhando o Mundo Diretor* Program, reveals the program’s role in reinforcing managerial and meritocratic actions and policies in Paraná’s education system through

internationalization and exchange experiences with Chilean schools and universities, serving as a laboratory referred to as an “inspiring experience”. In this way, the school administrators who participate in the program assume the role of replicating best practices within their school communities, based on training programs developed by Seed. From the practice context, the effects of these policies and programs implemented by the Ratinho Junior government during the 2019-2024 period reveal the construction of political arrangements aimed at implementing a state educational system grounded in the principles of New Public Management (NPM), emphasizing managerialism, efficiency and effectiveness, and merit-based policies, thereby distancing both the school institution and the school administrators from the social function of the school and the exercise of democratic management.

The perspective adopted in the state effectively hinders the debate on democratic management, holding school administrators accountable not only for low performance results but also for the poor quality of education received by students. By addressing the unequal conditions present in schools — where peripheral schools tend to have education professionals who are unlikely to benefit from bonuses and awards — the implemented policies further stigmatize and exacerbate inequalities in these institutions. Based on the foregoing, it is evident that the *Ganhando o Mundo* Program is an internationalization project with its own characteristics, planned, organized, and articulated with the objectives of the Management Plan (2019-2022). This plan prioritizes the implementation of a managerial and merit-based policy, which emphasizes “[...] simplifying the procedures and decision-making processes of public administrators, valuing merit based on results; using performance indicators and metrics to evaluate administrators” (Paraná, 2024, p. 54). The program focuses on a new model of school management, supposedly more efficient, effective, and proactive, closely aligned with market interests and policies guided by international organizations such as the World Bank and Unesco, taking Chilean education as a model of educational management.

When analyzing the *Ganhando o Mundo Diretor* Program (2024), a persistent tension emerges between two antagonistic societal projects, reflected in educational management. On one hand, democratic management, a historical achievement of post-dictatorship educational movements, legally supported by the Brazilian Federal Constitution and the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (Brazil, 1988,

1996), and grounded in collective participation, pedagogical autonomy, and holistic education (Paro, 1998; Cury, 2005). On the other hand, the NPM, which, under the discourse of efficiency, incorporates business logics into education, converting them into measurable results and institutional performance, characterized by meritocracy and individualism.

Finally, we highlight the distancing from the perspective of democratic management in the policies implemented in the state of Paraná today, which are oriented toward merit and competition within a managerial approach to public educational management. We continue to focus on this research theme through studies and investigations developed by the Educational Policy Research and Study Group (Greppe/PR), via the research project “Educational Policies in Basic Education in Latin American Countries and the Processes of Regulation and Managerialism in Education”, an interinstitutional project between the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS) and the Federal University for Latin American Integration (Unila). Aiming at broadening the discussions and analyses, we point out the need to map the institutions in which school management is working in counter-regulation, in order to share and strengthen democratic management, pedagogical work, and the goals of public school education.

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