



School evaluation: a socio-historical contribution to the study of grade assignment ¹

Avaliação escolar: uma contribuição sócio-histórica para o estudo da atribuição de notas

Evaluación escolar: una contribución sociohistórica al estudio de la asignación de notas

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Abstract

Students evaluation and assessment is a daily practice in schools, although we have very little knowledge on the criteria mobilized by teachers in those processes and we do not know much concerning the history about that aspect of school culture. In this paper, I intend to contribute with the history of evaluation, mainly on a theoretical perspective, in dialogue with sociological studies, by focusing in a classificatory practice, presenting the scale of excellence that giving grades allows to formulate. Besides, in order to exemplify the potentiality of the examination of sources constituted from the school scripture, I analyse records of grades of a Catholic school located in Porto Alegre (Brazil) covering the period 1957-1964. In articulation with others historical studies, I explicit the search of precision and objectivity in the quantification of the school outcomes and the pedagogic debate concerning the subject.

Key words: History of evaluation. School excellence. School culture.

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Resumo

A atribuição de notas ou conceitos aos alunos é prática cotidiana nas escolas, embora tenhamos muito pouco conhecimento sobre os critérios efetivamente mobilizados pelos professores nesses processos e conheçamos ainda pouco acerca da história desse aspecto da cultura escolar. Assim, no presente trabalho busco contribuir com a história da avaliação principalmente do ponto de vista teórico, focalizando, em diálogo com estudos sociológicos, a dimensão classificatória envolta na escala de excelência escolar que a atribuição de notas permite formular. A fim de exemplificar a potencialidade do exame de fontes constituídas a partir da escrituração escolar, apresento a análise de fichas de notas de uma escola católica de Porto Alegre entre 1957 e 1964. Articulando-se a estudos já desenvolvidos sobre o tema na História da Educação, neste trabalho explico o detalhamento e a busca de precisão e objetividade perceptíveis na quantificação dos desempenhos escolares e no debate pedagógico acerca da questão.

Palavras-chave: História da avaliação. Excelência escolar. Cultura escolar.

Resumen

La atribución de notas para los estudiantes es una práctica diaria en las escuelas, aunque tenemos muy pocos conocimientos efectivamente sobre los criterios movilizados por los profesores en esos procesos y sepamos todavía poco con respecto a la historia de ese aspecto de la cultura escolar. Así, en este trabajo busco aportar contribuciones a la historia de la evaluación, principalmente de un punto de vista teórico, enfocando, en diálogo con estudios sociológicos, la dimensión clasificatoria envuelta en la escala de excelencia que la atribución de notas permite formular. Por otro lado, con el fin de ejemplificar la posibilidad del examen de fuentes constituidas a partir de la escritura escolar, traigo el análisis de registros de notas de una escuela católica de Porto Alegre entre 1957 y 1964. En articulación con estudios ya desarrollados en Historia de la Educación, explico la búsqueda de precisión y objetividad perceptible en la cuantificación del rendimiento de la escuela y en el debate pedagógico con respecto al tema.

Palabras claves: Historia de la evaluación. Excelencia escolar. Cultura escolar.

On the last day of the final exams we all stood behind our seats, the berets on our heads, as if we were standing at attention. Mr. Cortês walked from one to the other with serious steps, announced the final note with his usual severe expression and handed us the bulletin with a fixed look. Uncheerful, pale, my bench neighbor, good student, received his and held him in his hands as if it were a Bible. Laughing, the worst student, the girls' favorite, suntan, dropped his on the floor, like garbage. Then we return to the heat of a July day.

Pascal Mercier (2013)

Education systems are increasingly being organized using evaluation processes. On the one hand, the intention is to quantify the educational performance, producing approval/disapproval and evasion rates for example, on the other, there is the need to know and specify the learnings of students. The widely held belief in the objectivity of performance quantification procedures associated with current *accountability* demands may, occasionally, lead to considering only the tools and results, especially in the analysis of educational policies, giving little attention to the socio-historical processes of constitution of such practices that created, it is necessary to note, also the conditions of its legitimization. The school evaluations are cultural practices whose history allows us to understand the logics that structure the school in Modernity. In this sense, in this work I assume the school evaluations and specifically the practice of assigning marks as research object that deserves attention. The intention is to highlight the relevance of the theme in the field of Education History and present, as an example of the potential of the examination of this type of source, the analysis of a set of 531 report cards of a Catholic school in Porto Alegre, comprising the period [between] 1957 and 1964. The text begins with a brief entry into questions posed to the historiography of education related to the evaluation as an object and to the school writing as a source. Next, I propose the dialogue with some sociological theories about school excellence and the classification character of the evaluations carried out in schools. I also make considerations about the demand for quantification of students' performances as a criterion to give greater objectivity and efficiency to teaching. Finally, I present a brief description and some analysis of the documentation assumed as a source.

Evaluation history and school writing as a source

School evaluation is not a new topic in education. Since the establishment of the modern school, from the 16th century, evaluation has been part of the practices that characterize this institution. Franco Cambi (1999) emphasizes that the modern world is structured around processes of civilization, rationalization and institutionalization that begin to organize social life. Among other aspects, we have the affirmation “of an ethic of responsibility, in relation to that of conviction (ideal and ideological), which elaborates a calculation of the costs and benefits of an action, which inquiries about its productivity and effectiveness” (CAMBI, 1999, p. 200). In addition, there is

the dimension of institutionalization, of detailed social control, articulated in the fabric of society, exercised through *ad hoc* institutions, concerning the classification of individuals and behaviors, the creation of different social typologies (madmen, criminals, the sick, the poor, orphans, etc.) which are studied and directed towards either productive integration into society or a separation from society, to make them harmless (CAMBI, 1999, p. 200-201).

The evaluation carried out in the modern school is articulated to this set of elements having, therefore, from that moment the character of examination and the intention to allow to place each individual in the quadrant where he could best produce (FOUCAULT, 1987).

Recently, since the 20th century, the pedagogical debate has been taking evaluation as one of the central themes of Didactics and has been questioning the relevance of its examination character within a school that becomes progressively accessible to all and that effectively establishes itself, in the Brazilian case, as a right of all. In this sense, what the debates underline is the inconsistency of maintaining a selective and exclusionary practice in an institution that should include and ensure the permanence of all. This brings to mind when Luckesi (2002, p. 84) points out in the actions of teachers, the “misconception in calling ‘evaluation’, when what is done is to practice ‘examinations’”. According to him,

evaluate is the act of diagnosing an experience, in order to reorient it to produce the best possible result; it is therefore neither classificatory nor selective; on the contrary, it is diagnostic and inclusive. The act of examining, on the other hand, is classificatory and selective and therefore exclusionary, since it is not intended for the construction of the best possible result; rather, it has to do with the static classification of what is examined (LUCKESI, 2002, p. 84).

School selectivity, engineered by the evaluative practices present in the Brazilian school, will only become a question to be discussed from the 1960s, when more students begin to seek higher education (GATTI, 2002). Despite the contradictions of a selective school that presents itself as *democratic* being present throughout the 20th century – and even today –, it is only in the second half of the century that the question becomes widely discussed. Bernadete Gatti (2002, p. 18) warns:

It should be noted that, in the 1960s and early 1970s, there is still no discussion of the mass school failure in elementary school and the drop out, who had dramatic contours. In schools, make pupils “repeat” the year, by “rigorous evaluations”, had become “natural”. The fact that students were eliminated from schools, especially those with low incomes, due to uninterrupted failure, was not questioned.

Despite the relevance of the theme, Denice Catani (2017, p. 9) states that

studies of the history of evaluation practices in Brazilian education are not abundant, although the general lines of such practices have already been established and allow us to recognize that their variations have been associated, from the first half of the 20th century, to the incorporation of psychological scientific justifications or the

incorporation of technical procedures which were intended to be derived from explanations relating to learning or development.

However, there are still few, specifically, historical studies that seek to understand how these practices took place, through which transformations have passed over time, using what instruments and wrapped in which rituals were actually performed school evaluations. Therefore, it is worth recognizing that “from the point of view of a history ‘ about what the school does’ this can gain much in clarification from the analysis of the ways of examining and evaluating the students” (CATANI, 2017, p. 9).

Some authors, however, have already taken on school evaluation practices as an object of research, sometimes centrally, or as part of investigations that focus on related objects. For example, Juárez José Tuchinski dos Anjos (2011), on *A plot in history: the child in the process of schooling in the last decades of the imperial period (Lapa, Province of Paraná, 1866-1886)*, took the perspective of microanalysis to scrutinize the practices of a teacher from Paraná, among which were the records about the students, part of them about evaluation. Carolina Ribeiro Cardoso da Silva (2014), in “*The value of the student*”: *traces of evaluation practices in the primary school (Florianópolis/SC, 1911 to 1963)*, undertook extensive documentary analysis, where she sought evidence of evaluative practices that allowed her to know the students' educational achievements and disciplinary aspects. The same author also analyzed the knowledge on evaluation presented in books for teacher training, in “*The fair measure of students' progress*”: *school evaluation in pedagogy manuals of the second half of the 19th century* (CARDOSO DA SILVA, 2018). Terciane Luchese (2014), in the article *Celebrations of knowledge: final exams in the schools of the Italian colonial region, Rio Grande do Sul, 1875 to 1930*, examined legislation and minutes of final exams. In addition Joseane Leonardi el Hawat (2015) tried to describe how the school exams were performed in *The elementary mathematical knowledge in isolated schools in Porto Alegre: evaluations, teaching programs and school books (1873-1919)*. Fernanda Cristina Campos da Rocha (2017) dedicated herself to knowing the ways to evaluate the student in the study entitled *Repentance and reprobation in the graduate school, in Minas Gerais, in the first decades of the 20th century*. There would certainly be other research efforts to mention, but mapping the existing works escapes the scope of this article and extrapolates the limits objectively placed on its writing.

In common, the works that aim to analyze evaluation practices from a historical perspective have the documentary sources: school scriptural documents and legislation notably. Such studies face the difficulty in knowing the actions and the reasons that guide them. In this sense, from the historiographic point of view, the school scriptural documents – although often insufficient – opens precious possibilities before unforeseen. Thus, registration forms, newsletters, frequency maps, inspection records, class diaries, among others, are documents that, when available, bring clues about the ways of making it. In other words, it is important to recognize that

various forms of writing will populate the modern school and diversify over the centuries. The documentary traces of these scriptural practices can be constituted in the research in History of Education as sources that allow us to know the teaching work, the students and some characteristics of the school paths, in addition to making it possible to understand ways of institutionalizing school management (GIL; HAWAT, 2015, p. 22).

In the research presented here, school scriptural documents are the main source – which may, at another time, with the continuity of the research, be completed and confronted with others, such as legislation and interviews. In this stage, the individual report cards of students from a Catholic school in Porto Alegre were analyzed. The description of the documentation appears later in the text, followed by the analysis of the records present in it, which is not presented as an exhaustive analysis, but rather to serve as an example of the potentialities of this type of source.

School evaluation, classification and excellence

The school evaluation expresses a student judgment that tends to have strong social legitimacy because of the very fact the school is considered in our society an institution capable of identifying and developing supposedly innate talents. Thus, according to modern thinking, all the individuals of a society should arrive at the school and those who are better able to continue their studies would be identified and, then, they should assume more prominent social positions. It is in this sense that the Brazilian liberals defended, in the first Republican decades, the importance of enlarging the access to democratic school, that is, the school that receives all children, regardless of the social origin, and that takes care, by its own means, of selecting the best children (MANIFESTO..., 2010). One has to ask, then, what these mean, how they have historically constituted themselves and what they express about the students. In this sense, I consider it productive to establish an initial dialogue with research developed in the Sociology of Education to propose, then, the proper historical analysis of sources that allow us to advance the understanding about the socially attributed meanings to the school evaluation. Thus, I start with the reflection proposed by Philippe Perrenoud about the school evaluation, its purposes and its classification processes. Perrenoud (1999, p. 9) states that

evaluate is – sooner or later – to create hierarchies of excellence, according to which will be decided the progression in the course followed, the selection at the beginning of the secondary, the guidance for various types of studies, the certification before entering the labor market and, frequently, the employment. To evaluate is also to privilege a way of being in class and in the world, to value forms and standards of excellence, to define a student model, applied and docile to some, imaginative and autonomous for others.

These actions, so typically scholastic, have had not since the beginning of the organization of the modern school the centrality they present today. Although the examination was among the elements proposed for the organization of the first schools in Modernity², this was for a long time not one of the central aspects in the functioning of the teaching. Eventually, the school evaluation gradually became institutionalized, as the schools themselves take on more defined, more institutional form and function. Perrenoud (1984, p. 106) points out, in the European context, that

the education system was not initially oriented towards evaluation. [...] the formal evaluation only developed late; during a long period of the school history, teachers were mainly concerned with teaching. The need for certification of acquisitions, both within the school system and for the labor market, was imposed after the configuration of that system, inseparable

²The prescription regarding the examinations appeared in the 17th century, both in *Ratio Studiorum*, which regulated teaching in Jesuit schools, and in Comenius's *Didactic Magna* for Protestant schools.

from its bureaucratization; or on the basis of the increasing education of vocational training. Regarding the concern about evaluate in order to better guide pedagogical action, this is a recent didactic rationality.

Even in Brazil it is possible to observe that the school evaluation will follow very fluid processes, unsystematic and, more importantly, with little effectiveness for a long time. In the 19th century, inspection visits and final examinations are foreseen in some provincial legislation³, both of which have evaluation functions. However, throughout the period, the educational official reports carry repeated descriptions of malfunction of the system, insufficient quantity of inspectors and lack of common criteria. It is in the 20th century, wrapped in a wider effort of institutionalization of the public and democratic school, with the installation of the graded school progressively in all states of the Federation and the detailing of the rules of operation of that institution, the evaluation will prove to be an essential practice of the school, being encouraged, prescribed in detail, and having expanded its purposes (SOUZA, 1998; ROCHA, 2008; CARDOSO DA SILVA, 2014).

The school evaluation acquires specific functions in societies where education has taken a decisive position in social regulation, as is the case of Western societies in Modernity. Evaluate serves to support decisions, related to what is established as success or failure at school and that engenders a series of consequences (such as disapproval, obtain a diploma, the subjectivation of students). Evaluation at school introduces “a *breaking point* to create homogeneous sets; on the one hand those who will be reproved [...] on the other, those who advance in the course [...]” (PERRENOUD, 1999, p. 13, original italics). It also has the function of certifying acquisitions, to the extent that school diplomas are assumed in non-school spaces as indicative of the skills and knowledge acquired by their holders, although they do provide few details about precisely reached domain level (PERRENOUD, 1999, p. 13).

As far as the school dynamics themselves are concerned, evaluation is of great importance. Perrenoud emphasizes that “in all cases, evaluation is not an end in itself. It is a cog in the didactic functioning and, more globally, in school selection and guidance. It serves to *control the students' work* and simultaneously to *manage the flows*” (1999, p. 13, italics added). The marks can therefore be available to teachers to control the work and behavior of their students, can also be used in the regulation of pedagogical relationships and the educational contract⁴, in addition, also serving as a message to families on the likely results and likely consequences in the course of the school period (PERRENOUD, 1999, p. 31-35).

The marks are, however, the most visible aspect of the school evaluation, represent the codification of a rather dispersed set and varied evaluative processes that take place in the school daily life. While the mark is often described as a result of objective tools for measuring performance in learning, such means and processes did not always have the same form or the same significance in the school and their supposed objectivity needs to be discussed. According to Perrenoud (1984, p. 137, original italics), there is at school a process of

informal evaluation, which is integrated with the flow of everyday interactions, which is not given much attention, which is not coded, recorded or negotiated. That does not mean that it is without consequences, on the contrary; judging a student on certain aspects of his work and class conduct, the teacher, regardless of a more formal assessment, constitutes a relatively stable picture of his character and skills. [...] the *formal*

³For example, see Jinzenji (2010), Anjos (2011) and Luchese (2014).

⁴I refer here to the concept proposed by Guy Brousseau in the 1980s. According to this author, the educational contract would correspond to the rules established between teachers and students regarding the activities and behaviors expected of both in the classroom.

evaluation [in turn] officially sets the level of excellence of each student, whether in a specific test, or in a period of work, in a defined discipline or, still, by the entire program of the school year.

Among the difficulties faced by the researcher who is dedicated to this theme is the fact that evaluative practices are very present in the school daily life, but the criteria and contents effectively considered are rarely described. The documentation prescribing the functioning of teaching frequently mentions the need to establish a moment of assessment of the pupils' progress and eventually indicates the scoring scales, the types and assessment moments that will be counted for the grade or concept assigned to each student. However, the contents and skills to be evaluated in each discipline are usually accurately mentioned. Perrenoud (1999) points out that everything happens as if the evaluation is an obvious and direct consequence of what is placed in the teaching programs. We all know that this is not the case. Between the mention of an element to be taught in a given subject and which will be effectively considered in the student's evaluation there is a large space to be filled by each teacher.

Perrenoud suggests to mark that a significant part of the assessments about students' performance predates and/or passes far from formal moments of evaluation. Thus, hierarchies of school excellence are diffusely defined, but appear, to a greater or lesser extent, expressed in fixed and communicable classifications. According to him, "in the course of the school year, the works, the routine tests, the oral proofs, the notation of personal works and dossiers create 'small' hierarchies of excellence, none of which is decisive, but whose addition and accumulation *prefigure* the final hierarchy" (PERRENOUD, 1999, p. 11, original italics).

The norm of excellence considered for school evaluation is itself a product of the school. The knowledge and the relationship with the knowledge that the school presents as necessary in the formation of the new generations are, in fact, an arbitrary selection made by groups in position of power to define legitimate knowledge (BOURDIEU; PASSERON, 1992). The expected criteria and performance levels of students at each stage of education are also arbitrary definitions. Success at school does not effectively communicate about the abilities and knowledge of the subjects examined. So, in the school

what is evaluated is not what is thought to be evaluated, because it is tested, on one hand, very general cultural and intellectual acquisitions, independent of a particular program and teaching, and on the other hand, strictly contextualized knowledge, of which there is often not much left in a slightly different situation (PERRENOUD, 1999, p. 20).

The significance of school success is very strongly linked to specifically school rules and the arbitrary set of knowledge that this institution has chosen as relevant. Even so, the students' processes of school evaluation and the development of hierarchy are socially and subjectively perceived as denotative of abilities and mastery of endorsed knowledge. In general,

to be successful in school, to be a good student is, most of the time, to be able to redo in a situation of evaluation, which has been exercised long in a situation of learning, faced with very similar tasks and according to instructions that suggest, in its own form, what should be sought and what knowledge and operations have to be mobilized (PERRENOUD, 1999, p. 20).

In this sense, Perrenoud suggests us to think that if the grades and concepts assigned in the evaluations carried out in the school do not say much about the students' knowledge and skills, however, they say a lot about the position of a student in relation to others in the

hierarchy of school excellence and the distance of each student from the standard of excellence. It should therefore be noted that

the hierarchies of excellence and the position of each student in these hierarchies result from a relatively complex fabrication that, from the daily school work and performance specially requested with a view to evaluating students, operates successive summaries according to processes more or less codified (PERRENOUD, 1984, p. 15).

According to this author, it is necessary to understand that

success and failure are socially constructed realities, both in their global definition and in the attribution of a value to each student, in various stages of the school trajectory, through evaluation practices that follow, on the one hand, instituted procedures and scales and, on the other, depend on the arbitrariness of the teacher and the establishment (PERRENOUD, 1999, p. 19).

As Perrenoud proposes, we can understand, at this point, success and failure as *representations*. It means that the school evaluation produces discourses about the performance of students which serve as elements of mediation of the relationships of these individuals with the social world, create dispositions, establish distinctive traits and construct the ways of seeing it. Representations can be understood as “acts of perception and appreciation, knowledge and recognition, in which agents invest their interests and assumptions” (BOURDIEU, 1998, p. 107). Thus they correspond to “incorporated intellectual schemes that create the figures thanks to which the present can acquire meaning, the other become intelligible and the space can be deciphered” (CHARTIER, 2002, p. 17). These categories organized in classifications, divisions and delimitations that conform the ways of perceiving the social world, they are stable and shared dispositions that thus act as mediators of practices and discourses. Although they aspire to universality, representations are relational mental structures determined by the interests and social positions of those who forge them.

The results of the evaluation, expressed in marks, do not, therefore, have the objectivity that the school sought to advocate them. Perrenoud (1984, p. 152, original italics) recalls that

however teachers give grades, based on a criterion or comparative, strict or lax, stable or adjustable, leads different teachers to assign different meanings to the same grades, either because they have different classes [...], or because they do not have the same absolute requirement [...]. To this are added all the *qualitative* variations of interpretation and specification of standards of excellence.

It occurs that, in the first half of the 20th century, in Brazil, the school practices acted in the opposite direction of this perception, seeking an increasing detailing of the evaluation and its quantification. The fractionation of the evaluation by the various contents of the teaching, the assignment of grades by subject, the establishment of relatively short periods (such as the month or two months) for the rating of the school results, are procedures that are affirmed in the schools in the period mentioned, seeking to increase the objectivity and quality of the students' evaluation. The scope was the improvement of learning and the greater efficiency of teaching that was favoring the school flow of the population growth, mainly children, who began to arrive at school. The result, however, was the sharpening of selectivity and school exclusion, in processes of

disqualification of students and with objective consequences in their trajectories. In any case, despite the relevance and centrality of the evaluation in the current school, the historical understanding of the processes by which, over time, school performances were expressed and recorded is still scarce. In view of this, I consider it productive, as an example, to present the analysis of the books of marks records of a private school in Porto Alegre, between 1957 and 1964. From these documents it is possible to understand the minutiae in the quantification of the evaluation performed by the school in the period. Before, however, it is important to make an incursion by the expectations of objectivity in the evaluation of the students' performances as expressed in pedagogical documentation between the years 1930 and 1960.

Objectivity and impersonality: pedagogical tests and the quantification of performances

The proposal of verification and recording of the students' performances is linked to the effort observed in Modernity to create the school and prescribe its operation. Carolina Ribeiro Cardoso da Silva (2018, p. 79) checks, when analyzing pedagogy manuals used in Brazil in the 19th century, the following

the term evaluation itself was not yet part of the school lexicon and is not mentioned in textbooks or educational legislation in that period. However, when performing the reading of the works, it was realized that evaluation - understood as an act of assigning value to different aspects of school life - was a practice in the schooling of the 19th century.

According to the author, the manuals evidence two functions assigned to the act of evaluating. The first one would be associated with disciplining the students, in mechanisms of control of frequency, behavior and application. The second function would be classification, that is, it mattered through exams, tests and exercises to organize students in classes and also to provide information indicating approval or disapproval at the end of the course.

Although the records of minutes of public examinations carried out in the 19th century in Brazil indicate the predominance of descriptive mentions of performances, in expressions such as *approved simply*, *fully approved*, *approved with distinction*⁵, Cardoso da Silva (2018) finds in the manuals for teacher training instructions for the assignment of grades indicated by numbers. For example, in the *Curso Pratico de Pedagogia* manual (published in 1851 in France; translated into Portuguese and published in Brazil in 1865), Jean Baptiste Daligault mentioned as indispensable in schools, three registration books: admission or enrollment; frequency and marks; composition (CARDOSO DA SILVA, 2018). In the frequency and marks book should be recorded:

1st. the *absences* or nonattendances of the disciples, and their *motives* and 2nd. the various marks, which they have deserved, both for their *conduct*, and their *cleanliness*, and for the *good achievement*, or success obtained in each of the branches of teaching, and as well as the *prizes*, or *good points*, which have been granted to them as a consequence of these marks (DALIGAULT, 1870, p. 138, italics in the original apud CARDOSO DA SILVA, 2018, p. 96).

⁵ Some studies already mentioned in this text analyze the performance of the examinations in the 19th century. See, as an example, Jinzenji (2010), Anjos (2011) or Luchese (2014).

For Daligault, the marks should be "as accurate as possible" (CARDOSO DA SILVA, 2018) and therefore the author prescribed to teachers how to proceed in relation to this record:

Every day the Teacher records in a stub or *memorial* the most important *facts* of the lessons, which refer to the *work*, the *conduct*, and the *cleanliness* of the students. At the *end of the week*, on each one of these objects extract from these daily marks a *fortnightly* mark, or weekly mark, which expresses by numbers 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 (which have the meaning of "VERY WELL, WELL, *well enough*, bad, and VERY BAD") and inscribes them in the column of the table to which the mark refers (DALIGAULT, 1870, p. 139, italics in the original apud CARDOSO DA SILVA, 2018, p. 101).

Cardoso da Silva (2018) details, still, that at the end of each week it was necessary for teachers to assign grades for each teaching branch and, at the end of the month, these grades should be added, calculating the average.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the circulation of the new education ideas reaffirmed and strengthened proposals for the rationalization and standardization of school practices, understood as *modern pedagogy*. In this sense, the quantification of school performances became articulated to the emerging enthusiasm with the psychological tests, whose scientific features should increase the efficiency of teaching (MONARCHA, 2009). Among others, the publication, in 1930, of the book *Introdução ao Estudo da Escola Nova*, by Lourenço Filho (2002), made the precepts of that movement widely circulated when compiling the classes of Psychology and Pedagogy that the author taught at the Escola Normal de São Paulo. The author presented the contributions of experimental psychology to education, among which the tests of intelligence and maturity, highlighting the advantages of the *technical* aspect that contributed to the educational action. In their understanding, these elements should be part of everyday teaching practice:

The teacher, because of his specific functions, which are those of work in class, do not necessarily fit the tasks of school psychologist. Not so, should he ignore the modern resources of applied psychology and, in particular, the general bases of the applications of tests and scales (LOURENÇO FILHO, 2002, p. 131).

According to Lourenço Filho (1947), education, as a technique, should be based on statistics as the basis of biological, psychological and educational measures in the educational process. It was necessary to *measure* the students, allowing an initial diagnosis and a later verification of the results of the pedagogical process, in order to arrive at an objective conclusion regarding its classification. For Lourenço Filho (1947, p. 486, italics in the original), the objectivity and impersonality in the evaluation of school performance were fundamental aspects to improve the efficiency of the school:

With the application of initial verification standards and post-work verification standards, a truly technical criterion can be established for school performance. It is this *technical awareness*, in particular, that statistics bring to the intimacy of didactic value. Without it, the teacher may have an idealistic, even exalted, sentimental attitude towards his work. But with that attitude we are no longer satisfied in education field.

The teacher must also know how to measure, how to verify his own work and the value of the processes he employs.

Faced with this, he said that the systems of objective measures of school work and students' abilities had been generalizing.

The concern about the sentimental interference of teachers in the measurement of the results of pedagogical work was not, however, a new one and, in particular, in regard to the marks given to pupils according to their school performance. In 1937, for example, Plínio Paulo Braga, in a periodic publication of the São Paulo Teaching Board⁶, pointed out some problems regarding the promotion criteria in primary education:

The criterion of promotions in the primary course has not been uniform. The marks vary from master to master and from moment to moment, by basing the current system on personal and subjective criteria, aggravated by emotional influences. [...] These processes, so to speak empirical, mechanical, will be able to be replaced, with real advantages, profit and efficiencies for primary education, by the use of tests, as a faster, scientific and secure means of school performance verification (SECRETARIA DA EDUCAÇÃO E DA SAUDE PUBLICA, 1937, p. 29).

Another example can be observed in a statement of the Directorate of Public Instruction of Rio Grande do Sul, published in 1941 in the *Revista do Ensino*:

In order to organize more or less homogeneous classes and thus facilitate the work of the teacher and increase the income of the school work, the Technical Section [of that Board] established, on the basis of the result of the statistical treatment to which the experimental tests applied at the end of the last school year were submitted, tables to be complied with in the distribution of pupils, by the different classes of the primary school (1941, p. 162).

From the result in these tests, students should be distributed in five different classes, organized according to the differences in scores tests in math, social and natural studies and language. What we observe, therefore, is that in addition to psychological tests, they sought to employ in schools other types of tests and exams that would allow them to measure more accurately and objectively the learnings performed.

It is important to note that it is under discussion in the educational field, between the years 1930 and 1960, the importance of objective measurement of the students' performances and, in this sense, one of the alternatives put into circulation was the development of pedagogical tests. The analysis of the articles published (between 1944 and 1964) in the *Revista Brasileira de Estudos Pedagógicos*, by INEP (Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais), on the school evaluation⁷ indicates the recurrent interest in the exams and different types of tests. For the journal's collaborators, "the accurate diagnosis of school

⁶ An accurate analysis of all official publications of the São Paulo Teaching Board was performed for the 1930s, seeking elements about the issue highlighted in this article. Likewise, the volumes of the *Revista do Ensino* (Rio Grande do Sul) published between 1939 and 1978 and the numbers of the *Revista Brasileira de Estudos Pedagógicos*, published by INEP, between 1944 and 1964, were analyzed. The results obtained indicate the convergence of discussions in the three publication sets. Instead of a detailed description of the documents examined, it was decided to focus on the central aspects of the arguments proposed here, bringing only a few quotations as an example.

⁷ Dilmar Kistemacher (2010) analyzed the issue in her Master's dissertation. In his work it is possible to find the synthesis of some of the articles published in the *Revista Brasileira de Estudos pedagógicos*.

performance and students' performance would be guaranteed by the objectivity of the exams”, in addition, “the efficient diagnosis would be plausible due to the extraordinary development that had occurred in the quantitative and qualitative methods of evaluation” (KISTEMACHER, 2010, p. 152). Lourenço Filho, for example, when defending the need for objectivity in school exams, allowing them to become reliable instruments of measurement, mentions the preference for *pedagogical tests*, instead of written exams (LOURENÇO FILHO; HILDEBRAND, 1945). The author details the proposal as follows:

The written tests, commonly applied in our schools, are of entirely arbitrary composition and subjective judgment. That is, from judgment that becomes variable from master to master. What was conventionally called *objective exam* corresponds to material already selected with some care, enunciated in a less arbitrary way, and susceptible, therefore, of less precarious evaluation. *Pedagogical* or *educational tests*, finally, are evidence composed of measured material beforehand, perfectly known in its content of reliability and validity (LOURENÇO FILHO; HILDEBRAND, 1945, p. 53, italics in original).

In the same article, Armando Hildebrand (LOURENÇO FILHO; HILDEBRAND, 1945) also considered that school evaluations needed to be reviewed in order to present greater objectivity. According to him, the examinations were not necessary if they continued “to be exams, written or oral, organized to the flavor of the moment and corrected according to the good or bad mood of the masters; if they continued to be decorated exhibitions of memorized points, or answers to questions from pocket” (LOURENÇO FILHO; HILDEBRAND, 1945, p. 51). For Hildebrand, the way they were being organized, the exams were largely based on luck and were not configured as good instruments for evaluating the real results of the students' learning. Thus, the rationalization of school practices presupposed, for the efficient grouping of students based on their objective classification, the use of tests:

the mental tests and the pedagogical or educational tests, those for the verification and measurement of the mental qualities, these for the verification of the learning of the pupil in the various disciplines. Psychological tests are also applied, as an element of professional guidance, in the verification of student trends, individually and collectively observed in primary schools (JARDIM, 1946, p. 460).

The analysis of the pedagogical press highlights the growing importance of accuracy, objectivity and impersonality in school evaluation processes. It can therefore be said that in the teacher training institutions, during the first half of the 20th century, the giving school marks expressed in precise numbers was considered a desirable practice that would make it possible to increase the efficiency of teaching. These discussions reached the professors in exercise and must have impacted the ways in which they evaluated their students and recorded the use of the classes. However, there is a distance that must be scrutinized from historical research between the pedagogical prescriptions in textbooks and printed material intended for teachers, and the tools and practices put into operation in schools. In this sense, the analysis of the mark forms presented below can provide some important clues and stimulate new research.

The students' performance in the primary course of the Santa Clara School (1957-1964)

The Santa Clara School⁸ was a teaching institution that operated in the city of Porto Alegre (Rio Grande do Sul - Brazil) between 1926 and 1983, maintained by the Charitable Society and Literary São Francisco de Assis. It initially offered only the primary course in girl's classes. In 1962 began to operate the classes of the secondary course. In this period, the school received both girls and boys.

For this study, 531 individual forms were analyzed, where the students' marks, from 1957 to 1963, were recorded. In 1964, the forms are reproduced in notebooks. This documentation was located in the archives of the School Control Sector of the Department of Education and Culture of the State of Rio Grande do Sul (SEDUC/SECOE) which keeps, since 1972, documentation of the extinct schools of Porto Alegre. In addition to the forms considered here, there they store, in boxes for Santa Clara School documentation, also admission exam minutes, nominal list of enrolled students, contribution table to be charged of students, lists of teachers, teachers' remuneration table, class capacity and class area.

The choice for the analysis of this documentation, selecting the period 1957 and 1964, was due to the richness and rarity of the documentary *corpus*, a wide set, quite complete, filled and well preserved of student marks forms. These are individual forms printed, in the first years, and handwritten or mimeographed in 1964. In the header of the forms there are the full name of the student, his/her age, the school year, the course grade and the overall average grade. The forms show in the first column the list of subjects of the primary course: behavior, application, religion, reading, grammar, dictation, writing, arithmetic, social studies, drawing, manual work, singing and physical education. Then there are columns for marks indication month by month, between March and November. The last columns are to record the average of the monthly inquiry, the written and oral exam mark, the final average. On the bottom lines, there is room to indicate the average of the results each month, as well as the *place* occupied by the student in relation to the colleagues and the *flaws*, where the total absences to the classes should be indicated.

Nome : <input type="text"/>												
19 <u>57</u> <u>9</u> anos <u>1º</u> ano Média geral <u>8,8</u>												
	Março	Abril	Mai	Junho	Agosto	Setembro	Outubro	Novembro	Média das avaliações	EXAME	ORAL	N. FINAL
Comportamento		10	10	10	10	10	10			10		
Aplicação		10	10	10	10	10	10			10		
Religião		10	-	10	10	10	-			10		
Leitura		10	10	10	10	10	10			} 9,3		
Gramática		-	9,5	10	10	10	9					
Ditado		10	10	10	10	10	10					
Redação												
Aritmética		10	10	10	10	10	9			4,2		
Est. Sociais												
Desenho		9	10	10	10	10	10			10		
Trab. Manuais		8	9	9	-	-	-			-		
Canto				8	-	-	-			8		
Ed. Física		-	-	10	10	10	10			10		
MÉDIA		9,8	9,9	10	10	10	9,6			8,8		
LUGAR		1º	1º	1º	1º	1º	1º			4º		
FALHAS												

⁸ It was not possible to locate previous studies on the history of this institution. Thus, the information about the school presented in this article was obtained in the same file in which the notes are deposited.

A first aspect that draws attention is the monthly record of the grades in each discipline, even for minor children, first and second year of primary school, who were between six and nine years old. Another relevant element is the prediction that the classification of students is recorded monthly from the average of the inquiries in the disciplines that counted for approval, emphatically displaying the hierarchies of excellence. The most common in the analyzed set is that there is a variation in the position occupied by the students each month, resulting from the difference in performance of the same student throughout the year.

There is a large difference between the forms of 1957 and 1958 and those of 1964 as regards the marks. Although the marks vary, sometimes a lot, from one month to another, in 1957 and 1958, they concentrate markedly above 6.0 and are very rare the marks below 5.0. It is also observed that low Arithmetic performances are accompanied by equally low performances in Portuguese. In those years, still, the marks for behavior, application, Religion, Drawing, Crafts, Singing and Physical Education are expressed in round numbers (without decimal fractioning) allowing one to suppose that they are the result of assumptions that are likely to more subjective. While others, where decimals are frequent, it is possible that they have been obtained in tests with defined score for a certain number of questions and exercises. In 1964, grades below 5.0 are more frequent than in previous years, the performances in Arithmetic, for some students, are presented markedly lower than in other disciplines and the discipline Religion goes on to receive fractional marks in decimals, like 8,2 for example.

With regard to reprobation, it should be pointed out that it is not identified in the forms analyzed at the beginning of the period. It was only in 1960 that we had the registration in the forms, for the first time, of the disapproval of students. Analyzing only the records of the 1st series it is necessary to mention that there is the increase of the number of registrations each year, as it is observed in the table below:

Year	Number of 1st series enrollment	Disapproval
1957	14 students	-
1958	24 students	-
1959	38 students	-
1960	59 students	8
1961	51 students	-
1962	73 students	5

Of the 8 students who failed in 1960, only one of them was enrolled in the first grade of this school in 1961 and followed the school path without further retention until at least the third grade.

As has already been mentioned, there are many disciplines in the printed file. However, not all are filled. Thus, behavior and application are only graded in the first series classes. On the other hand, in this grade, there are no records in writing, social studies and manual works. Reading, grammar and dictation make up a single average at the end of the year, in the case of the 1st grade, plus writing, for the other primary series.

Not all disciplines that receive grades throughout the year, however, count for the final result, that means for approval. Even the monthly averages, which result in the classification expressed in the forms, count only Religion, Portuguese⁹, Arithmetic and Social Studies. It is important to emphasize, for example, that the behavior and application marks do not enter in the calculation of the average. That does not mean that they do not [have] “value”, since they

⁹ In the forms it does not appear expressed that way, it is the average of the reading, grammar, dictation and writing marks.

certainly had weight in conducting the daily relationship in the classroom, favoring or not, the appreciation in formal assessment situations. It is also worth noting that it is the disciplines accounted for the final average that receive marks with decimal places (7,2 or 8,9, for example), what makes one think that, in an effort of objectivity, these were evaluated in more formal situations and by evaluative instruments that allow the quantification of knowledge, such as exams and inquiries. The other subjects, perhaps because of this, could be evaluated more globally, the mark being, much more often, 9 or 10. Religion, however, has a peculiar position in this regard. In 1957 and 1958 the marks of this discipline follow those of behavior and application, for example, being expressed without decimals and tending to 9 or 10, although they are part of the calculation of the final average. It is, after all, probably the only content whose evaluation does not include only intellectual performance. This is illustrated by the final marks of a student in 1957: Portuguese 5.3, Arithmetic 5.9, Social Studies 5.2 and religion 8.6. That is, religion contrasted with the other marks and contributed to increase the final average of the student, which closed at 6.

A final aspect that deserves to be highlighted in the analysis of the forms, concerns the evidence of some persistence in the ways of assigning grades. In 1964, the school no longer uses the printed form of the first years, but continues to record the marks in individual mimeographed forms or reproduce them by hand in a notebook. The mimeographed forms are much simpler than the previous ones. They do not include the *behavior* and *application* items and do not provide space to register the *place* of each student in the hierarchy of the marks. What draws attention is that, as the school now has two classes for each grade, filling differs, making us ponder on what was mandatory on the forms and what was considered relevant by the teachers. So, for example, in the forms of 1st grade class A, from 1964, the *place* field only appears filled out for the top 10 placed each month. In the 1st grade class B, that same year, this field is never filled, even if the scores of several students are quite high.

The comparison of the records of the second year A and B, produced by pen in a notebook, evidences the choices of the teachers in the very composition of the format. Thus, for class A appears the *attitude* category where OT, MB and REG are registered (great, very good and regular). This indicates the permanence of the appreciation of behaviors that previously received quantified marks in forms as *behavior* and *application*. The absence of these categories in the mimeographed forms indicated that they were no longer contents whose evaluation should be formalized in the records. This same teacher includes in the forms a field for the *embroidery* marks, only for the girls. The teacher in class B writes her forms differently. She reproduces the old printed form only excluding *behavior* and *application*, without including any other category. There is also no *embroidery*, but there are marks for *manual work* only in the girls' forms.

Final considerations

In this article I tried to bring theoretical and methodological considerations and some results from historical documentary research on the evaluation of the school performances of primary school students. I started from the understanding that the subject of the school evaluation is very relevant and very current. In this way, broadening the understanding of the history of school evaluation processes allows to strengthen and diversify studies in the History of Education, as well as providing important elements lacking in the current debate on the issue: such as the illusion of objectivity of the quantification of performances and the contradiction of the democratic school that persists in selective and exclusionary evaluation practices.

The grade assignment is the privileged focus of the analyses presented here, about which we still have few studies in the field. The intention was to bring, in dialogue with sociological and historical studies, an initial examination of the documentation. Of the results, what stands

out most is the detailing and the accuracy of the quantitative records that intend to indicate the students' performances. Thus, it is expressive of the classification rationality that guides the actions and the subjects of the school that the marks are assigned to each of the contents month by month and the monthly averages allow to position the students in an order measured by the values obtained. It also incorporates this practical reason, the frequency with which the marks are expressed in decimal fractioned values such as 8,2 or 6,9. Finally, it should be mentioned that categories such as *behavior* and *application* make up the list of categories in which students are evaluated and receive, as well as in others, grades.

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