

The concept of “obutchenie” in the face of capitalist meritocracy in education in Paraná: a study in light of the Historical-Cultural Theory¹

O conceito de obutchenie frente a meritocracia capitalista na educação paranaense: um estudo à luz da Teoria Histórico-Cultural

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the congruence between the meritocratic logic of Law No. 730/2021, implemented in Paraná's Basic Education, and the process of *obutchenie* (instruction) in the formation of scientific thinking, according to Historical-Cultural Theory. It seeks to understand the impact of capitalism on educational alienation and investigate whether meritocracy interferes with school management and teaching work by linking bonuses to the achievement of government-imposed goals. This bibliographic and documentary research examines how this policy reflects the commodification of education and transforms teaching into a mechanism of institutional ranking. It highlights that this model compromises the development of students' higher psychological functions, shifting the focus from humanization to achieving results in external evaluations. Thus, the study investigates not only the congruence between meritocracy and the process of instruction (*obutchenie*) but also its impacts on school management, teaching work, and pedagogical autonomy. It seeks to assess whether this structure contributes to the formation of theoretical and scientific

RESUMO

Este estudo tem como objetivo analisar a congruência entre a lógica meritocrática do Projeto de Lei n. 730/2021, implementado na Educação Básica Paranaense, e o processo de *obutchenie* (instrução) na formação do pensamento científico, segundo a Teoria Histórico-Cultural. Busca-se compreender o impacto do capitalismo na alienação educacional e investigar se a meritocracia interfere na gestão escolar e no trabalho docente, ao vincular gratificações ao cumprimento de metas governamentais. A pesquisa, de caráter bibliográfico e documental, examina como essa política reflete a comercialização da educação e transforma o ensino em um mecanismo de ranqueamento institucional. Evidencia-se que esse modelo compromete o desenvolvimento das funções psíquicas superiores dos estudantes, desviando o foco da humanização para a obtenção de resultados em avaliações externas. Assim, o estudo investiga não apenas a congruência entre a meritocracia e o processo de instrução (*obutchenie*), mas também seus impactos sobre a gestão escolar, o trabalho docente e a autonomia pedagógica. Busca-se avaliar se essa estrutura contribui para a formação do pensamento teórico e científico ou se reforça um

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thinking or if it reinforces an educational model focused on ranking and statistical performance, distancing itself from its social and humanizing function.

Keywords: Education. Instruction. State of Paraná.

modelo educacional voltado à obtenção de índices e ranqueamentos, distanciando-se de sua função social e humanizadora.

Palavras-chave: Educação. Instrução. Estado do Paraná.

1 Introduction

Law 730/2021, approved at the beginning of 2022, established the Monthly Graduated Incentive Bonus and the Learning Results Bonus for principals and assistant principals of educational institutions in the Paraná State Basic Education Network. Their practical content has led to the installation of meritocratic work in Paraná state schools. Compensations for learning outcomes intensify the neoliberal educational project because they measure students' knowledge through large-scale assessments to present quantitative teaching data. At the same time, they ignore, or often don't consider, the learning processes that take place procedurally and consciously in the social transformation of the concrete reality of each school, each community.

From the moment that headteachers are rewarded for their school's excellence in state tests or for student attendance to maintain their bonus, we are faced with an institution that is concerned with numbers in response to the government - like a company that needs to maintain its productivity – and not with the educational process itself. The end goal is the grade – the merit, not teaching and development.

On the other hand, from Vygotsky's perspective, the term *outchenie* refers to a universal activity of the child, the aim of which is to appropriate the products of culture and human experience through relationships mediated by others. This process is not limited to simple instruction, but is an essential moment in the child's development, stimulating the formation of higher psychic functions through mediated interaction in the educational context.

It should be noted that, according to Prestes (2012) *apud* Vigotski, *obutchenie* is a fundamental activity for development and should precede and not

only follow this process. In contrast to learning theory, which sees learning as an individual psychological process, *obutchenie* is an activity that contains the elements that generate development.

Of course, *obutchenie* is also a process, and we're not denying that. Every activity is a process from Vygotsky's perspective. But when it comes to learning, it's the result that matters. In turn, ***obutchenie* is an activity and its meaning is to be found in itself; that's why it can be said that activity contains within itself the elements that promote development.** Activity in the sense of the term *perejivanie*⁴ is rich in experiences that generate new formations (PRESTES, 2012, p. 219, emphasis added).

In this sense, it is important to emphasize that the process of teaching that promotes the development of psychic functions must go beyond everyday content and specific training for large-scale assessments, articulating the possibility of forming scientific concepts. Thus, the task planned by the teacher must consider the teaching and development process as a possibility for the formation of theoretical thinking. It is also worth noting that the process of *obutchenie* takes place through reciprocal mediation, in which the teacher and student are in the process of teaching and development mediated by a dialectical movement, considering the unity of reciprocity and diversity.

For Vygotsky (2003), the process of teaching is intentional and structured, but it is not limited to the simple transmission of knowledge. In this context, the teacher has the role of organizing the tasks in such a way that the student not only assimilates the content but also uses it as an instrument to transform

⁴ “[...] for Vygotsky, the social situation and the child's peculiarities form a unity. ***Perejivanie***, for him, does not concern a particularity of the child or the social environment in which he finds himself, but the relationship between the two. The environment has different meanings for children at different stages of their lives. From a psychological point of view, in a given social development situation, two children - a five-month-old and a five-year-old - although they are in the same space, do not experience the environment in the same way, because their specificities are at play; the five-month-old perceives the situation in one way and the five-year-old in another; therefore, each has their own experience and the social environment is not the same for both. In other words, the environment does not exist in absolute terms. To understand and study human development, we need to know the environment in relation to the specific characteristics of each individual. There is no social environment without the individual who perceives and interprets it. The social environment is a reality that includes the environment and the person, it is the in-between” (PRESTES, 2010, p. 120).

reality, thus developing his or her own thinking. In this way, teaching (*obutchenie*) should be understood as a broader concept than teaching and learning, as it encompasses the entire social dynamic between teacher, student and school in an intentional activity, in which educational processes promote human development, without fragmenting it into isolated stages, as happens in many approaches to learning theories.

Given this perspective, this study adopts the concept of instruction (*obutchenie*) to encompass the concepts of teaching-learning, teaching and learning, emphasizing that *obutchenie* is not limited to the assimilation of content, but is constituted in the Historical-Cultural Theory as an essential formative process that allows the development of higher psychic functions.

Thus, in the light of the Historical-Cultural Theory, especially the concept of *obutchenie*, this study seeks to analyze whether the meritocratic logic present in Law 730/2021, implemented in the Basic Education in Paraná, allows the formation of students scientific thinking, or whether it limits the educational process to a logic of ranking and pedagogical control. It also examines whether the introduction of meritocracy in the school environment has a negative impact on teaching and the development of higher psychic functions, compromising the quality of education. It also seeks to understand the role of capitalism as a factor of educational alienation, verifying whether the granting of bonuses to school principals, linked to the achievement of targets, influences school management and teaching work. The aim is to assess whether education structured according to this model contributes to the formation of theoretical and critical thinking, or whether it reinforces teaching aimed at obtaining indices and statistics, distancing itself from its social and humanizing function.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to analyze the congruence between the meritocracy outlined by Law 730/2021, in force since January 2022, and the educational process (*obutchenie*), with an emphasis on the formation of students scientific thinking, in accordance with the principles of Vygotskian theory.

Although Law 730/2021 was implemented with the argument of promoting improvements in educational indices, it is essential to analyze its impact on the

educational process beyond quantitative metrics. The relationship between merit and institutional performance raises questions about the real effectiveness of this model, especially when it comes to the formation of scientific thought and the quality of teaching. It is therefore necessary to consider whether the evaluation of external indicators contributes to a meaningful education or whether it ends up being limited to a school ranking format.

This research was based on the principles of theoretical and bibliographical research and was based on the method of historical-dialectical materialism, which provides theoretical support for historical-cultural theory. The method sought to interpret the object of study, considering the singular-particular-universal relationship. Because only this relationship allows us to understand the phenomenon beyond the empirical and apparent data, making it possible to unveil the essence contained in the object. The dynamics that exist in the singular-universal-particular movement make it possible to understand the object under study as a totality. For this to happen, mediation must be thought of as the unity of these three moments. The contradiction mediated in this dynamic allows for the emergence of the new, in other words, the emergence of new particularities in relation to the object under study. In this sense, Marx (2017) points out that all science would be superfluous if the form of manifestation and the essence of things coincided immediately.

The study examines the complex interaction between public education policies and the implementation of the teaching process (*obutchenie*) in basic education in Paraná. In addition, a documentary analysis is made of the implementation of the aforementioned Law, which establishes the graduated and monthly incentive bonus and the learning results bonus for directors and assistant directors of educational institutions in the Basic Education Network of the State of Paraná.

The analysis of the relationship between Law 730/2021 and the process of teaching (*obutchenie*) in the context of historical-cultural theory raises questions about the impact of meritocracy on education. While the legislation proposes the

evaluation of institutional performance, it is necessary to examine how this model dialogues with the formation of scientific thought and the construction of students knowledge.

Faced with this question, it is imperative to discuss whether basic education, as proposed in the Law in question, truly aims to form students scientific thinking, or whether it merely aligns its principles with the meritocratic logic that sustains the capitalist system. The adaptation of education to the premises of capital gives meritocracy the crucial function of controlling and limiting the school environment, silencing the school collective in the face of the challenges facing education.

In presenting the results of this theoretical and documentary research, the text is organized to cover the following topics Historical-cultural theory and the concept of *obutchenie*; analysis of meritocracy in line with capital; an approach to basic education in Paraná and the commercialization of meritocracy in the school context, an element that contradicts the true process of *obutchenie*.

2. Historical-Cultural Theory and the meaning of *obutchenie*

Lev Semionovich Vygotsky (1896-1934) felt the need to develop a general theory of psychology that would overcome empirical data and the fragmentation of psychological knowledge based on unsound assumptions. To this end, he made the following statement: “I don't want to know for free what the psyche is by choosing a few quotations, I want to learn in the globality of Marx's method how science is constructed, how to focus analysis on the psyche” (DUARTE, 2000, p. 80).

The cultural-historical theory was not seen by Vygotsky as the emergence of another psychological current, but as the construction of a psychology centered on science, which understood the subject in its entirety, and in this sense, “Vygotsky stated that a theory was needed that would play the same role for psychology as Karl Marx's Capital played for the analysis of capitalism” (DUARTE, 2000, p. 80).

According to Elhammoumi (2016), Vygotsky used the dialectical concept of contradiction to understand and explain the development of human psychological

functions and used the dialectical materialist approach to explain elementary psychological functions and how these functions are transformed into higher psychological functions.

It is understood that elementary psychological functions and higher psychological functions are contradictory because development is not formed by the sum of higher and elementary structures. It can be said that the higher functions during their development “[...] not only change and grow certain psychological functions, but, above all, the correlations between them change” (VIGOTSKI, 2018, p. 95).

For Vygotsky (1995), psychology was still unable to respond to the process of the development of the psyche in terms of the development of higher psychological functions, because psychology did not consider the historical development of psychological functions. In the conception of certain psychological currents rooted in a reductionist vision, they ended up analyzing psychic development following the development of the body, in other words, they considered only the biological and natural aspects, preserving the idea that the development of functions resulted only from cerebral maturation.

According to the new psychology proposed by Vygotsky (1995), which met the needs and desires he experienced in the context of the Russian Revolution (1917), the development of the human psyche and higher psychological functions are articulated in the search for an understanding of the formation of human behavior, thus the development of consciousness in its most complex forms does not occur from randomly constructed processes, but through historical and cultural conditions.

In other words, the development of behavior requires both internal and external processes in the formation of complex psychic functions. When Vygotsky (1995) says that the child's development takes place twice, he means that it takes place on a social level – that is, between people – and then within the child – on a personal level – that is, in the formation of human behavior.

From this perspective, Martins (2017) points out that

The process of acquiring human particularities, i.e. culturally formed complex behaviors, requires the appropriation of the legacy objectified by social-historical practice. The processes of internalization, in turn, interpose between the planes of interpersonal (interpsychic) relations and intrapersonal (intrapsychic) relations, which means: they are established based on the universe of human objectifications made available to each individual through the mediation of other individuals, that is, through educational processes (MARTINS, 2017, p. 14).

It is understood that human consciousness is the product of man's action among himself. Culture, historically constructed, transmitted and appropriated by the subject, is seen as the possibility of transforming the hominized being into a humanized being, in other words, man becomes human in the process of appropriating culture.

The term “function” has its genesis at the biological level. However, it is constituted as a higher psychological function on the social level, since the development of the function is mediated by the other. In this sense, Pino (2005) has paraphrased Marx by mentioning that the psychological nature of the person is the set of social relations that have been transferred inwards and have become functions of the personality in its structure. For this reason, all higher psychological functions are biologically formed, but “[...] the very mechanism that is the basis of higher mental functions is a copy of the social” (PINO, 2005, p. 101).

When Vygotsky (1995) emphasized that his goal with psychology was similar to the role of Marx's work “Capital”, it is possible to understand that the analysis of the development of human psyche starts from abstract determinations to synthesis in the construction of the concrete through thinking, and educational action has a primordial function in relation to the development process. Saviani (2016) says that

[...] if each human individual synthesizes social relations, this means that he is only constituted as a man through the relations he establishes with other men, that is, he can only become a man if he incorporates into his own subjectivity forms of behavior and ideas created by previous generations and reworked by him and by those who live with him (SAVIANI, 2016, p.96).

This excerpt reinforces the social and historical condition of man's existence, since his humanization occurs only in his relationship with others. The human species gives way to the construction of the human race only through educational processes that make this transformation possible. The subject is born biologically and becomes human through the internalization of culturally created signs and instruments. In this sense,

Vygotsky saw the individual as internally social. He explained: "I am a social relation of me to myself". Vygotsky's psychological approach to the human individual means many important things for us today. One is that human activity and higher psychological functions, such as consciousness and personality, are social products that develop because of social processes (ELHAMMOUMI, 2016, p. 26).

In this sense, human consciousness and personality are constructed and grounded in the material bases of the subject's concrete life and objectified in social relations. Culturally structured human activity brings with it the possibility of shaping conscious processes through thought. From this perspective, the activity of work and human praxis is at the center of the production of human psychic development in the social and individual spheres.

The historical-cultural theory emphasizes that man becomes part of the human race through the activity of work, which, according to Marx and Engels (1998), is the activity that guarantees the life of a species, and in this respect human activity differs from animal activity in that it is characterized as a conscious activity.

This explanation of mediation is based on an understanding of what dialectics is that appears with the Greeks, but it is only with Hegel that dialectical logic is systematized, including contradiction as a category of thought. However, Hegel adopts an idealistic view of dialectics, interpreting it as the movement of reality articulated with the world of ideas. For him, "[...] it is the idea (itself) that comes into contradiction with itself and becomes objectified [...]" (SAVIANI, 2016, p.78).

Marx and Engels (1998), in the work *German Ideology*, make it clear for the first time that Hegelian dialectics does not consider the movement of (concrete) reality as a primary element in the construction of thought. Marx and Engels (1998) emphasize that access to the concrete is permeated by the mediation of the abstract, i.e., the formation of thought takes place in the passage from the empirical to the abstract, which arrives at the concrete, i.e., the passage from the empirical to the concrete occurs through the process of mediation of the abstract. In this sense, Saviani (2016, p. 79) points out that “[...] the empirical and the abstract are moments in the process of knowledge, that is, the process of appropriation of the concrete in thought”.

Thus, it is understood that the quality of the mediation of signs transforms the subject/object relationship in the construction of new psychic formations. The qualitative leap resulting from the quality of this mediation is linked to the process of language/speech development, in which the use of words is a primordial condition for the sensible movement of reality to be transformed into abstraction. It can therefore be said that the activity of work and the activity of speech, mediated by instruments and signs, are fundamental elements in the construction of consciousness. From this perspective, the educational process is entirely linked to the process of development of the human psyche as a possibility for the formation of concepts to achieve theoretical thinking.

In this way it is possible to understand that the natural and cultural development of the child is intertwined in such a way that it is difficult to distinguish one from the other. One type of development depends on the other, in other words, the natural and the cultural are intertwined. The delay in logical thinking can be caused by the lack of command of language (words, speech), which explains the importance of the connection between the types of development (natural and cultural). Vygotsky (2021) points out that

[...] cultural development does not create anything new beyond what is contained as a possibility in the natural development of the child's behavior. Culture does not create anything new beyond what is already given by nature but transforms nature in accordance with the goals of man (VIGOTSKI, 2021, p. 79).

From this point of view, the development of cultural behavior in children occurs through biologically given internal changes, i.e. the higher forms of behavior depend on the lower forms that already existed in the same activity. This fact reinforces the premise of the intertwining of nature and culture. Thus, “[...] there is no complex, higher form of cultural development that is not ultimately composed of some elementary processes of behavior’ (VIGOTSKI, 2021, p. 81).

By assigning a certain task to a child, it is possible to understand the types of behavior adopted in solving the activity, since, according to Vygotsky (2021), the child does not overcome the natural means of behavior, when they carry out the task by memorizing a certain amount of numerals and words through associative or conditioned links between stimuli and reactions, this implies that the activity is carried out by natural and primitive means. Another type of behavior is cultural, i.e. the child surpasses their natural abilities by performing the task presented. During the play process, some materials are made available, such as: paper, pins, beads, string, etc. When proposing the task, the child uses the available instruments (signs) to help them solve it, in other words, they use the string to make knots, separate the beads, cut out the paper, in short, the child solves the internal task with the help of the internal materials (signs), in this type of activity it can be said that the development of memory is based on signs.

Therefore, it is worth remembering the concept of the word *obutchénie* in Vygotsky’s theory. According to Prestes (2012), the term instruction (*obutchénie*) has been confused with the terminology of the word learning. Translations have taken the word learning from English to mean instruction, “thus deforming what is really contained in the word *obutchénie* for Vygotsky and opening loopholes for classifying the cultural-historical theory in the ‘box’ of learning theories” (PRESTES, 2012, p. 218). In translations of Vygotsky into different languages, the meaning of the word instruction is sometimes “teaching” and sometimes “learning”, which is incorrect. The author is referring to the simultaneous process of “instruction” and “teaching”, which for him means “learning for its own sake”. Prestes (2012, p. 219) points out that “[...] it is not uncommon for translators to

make mistakes, changing the original text and paying little attention to the meaning of what Vygotsky says very clearly in Russian”.

For many theories of learning, learning is also a process. From this perspective, Prestes (2012) wonders what the difference between the concept of learning and activity is. This question leads to the need to understand how cultural-historical theory distinguishes learning from teaching (*obutchenie*).

From a Vygotskian perspective, teaching (*obutchenie*) is not limited to the mere transmission of content or the individual performance of students in external assessments but is constituted as a dynamic process of appropriation of socially mediated knowledge. Based on this understanding, it becomes essential to analyze the impact of meritocracy on education and to reflect on whether current educational policies favor or restrict this formative process.

The answer to this distinction between learning and activity can be found in A. N. Leontiev. The author states that psychologies that deviate from the theoretical assumptions of Marxism interpret activity in the sphere of idealistic conceptions, in the sense of a passive subject's response to an external influence. Learning theories, on the other hand, present a binomial and mechanistic scheme of analysis, using the stimulus-response (S-R) model. In Vygotsky's view, the term learning does not convey all the meaning contained in *obutchenie*, since the latter represents an activity that considers not only content, but also the subject's concrete relations to the world.

In the new Soviet regime, Vygotsky was concerned with the organization of the work of educating and teaching children. The purpose of schooling had to be the formation of the new man. Between 1920 and 1930, Vygotsky took on the task of organizing school activities.

According to Prestes (2010) apud Vigodskaja and Lifanova (1996), the beginning of Vygotsky's intellectual career coincided with the socialist revolution of 1917, the terrible civil war and its consequences for the lives of millions of children, which led the author of the historical-cultural theory to organize a new educational format, whose goal was the formation of the new man, the man of the new socialist society.

Next, Prestes (2012) points out that for Vygotsky, *obutchenie* activity can be defined as an autonomous activity of the child, guided by adults or peers, that is, the participation of the child in the perspective of appropriating the products of culture and human experience, in this sense, the word that comes closest to the term *obutchenie* is instruction.

The activity that promotes the development of new psychic formations is not transmitted by the teacher and internalized by the student as if by magic; the activity mediated in the process of instruction creates the zone of imminent development and enables the formation of theoretical thought. In this sense, Puentes (2019) points out that

[...] *obutchenie* is not a guiding activity, much less a Study Activity, it is a process and a moment. According to Vygotsky (1996), *obutchenie* is an “internally necessary and universal moment in the development process, in which the higher psychic function appears in a child’s development”; a process that guides and stimulates other internal development processes (PUENTES, 2019).

In view of the above, it is understood that school education, organized and structured according to capitalist principles, seems to hinder the internal processes of mental development through pedagogical activity, since this educational structuring is based on the principles of formal logic, which proposes the construction of thought by thought itself, hiding the movement of reality. It is known that reality is the basis of dialectical thinking, i.e. the activity mediated in the process of *obutchenie* is supported by the law of contradiction, which allows us to think dialectically about the movement of reality.

Education in the service of capitalist society is based on the principle of training cheap labor. This form of education has at its core the training of the individual to meet the demands of the market, and from this perspective, school curricula have been structured with the intention of training students with technical skills in the field of entrepreneurship. Today's schools serve as business model of education, in other words, an education that is discussed in terms of numbers, indices and targets. The construction of theoretical thinking does not

seem to take place through teaching and learning processes that focus solely on the product, without paying attention to the sinuosity of the learning process.

3. Meritocracy hand in hand with capital

The word merit means being worthy of something, the reward is promoted through the individual effort of the subject, and, in this sense, the primary objective of meritocracy is the link between merit and power. According to Soares and Baczinski (2018) the meaning of the word merit,

[...] comes from the Latin *meritum* and designates both gain, profit and penalty, punishment. “To have merit” is ‘to be worthy, to have merit means to be worthy of reward, praise, prize, esteem, appreciation’ (WALZER, 2003, p. 194-195 apud VIEIRA, M. V. et al., 2013), a vague and pluralistic meaning that allows for different interpretations according to the need for argumentation. In this context, the deserving are those who have a certain value in a given situation; those who have a set of recognized intellectual and moral qualities and do everything they can to be worthy of them (VALLE and RUSCHEL, 2010). According to Kreimer (2000 apud VALLE and RUSCHEL, 2010), in the pre-modern period the word merit was mainly associated with ethics, referring to performing a good deed. In the modern era, the word had not yet lost this meaning, but gradually came to indicate talent, recognition and knowledge, as opposed to inherited rights. This new concept of the word underpinned bourgeois reforms, justifying the norms and values “proposed by modern democratic societies” and functional hierarchies, as well as legitimizing wage inequalities (SOARES; BACZINSKI, 2018, p. 37-38).

Following on from this, Soares and Baczinski (2018, p. 37) point out that.

[...] an ideal meritocratic model, everyone would be rewarded according to their merits, regardless of social class, ethnicity or any other factor other than their own merit. However, the meritocracy preached by the capitalist system we live in is far from ideal, as it is just another means of ideological domination by the dominant classes over the lower classes (SOARES; BACZINSKI, 2018, p. 37).

The present discussion points out that school meritocracy is seen as one of the fundamental elements within the capitalist system, as it helps to perpetuate the social inequalities delimited by the system, thus reinforcing the role of school education as a tool of capitalism. The ideology behind the implementation of meritocracy in a society dominated by capital is based on the principle of dominating the working class. In this respect, meritocracy is an essential element in legitimizing the exploitation of labor, attributing the character of the result to the individual subject.

In view of the above, Béhar (2019) points out that

[...] it is necessary to emphasize the importance of the contribution of Karl Marx (1818-1883), since he “[...] transformed the concept by incorporating it into a theoretical framework and a political program that were deeply dependent on the spirit of the Enlightenment” (THOMPSON, 1990[2009], p. 43). In short, the author's conception is based on the perspective that ideology reinforces the process of domination of the bourgeois class over the rest of society through false consciousness. Thus, by making the dominated class falsely aware of the reality in which they find themselves, assuming that the conditions presented by the ideology of the dominant class are true, the bourgeoisie would act to control and manipulate individuals, making their mobilization and social transformation impossible (THOMPSON, 1990[2009]).

Considering this discussion, meritocracy, in line with the capitalist premises immersed in the educational environment, contributes to the construction of alienation, both in the teaching process and in the learning process, creating a false consciousness regarding the reading of reality. In this sense, Leite (2019) *apud* Plato (1993) highlights as an example Plato's organization of the *polis*, which emphasizes the importance of keeping a city organized and in order. To do this, everyone must perform their function properly, and to maintain this organization, the ruler enters with the role of legislator and educator of all. “He will then be given the power to determine the role of each person, according to the power that each one demonstrates in his educational journey” (LEITE, 2019, p. 60).

Meritocracy is an ancient tool designed to serve power, used as a method of persuasion. From this perspective, it is possible to draw a parallel between Plato's political system and the capitalist educational system, in which both systems use meritocracy. In Plato's case, the meritocratic system is used to maintain order in the city, while in the case of education, meritocracy is used to serve capital and individualism. Merit is defined according to the power of the individual to carry out his actions, whether in the *polis* or in school education, there can be no resistance or arguments that contradict what is imposed by the ruling class.

In school education, the management team may face challenges in balancing pedagogical autonomy with the administrative demands imposed by current public policy. The need to meet targets and performance indicators can create tensions between school management and teaching practice, raising questions about the impact of this structure on the educational environment. Faced with the demands of the meritocratic model, the management team may be under pressure to meet the targets set, which may affect the management of the school and the transparency of educational indicators such as learning rates and pupil attendance. This scenario raises questions about the impact of this model on school autonomy and teaching quality.

This discussion is based on the analysis of Law 730/2021, which entered into force in January 2022, on Basic Education in the State of Paraná, which, according to the first article described in Law 730/2021, “creates the *Gratificação de Incentivo Escalonada e Mensal* (Graduated Monthly Incentive Bonus – GIEM, acronym in Portuguese) – and the *Gratificação de Resultado de Aprendizagem* (Learning Results Bonus – GRAP, acronym in Portuguese), to be paid to public officials, in the effective exercise of the position of principal and assistant principal [...]”.

This legislation corresponds to the dirty principles of capitalism, with the intention of justifying wage inequalities. The introduction of meritocracy in basic education in Paraná promotes a management model based on school performance. However, it is necessary to reflect on how this approach affects the educational environment, whether it promotes improvements in teaching

or whether it generates a competitive dynamic that can affect collectivity and pedagogical development.

This legislation comes as an instrument against any act of resistance or scruple in relation to the current school organization. Seen as an instrument of control that acts specifically on school management, it is a way to buy off any kind of contradictory or revolutionary argument against the barbarity that is accentuated daily in the school. The atrocities that jeopardize the teaching and learning process help to legislate education in the context of competition, awards, external evaluation statistics and training. In short, meritocracy is advancing strongly in basic education in the State of Paraná and has at its core its main objective, which is an efficient way to buy control of the school community and promote the production of docile individuals, a perfect union between meritocracy and capitalism.

In this sense, Soares and Baczinski (2018, p. 38) *apud* Barbosa (2003, p. 22 *apud* VIEIRA, *et al.*, p. 318, 2013) define meritocracy “[...] as a set of values that postulates that the position of individuals in society should be a consequence of their merit. In other words, public recognition of the quality of individual performance”. This statement provides a justification for the dismantling of the school community, which allows the school to live at the height of the capitalist premise of “a tooth for a tooth, an eye for an eye”, it’s a real salve if you can, this achievement is due to the efficiency of the educational legislation that allows and orders the destruction of the concept of collectivity on the school floor.

4. Basic education in Paraná and the commercialization of education

It can be said that meritocracy entered basic education in Paraná through the front door when the Paraná *Secretaria da Educação e do Esporte do Estado do Paraná* (State Department of Education and Sports – SEED, acronym in Portuguese) drafted Law 730.2021, which, as of January 2022, established the incentive bonus for principals and assistant principals of educational institutions in the Public Basic Education Network.

According to the text of the aforementioned Law, the monthly bonus, based on the principles of meritocracy, ranges from R\$108.00 to R\$2,430.00 for

principals and from R\$92.00 to R\$2,070.00 for assistant principals, depending on the number of students in the school.

To receive the financial incentive, professionals must meet a series of requirements divided into two categories. According to the law, the GIEM establishes the number of students enrolled and their attendance as criteria. In turn, the GRAP considers the learning index. It should be noted that the learning index mentioned in this text refers to the large-scale assessments carried out in the state.

The second article proposed by Law 730/2021 (p.02-03) clarifies that

I - Graduated Monthly Incentive Bonus - GIEM:

- a) Number of students enrolled greater than 150 (one hundred and fifty), cumulative with;
- b) Student attendance greater than or equal to 85% (eighty-five percent).

- Learning Results Bonus - GRAP:

- a) The result of the external evaluation for the school year, according to the criteria established in the Regulatory Acts, depending on the evaluation system chosen, to be paid in the month following the month in which the result is calculated by the Ministry of Education and Sports.

- b) For the purpose of obtaining the GRAP, the eligible assessment may be that of the Paraná State Basic Education Evaluation System (SAEP); the National Basic Education Evaluation System (SAEB); or any other official assessment instrument to be established by act of the Chief Executive.

§ Paragraph 1 - The Graduated Monthly Incentive Bonus - GIEM shall be calculated on the basis of the number of students and shall be due to the Directors and Assistant Directors of Educational Institutions with more than 150 (one hundred and fifty) students enrolled, according to the graduated schedule established in the Single Annex to this Law.

§ Paragraph 2 - The amount of the bonuses shall be proportional to the size of the school, up to the maximum established for institutions with up to 1,500 (one thousand five hundred) students.

§ Paragraph 3 - Principals and Assistant Principals of educational institutions whose student attendance is less than 85% (eighty-five percent) shall not be eligible for payment of the Monthly Incremental Incentive Bonus (GIEM);

§ Paragraph 4 - Student attendance, calculated monthly, will indicate the incidence of the bonus that will be paid in the month following the calculation, always taking into account the school

days of each period, and will be due only in months with more than 10 (ten) school days, divided into three segments:

I - Attendance greater than or equal to 85% (eighty-five percent) and less than 90% (ninety percent);

II - Attendance greater than or equal to 90% (ninety percent) and less than 95% (ninety-five percent); and

III - Frequency greater than or equal to 95% (ninety-five percent).

§ Paragraph 5. In the event of termination of the appointment as Director or Assistant Director, when the results of the Learning Results Bonus are determined, the official then in office shall receive the amount proportional to the months during which he/she was active in these functions.

§ Paragraph 6 - Directors or Assistant Directors are entitled to the bonuses referred to in this Law in the event of a legal leave of absence, unless the leave of absence results in the termination of their mandate or appointment.

In this respect, it is possible to understand meritocracy as a tool of state control used to curtail students right to *obutchenie*. With each passing day, and with greater emphasis from this state administration, education is seen as an element that reinforces capitalist principles.

It seems that it is not the issues listed in this Law, nor the incentive bonus offered to school administrators, that will change the course of education in Paraná. Because the requirements mentioned in the law do not address the teaching and learning process in search of theoretical thinking, but rather the training of students to guarantee high levels of learning results, many of which are not true. This law does not consider the process of *obutchenie* as an expression of the singular-particular-universal relationship, a process that allows the formation of dialectical thinking.

Consequently, Veggetti explains that *obutchenie* is imprinted in the activity of learning and the activity of teaching at the same time, which leads to a series of internal developments, a zone of imminent development (verbal information)⁵. In this way, *obutchenie* is understood as a process that allows children to develop not in a natural way, but through an activity that allows thinking to develop into more complex forms.

⁵ Speech by Dr. Maria Serena Veggetti in an online presentation entitled: *Approximations and distancing between Vygotsky and Davidov, regarding the formation of theoretical concepts*, on 15 December 2021.

The true meaning of *obutchenie* highlighted by Vygotsky, according to Prestes (2012), considers the mediation of a pedagogical activity that permeates the transformation of the student's thought movement. In other words, it leads the student to solve complex tasks to build scientific concepts. The pedagogical activity that establishes scientific thinking must have as its premise the articulation of the need and the reason for solving the problem presented in the activity, since the objectification of knowledge occurs only through processes that originate in the experience of the subject, considering his concrete life history.

Final considerations

Based on this study, it can be concluded that capitalist education, based on the principles of meritocracy, does not have the theoretical foundations to adopt pedagogical processes that allow for humanization of the subject. It is well known that the activity that humanizes begins with an activity that transforms man's nature and, in transforming his nature, transforms himself.

The theory studied by Vygotsky discusses teaching (*obutchenie*) as an instrument for transforming the human species into the human race, and for this, education must start from the formation of thought in its highest forms, concluding that the concept of *obutchenie*, in the sense of building students scientific thought in accordance with the historical-cultural theory, is not printed in the format of the current educational policy.

In this context, the schooling articulated in Law 730/2021 allows and reinforces the implementation of meritocracy in schools, as well as an education based on the intention of training students to perform well in external assessments.

From the above, it can be seen that this type of education does not coincide with the objective of education legitimized by Vygotsky's theory, which has as its goal the formation of scientific thinking and the formation of a subject capable of carrying out contradictory readings of the various conceptions that exist in society, be they of the world, of man, of education, in

short, of carrying out readings of the multi-determinations imprinted on the phenomenon, presenting as a result knowledge as a totality and the recognition of the subject's self-development.

Finally, to note that, from this perspective, meritocracy, in line with the principles of capitalism, has the primary intention of enticing school managers and paying them in the form of bonuses for the suppression of alienated teaching work.

In this way, the impact of meritocracy on school management should be critically analyzed, considering whether this model reinforces the market logic within the school. By linking bonuses to the achievement of objectives, it can be questioned whether this structure contributes to the quality of teaching or whether it ends up reinforcing hierarchical relationships and the standardization of teaching, moving away from the perspective of critical education for students.

El concepto de obutchenie ante la meritocracia capitalista en la educación paranaense: un estudio a la luz de la teoría histórico-cultural

RESUMEN

Este estudio tiene como objetivo analizar la congruencia entre la lógica meritocrática del Proyecto de Ley n. 730/2021, implementado en la Educación Básica de Paraná, y el proceso de obutchenie (instrucción) en la formación del pensamiento científico, según la Teoría Histórico-Cultural. Se busca comprender el impacto del capitalismo en la alienación educativa e investigar si la meritocracia interfiere en la gestión escolar y en el trabajo docente al vincular gratificaciones con el cumplimiento de metas impuestas por el gobierno. Esta investigación, de carácter bibliográfico y documental, examina cómo esta política refleja la mercantilización de la educación y transforma la enseñanza en un mecanismo de clasificación institucional. Se evidencia que este modelo compromete el desarrollo de las funciones psíquicas superiores de los estudiantes, desviando el enfoque de la humanización hacia la obtención de resultados en evaluaciones externas. Así, el estudio investiga no solo la congruencia entre la meritocracia y el proceso de instrucción (obutchenie), sino también sus impactos en la gestión escolar, el trabajo docente y la autonomía pedagógica. Se busca evaluar si esta estructura contribuye a la formación del pensamiento teórico y científico o si refuerza un modelo educativo centrado en el rendimiento estadístico y la clasificación, alejándose de su función social y humanizadora.

Palabras clave: Educación. Instrucción. Estado de Paraná.

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