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Somar Project: the paths of privatization in the management of public education in the state of Minas Gerais after five years of implementation[1]

Projeto Somar: os caminhos da privatização da gestão da educação pública no estado de Minas Gerais após 5 anos de implementação

Proyecto Somar: Los caminos de la privatización de la gestión de la educación pública en el estado de Minas Gerais tras cinco años de implementación

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Abstract: This study analyzes the *Projeto Somar*, implemented in 2020 within the context of the educational policies of the Romeu Zema (2019-2022) administration in Minas Gerais, as an expression of contemporary reconfigurations of public educational management under neoliberal logic. The investigation examines the transfer of the management of three state public schools to social organizations, highlighting the advancement of indirect forms of privatization that challenge the public character of education after five years of the project's implementation. Inserted within a broader movement of the commodification of education, the project signals the intensification of public-private relations and the redefinition of the role of the State. Methodologically, the research articulates a literature review and document analysis, seeking to apprehend the phenomenon in its historical and contradictory dimensions. The results indicate that, although presented as an efficiency strategy, the model undermines democratic principles and reinforces the influence of capital in the organization of public schooling, producing profound implications for education in Minas Gerais.
Keywords: Privatization; Projeto Somar; Public-Private Relations; Romeu Zema.

Resumo: O estudo analisa o Projeto Somar, implementado em 2020 no contexto das políticas educacionais do governo de Romeu Zema (2019-2022) em Minas Gerais, como expressão das reconfigurações contemporâneas da gestão pública educacional sob a lógica neoliberal. A investigação analisa a transferência da gestão de três escolas públicas estaduais para organizações sociais, sob o avanço de formas indiretas de privatização que tensionam o caráter público da educação após 5 anos de implementação do projeto. Inserido em um movimento mais amplo de mercantilização do ensino, o projeto sinaliza a intensificação das relações público-privadas e a redefinição do papel do Estado. Metodologicamente, a pesquisa articula revisão bibliográfica e análise documental, buscando apreender o fenômeno em sua dimensão

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histórica e contraditória. Os resultados indicam que, embora apresentado como estratégia de eficiência, o modelo compromete princípios democráticos e reforça a influência do capital na organização da escola pública, traçando implicações profundas para a educação mineira.
Palavras-chave*:* Privatização; Projeto Somar; Público-Privado; Romeu Zema.

Resumen: El estudio analiza el *Projeto Somar*, implementado en 2020 en el contexto de las políticas educativas del gobierno de Romeu Zema (2019-2022) en Minas Gerais, como una expresión de las reconfiguraciones contemporáneas de la gestión pública educativa bajo la lógica neoliberal. La investigación examina la transferencia de la gestión de tres escuelas públicas estatales a organizaciones sociales, evidenciando el avance de formas indirectas de privatización que tensionan el carácter público de la educación tras cinco años de implementación del proyecto. Inserto en un movimiento más amplio de mercantilización de la enseñanza, el proyecto señala la intensificación de las relaciones público-privadas y la redefinición del papel del Estado. Metodológicamente, la investigación articula revisión bibliográfica y análisis documental, buscando comprender el fenómeno en su dimensión histórica y contradictoria. Los resultados indican que, aunque se presenta como una estrategia de eficiencia, el modelo compromete principios democráticos y refuerza la influencia del capital en la organización de la escuela pública, generando profundas implicaciones para la educación en Minas Gerais.
Palabras clave: Privatización; Projeto Somar; Público-Privado; Romeu Zema.

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Introduction

The present study investigates Project Somar, an educational policy implemented by the State Secretariat of Education of Minas Gerais (SEE/MG), in the context of reforms guided by neoliberal principles during the government of Romeu Zema (2019–2022). Conceived as a "pilot" project, the announcement and discussion of Project Somar began in 2020, but it was only effectively published and implemented in 2021 by SEE/MG, with an estimated duration of five years, to be tested in three state schools[4], for a period of 54 months, ending in the second half of 2025, and, if the results were better than before the project's implementation, the proposal was that the Project could be extended throughout the entire state education network of MG (Rodrigues, 2023). In this model, Somar was structured with the purpose of "testing" the transfer of management of public state schools to private social organizations, under the argument of promoting greater administrative efficiency and improvement of educational indicators.

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Inserted into a broader scenario of reconfiguring the role of the State in social policies, Projeto Somar materializes contemporary forms of privatization of public education, especially through so-called shared management, in which ownership remains state-owned, but administrative and pedagogical leadership is delegated to private agents (Pereira; Paiva and Rodrigues, 2024). This movement does not constitute an isolated phenomenon but is part of a historical process of advancing privatizations in Brazilian basic education, linked to the expansion of market logic over constitutionally guaranteed rights (Freitas, 2018).

In the state of Minas Gerais, this process gains specific contours by articulating with governmental directives that advocate for reducing state action and expanding partnerships with the private sector as a management strategy, as is the case with Romeu Zema, representative of the NOVO Party[5]. In this sense, Projeto Somar emerges as a concrete expression of a political project that understands education not only as a social right but "as a potential field for investment and managerial rationalization, aligned with structural reforms initiated in the 1990s and intensified in the contemporary scenario" (Freitas, 2018, p. 37).

Considering that the proposal was conceived to be in force for a period of five years, it becomes fundamental, in the year 2026, to proceed with an analysis that articulates the moment of its implementation with its most recent updates, seeking to apprehend its continuities, inflections, and developments. Such a temporal cut makes it possible to understand the project not only in its initial formulation but as a historical process in development, marked by contradictions, disputes, and reconfigurations.

In view of this, the study is guided by the following problem statement: what are the implications of implementing Project Somar for public education in Minas Gerais, especially concerning the intensification of privatizations in educational management? Based on this question, the aim is to analyze the project in its concrete totality, highlighting how forms of education commercialization materialize in daily school life and what their impacts are on management, teaching work, and the democratic principles that historically underpin public schools.

Grounded in a critical-dialectical perspective (Gramsci, 1966), the investigation understands Project Somar as an expression of a broader movement of education

5 It is a Brazilian right-wing political party founded in 2011. According to the party, which claims to reject political labels, its main stance consists of defending civil liberties, with an incentive for entrepreneurship. According to its founders, the party's principles include the defense of economic freedom and individual liberty, in addition to proposing a Minimal State (Novo, 2018).

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commodification (Adrião, 2018), in which the expansion of capital into the public sector occurs through multiple strategies, not always explicit, but profoundly structuring. In this sense, analyzing such a policy implies unveiling its historical determinations, its underlying interests, and its implications for guaranteeing the right to public, free, and quality education.

Regarding methodological procedures, the investigation is initially based on bibliographic research, the purpose of which was to deepen the theoretical framework that supports the analysis and guides the interpretation of the data produced. In this sense, to support the discussions developed, contributions were mobilized from authors who problematize the reconfiguration of the State's role and the advancement of capital in education, such as Laval (2019), Freitas (2018), Evangelista (2013; 2018), Fontes (2010; 2020), and Peroni (2018), among others.

As Minayo (2013, p. 22) points out, "methodology includes theoretical approaches, the set of techniques that enable the apprehension of reality, and the researcher's creative potential." In this direction, the methodological path adopted is anchored in a qualitative, documentary approach, as outlined by Esteban (2010) and Cellard (2008). This choice is justified by the possibility of apprehending the investigated phenomena in their complexity, based on the production of descriptive data constructed in the direct relationship between the researcher and the analyzed context. It is important to highlight that methodological rigor demands theoretical and technical mastery from the researcher, to avoid the production of superficial analyses or the collection of data disarticulated from the research problem.

Secondly, a documentary research was developed with the objective of examining official materials produced by the government of Romeu Zema and the State Secretariat of Education of Minas Gerais (SEE/MG), especially those related to the Somar Project and partnerships with the private sector in education.

It should be noted that methodological choices are not neutral but express theoretical and political positions regarding the object under investigation. Thus, the adopted approach articulates the analysis of documents and theoretical productions, seeking to understand the phenomenon in its historicity and concrete determinations. In this way, the Somar Project is analyzed as a complex and contradictory phenomenon, involving multiple actors and expressing broader trends in the reconfiguration of educational policies under neoliberal hegemony. From this approach, it becomes possible to highlight not only the diversity of forms assumed by privatizations in education but also their effects on the organization of

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public schools, teaching work, and the principles that underpin the right to education, aspects that will be further explored in the following sections.

The NOVO in Minas Gerais Educational Management

The ascension of Romeu Zema to the government of Minas Gerais in the 2018 elections was marked by a discourse of rupture with previous models of public management, strongly associated with the identity of his party, NOVO, whose very name suggests the promise of change. In this context, the government plan titled "Liberdade ainda que tardia" (Liberty, however late), presented to the Superior Electoral Court, was structured as the main programmatic reference for the candidacy, organized into five priority axes: State Management, Wealth Generation, Health, Public Security, and Education.

A closer analysis of the document highlights, from its earliest formulations, the centrality attributed to public-private partnerships (PPP) as a management strategy, especially in the educational field. This orientation becomes evident in the excerpt stating: "Too much state, too much public spending, too much corruption, too many taxes. [...] We believe that guaranteeing freedom is the state's sole and true function, and that, therefore, it must be minimal" (Partido Novo, 2018, p. 4). This position clarifies the plan's affiliation with principles characteristic of neoliberalism, such as the defense of a minimal state, the valorization of individualism, and the centrality of freedom of choice. As Brown (2019) points out, such discourses not only guide public policies but also produce specific forms of subjectivation aligned with neoliberal rationality.

Throughout the document, a recurrence of proposals is observed that encourage the transfer of state responsibilities to other agents, especially the private sector. In this regard, the plan states: "The State does not solve all problems [...] it is possible to delegate some of its functions through concessions, public-private partnerships, and denationalization actions" (Partido Novo, 2018, p. 15). This perspective emphasizes a conception of the state guided by market logic, where efficiency is associated with private action. However, as Freitas (2018) argues, this defense of a reduced state does not imply its absence but its reconfiguration: it is a state that withdraws from the field of social policies and expands in guaranteeing the conditions for the reproduction of capital.

In this vein, Peroni (2018) and Harvey (1989) highlight that the so-called "minimum State" operates, in practice, as a maximum state for capital, by creating favorable conditions

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for accumulation, including through the transfer of public resources to the private sector. Thus, in the educational field, this logic materializes in the proposition of strategies that bring public schools closer to market mechanisms. The plan suggests, for example, the expansion of access to private education and the adoption of instruments such as vouchers, tax credits, and partnerships with the private initiative, even while acknowledging legal limitations for their implementation: "Even in the face of legal limitations, it is possible to carry out PPP [...] including the management of the administrative area" (Partido Novo, 2018, p. 35). Such a proposition is anchored in the idea that private management would be, by nature, more efficient, an argument criticized by Fontes (2020), who demonstrates how this assumption contributes to the delegitimization of public service and to the naturalization of public-private partnerships as an inevitable solution.

The section of the government plan dedicated to education reinforces this perspective by presenting Ideb data that point to differences between public and private networks, constructing a narrative that associates educational performance with managerial efficiency. By highlighting the increase in public investments without a proportional correspondence in results, the document suggests a supposed inefficiency of the public sector, disregarding structural and historical factors that permeate Brazilian education.

Given this scenario, the government plan explicates the adoption of mechanisms typical of competitive logic, by stating that "the permanence of private institutions in the market would depend on their performance, unlike public schools". Based on this interpretation, it proposes the incorporation of "managerial practices, stricter evaluations, and the expansion of public-private partnerships" (Partido Novo, 2018, p. 36).

Thus, this conception of the Zema administration inserts education into the circuit of capital appreciation, insofar as, as Harvey (1989) argues, the provision of public resources to private agents constitutes a fundamental condition for capitalist reproduction. In this view, privatization is not restricted to the transfer of ownership but involves the incorporation of mercantile logics into public management (Peroni, 2018).

Regarding the teaching career, the plan also shows a managerial inflection by proposing to link professional progression to performance, relativizing the importance of experience and training. According to the document: "The career evolution of teachers must be guided by their performance, directly impacting variable remuneration" (Partido Novo, 2018, p. 37). This proposal reinforces the meritocratic logic, which, although presented as an

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instrument of appreciation, disregards the concrete working conditions of teachers and the structural inequalities of the educational system.

In general, the guidelines presented in the government plan, such as PPPs, competitiveness, managerial autonomy, and debureaucratization, have already signaled the incorporation of neoliberal principles in the formulation of educational policies during Romeu Zema's administration. According to Dardot and Laval (2016), neoliberalism operates as a rationality that guides practices and subjectivities, naturalizing competition and business logic in different social spheres. This translates, according to Gramsci (1966), into the assertion that discourses are not neutral, but express worldviews and disputes over hegemony. In this sense, as Evangelista (2009) states, although different groups may use the same terms, the meanings attributed to them are marked by their social positions and interests.

Analyzing the political trajectory of Romeu Zema, from an entrepreneur with no prior political experience to his re-election in the first round in 2022, is associated with the consolidation of a project aligned with neoliberal rationality. As highlighted by Silva, Valente, and Pereira (2019), the policies implemented in Minas Gerais during this period demonstrate the centrality of privatization as a management strategy, articulated with the idea of efficiency and the reduction of the State's role. In this context, his defense of partnerships with the private sector is justified by the alleged incapacity of the State to respond to social demands: "[...] the government alone cannot be efficient in addressing the numerous demands of the population" (Partido Novo, 2018, p. 16).

This reinforces the adoption of the managerial model as a paradigm of public administration, incorporating principles such as productivity, performance evaluation, and decentralization, while simultaneously redefining the State's role in guaranteeing the right to education, as exemplified by Project Somar.

Project Somar

In late 2020, the State Secretariat of Education of Minas Gerais announced the implementation of a pilot project called Project Somar, whose central proposal consisted of sharing the management of public schools with private sector entities. This initiative was justified by the government as a strategy to improve the quality of education in school units that exhibited low results in external evaluations.

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The Somar Project was publicly presented on April 28, 2021, through the portal of the State Secretariat of Education of Minas Gerais (SEE/MG), and subsequently formalized in May of the same year, during the COVID-19 pandemic, with its publication in the Official State Gazette. In general, the proposal consists of transferring the management of state high schools to non-profit Civil Society Organizations (CSO), while maintaining public funding. In other words, it is an arrangement in which resources remain state-owned, but administrative and managerial conduct is delegated to the private sector, configuring a process of privatization of educational management (Adrião, 2018).

The justification for implementing this model is supported by Romeu Zema's own government plan, as we initially highlighted. This plan sustains the idea that the State should not be directly responsible for all public services, especially given its supposed inefficiency: "Currently, the state monopolizes several public services that do not necessarily need to be offered directly by the state. However, the government cannot be efficient enough to respond, with its own structure, to the numerous demands of the population" (Partido Novo, 2018, p. 1).

The project's operationalization began in August 2021, when the selected schools started operating under the management of the winning organization of the bidding process, CETEB – Centro de Educação Tecnológica do Estado da Bahia[6] –, a company whose purpose had, until then, no connection with public basic education. The signed contract provided for the execution of activities over the remaining five months of 2021, plus a four-year partnership period between the public power and the private entity responsible for the management.

This configuration clearly demonstrates the movement to incorporate private agents in the conduct of public educational policies, in line with what Peroni (2018, p. 51) calls the "privatization from within" of public education. According to the author, the private commercial sector has acted strategically in defining the guidelines and organizing educational policies, influencing their content and forms of implementation, which "strains the understanding of education as a social right and public good" (Peroni, 2018, p. 54).

On October 1, 2021, a Collaboration Agreement was signed between SEE/MG and CETEB, regarding the shared management of the three school units participating in the Somar Project. This instrument established a work plan that outlined the actions to be developed by CETEB within the educational institutions during the contractual period. The

[6] Non-profit CSO, selected through a public call for bids.

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document defines, for each school, the attributions related to shared management, as well as the obligations assumed by the involved parties.

> GROUNDED Justification, objectives, and purpose of the Collaboration Agreement: **considered the "greatest challenge for basic education," high school education in Minas Gerais has shown stagnant results, consistently below national targets over a long historical series**. The Government of Minas Gerais, through the State Secretariat of Education, emphasizes the need to seek alternatives that lead to better outcomes for high school education. It is important to highlight that the set of actions developed by the State Secretariat of Education over the past three years already demonstrates an improvement in IDEB (Basic Education Development Index) scores. **In the pursuit of improved high school results in the state network,** the partnership with the Centro de Educação Tecnológica do Estado da Bahia - CETEB (Technological Education Center of the State of Bahia), a Civil Society Organization (CSO), and the State of Minas Gerais, through the State Secretariat of Education for the shared management of the State School, arises anchored in the Somar Project, through a Collaboration Agreement. This agreement aims to overcome significant quality challenges in educational provision and offers the opportunity to implement management and pedagogical innovations within the context of implementing the New High School (SEE/MG, 2021, our emphasis).

The Collaboration Agreement had a term of 1,550 calendar days, scheduled to begin on October 29, 2021, and end on January 25, 2026, thus totaling the five-year period initially proposed for the execution of the pilot project. The implementation schedule established three main goals. The first consisted of implementing the transition of the management model, planned for the period from October 21 to December 31, 2021. The second goal referred to ensuring operational funding, according to the items described in the budgetary spreadsheet, in the interval from October 4 to December 31, 2021. The third goal concerned the implementation and consolidation of the shared management model in schools, covering the period from January 1, 2022, to December 31, 2025.

> General Objective: To ensure, through the shared management of the educational unit, the improvement of teaching quality based on the constitutional principle of pluralism of ideas and pedagogical conceptions in the context of implementing the New High School curriculum.
> Specific Objectives: **Elevate educational indicators within the School; [...] Strengthen and expand the number of partnerships between the School Unit and Public and Private Institutions in its vicinity**; educe the dropout rate; Develop and implement a continuous training program for employees and teachers; **Ensure shared management, [...] Elevate educational flow and performance indicators within the School**; Implement the new High School Reference Curriculum [...] (SEE/MG, 2021, emphasis added).

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In addition to defining goals and objectives, the document also presented statements related to the application of public funds by the contracted entity, explaining how the amounts transferred by SEE/MG should be executed throughout the partnership. The total amount projected for the five years was approximately R$ 15 million per school, which highlights the financial dimension of the project and the volume of public resources mobilized for its implementation. In addition, the term provided for monitoring and control mechanisms, including annual accountability and the periodic presentation of indicators by the contracted institution to the State Secretariat of Education of Minas Gerais, to formalize the administrative and financial monitoring of the partnership.

For characterization purposes, the literature on educational policies has highlighted that initiatives of this nature are part of broader processes of educational privatization, which can occur at different levels. According to Adrião (2018), such processes manifest themselves both within public education networks, where the incorporation of private logics in educational management is observed, and at the level of school units, where management is directly transferred to external agents. In both cases, it involves the delegation, by the State, of decisions related to the purposes of education and the means necessary for their realization.

In the case of the Somar Project, the state government argues that the adoption of a new management model, based on sharing with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), would contribute to improving the quality of education, especially in the context of implementing the New High School (NEM). However, this proposal should be analyzed in light of its concrete developments, especially regarding curricular reorganization and the implications for student education.

In this regard, the curricular flexibility promoted by the NEM, articulated with initiatives such as Project Somar, tends to deepen educational inequalities, as it transfers part of the responsibility for their education to the student. Considering that public school students are mostly inserted in contexts marked by material inequalities, this transfer results in the intensification of formative disparities, aligning with the demands of the current accumulation regime and the logic of adapting education to market demands.

A central element of this proposal is the concept of "shared management," widely mobilized in the project's official discourse. However, as Lima, Prado, and Shimamoto (2011) demonstrate, the notion of shared management, historically associated with democratic ideals, has been re-signified within contemporary educational policies. According to the authors, there is a tendency to equate democratic management with shared management, producing a

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conceptual confusion that, in practice, empties the political character of the school community's participation. In this process, as the authors point out, "the so-called shared management divests the State of its responsibilities and transforms the public space into a private space" (Lima; Prado; Shimamoto, 2011, p. 2).

Thus, the shared management proposal present in Project Somar reveals itself as contradictory in relation to the principles of democratic management, since it does not expand the decision-making power of the school community, but, on the contrary, transfers the conduct of educational policy to private entities. It is, therefore, a displacement of decision-making power, which remains concentrated, albeit under new institutional forms.

Historically, this management model gained traction in the 1990s, within the context of consolidating neoliberal policies that attributed the state's crisis to its supposed inefficiency, advocating for the expansion of the market, competition, and individualism as solutions. In this scenario, shared management is presented as a democratic alternative, but, as Lima, Prado, and Shimamoto (2011, p. 9) highlight, "it ultimately reduces the possibilities for effective participation, converting community action into a mechanism of oversight and co-responsibility, rather than political decision-making."

The implementation of Project Somar, in turn, occurred in a context marked by the Covid-19 pandemic, which significantly limited spaces for public debate and the organization of resistance. In light of this, the Sole Union of Education Workers of Minas Gerais (Sind-UTE/MG) denounced the absence of dialogue with education professionals and characterized the proposal as a top-down policy, that is, according to Freitas (2018), formulated and implemented in a verticalized manner, without the effective participation of those involved.

Initially, Project Somar was implemented in three state schools, covering approximately 2,100 students, with a projected duration of five years. In this arrangement, the transfer of management practically implies the reallocation of public funds to private entities, highlighting the centrality of partnerships with business organizations, often justified by arguments of greater efficiency and innovation.

Regarding the project's monitoring, SEE/MG indicated the adoption of monitoring mechanisms based on criteria of efficacy and effectiveness, aligned with managerial logic. Despite this, an analysis of the public notices suggests that, although the schools formally remain public and free, the management of resources, pedagogical practices, and the organization of schoolwork become mediated by OSC (Civil Society Organizations).

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Another relevant aspect concerns the reorganization of the staff. As anticipated, school employees would be removed at the end of 2021, with only management teams remaining temporarily, at the discretion of the organizations responsible. This measure generated a strong reaction from education professionals, who denounced the risks of unemployment, precarious working conditions, and loss of school autonomy. Even in the face of opposing mobilizations, the government gradually continued with the project, publishing, during 2021, calls for applications for contracted teachers under the CLT regime and officially starting it in the management of the three participating schools at the beginning of the 2022 school year.

Results after 5 years of the imposition of the "pilot" Project

Considering that the project was launched in 2020, we understand that five years have passed since the imposition of a proposal for the commercialization of public state education in Minas Gerais. Knowing that the motivation for this project was the low indices of the three selected schools, we begin the analyses with them. Regarding educational indicators, the analysis of the Basic Education Development Index (Ideb) data from the participating schools raises questions about the justification presented by the State. In some cases, an evolution in results is observed even before the project's implementation, which weakens the argument that the selected units had critical performance.

Furthermore, it is necessary to consider the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, a period in which the National Education Council (CNE) recommended the flexibility of approval criteria, which contributed to an artificial increase in educational indices. Thus, the rise in Ideb cannot be interpreted, in isolation, as an exclusive indication of an effective improvement in the quality of education.

In this scenario, the transformations promoted in Brazilian high school education and initiatives such as Project Somar should be understood within a broader movement of reconfiguring the role of the State. As Santos (2007, p. 45) states, "educational reforms lead to the shrinking of the State in its social function, in favor of private enterprise".

Thus, far from addressing the structural problems of basic education, such policies tend to reinforce the insertion of market logic into public schools, favoring the involvement of private agents and redefining the meaning of education as a social right. In this context, the focus shifts from material and structural conditions to management, highlighting the

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centrality attributed by business reformers to the managerial dimension as the axis of public education transformation.

Table 1 – Ideb Records for High School in Project Somar Participating Schools

School	2017	2019	2021	2023
E. E. Francisco Menezes Filho	3,4	3,6	3,8	4,5
E. E. Maria Andrade Resende	-	-	4,4	-
E. E. Cel. Adelino Castelo Branco	3,6	3,5	4,1	4,2

Source: Prepared by the authors based on Inep data[7] (2026).

Regarding this data, some points are worth highlighting. In the case of the Escola Estadual Francisco Menezes Filho, a growth trajectory in Ideb was observed even before the implementation of Project Somar, increasing from 3.4 (2017) to 3.8 (2021), reaching 4.5 in 2023. This data directly weakens the official narrative of the SEE/MG, which claimed the school exhibited critical performance justifying intervention through a shared management model with the private sector. As cited by Freitas (2018) and Laval (2019), this type of situation reveals a recurring strategy in business-led education reforms: the construction of a crisis to legitimize the entry of private agents. The school, which was already showing gradual improvement, is incorporated into a project that then claims credit for subsequent advancements, disregarding the prior historical process. Furthermore, considering the pandemic context and the easing of evaluation criteria recommended by the CNE, the growth observed in 2023 needs to be critically examined.

The situation of the Escola Estadual Maria Andrade Resende presents an even more complex picture. The absence of Ideb data in previous years, due to low participation in SAEB (SEE/MG data), demonstrates a structural problem that cannot be reduced to the dimension of management. This is a school that already faced difficulties, expressed in high rates of failure and dropout, indicating weaknesses in teaching and learning conditions. From the perspective of authors like Evangelista (2013), this type of context tends to be exploited by privatization policies as a justification for external intervention, reinforcing the idea of public inefficiency.

Non-participation in SAEB can also be interpreted as a combination of factors that are difficult to resolve through the introduction of private management models. On the contrary,

[7] Available at: www.inep.gov.br/ideb/resultados/divulgacao_ensino_medio (updated on 01/27/2025). Access on: March 15, 2026.

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as Peroni (2018) points out, such policies tend to intensify school accountability processes without offering real conditions for overcoming problems.

Escola Estadual Cel. Adelino Castelo Branco shows an evolution in its Ideb from 3.6 (2017) to 4.1 (2021) and 4.2 (2023), even in the face of a reduction in enrollment numbers. This data is particularly relevant, as the improvement in indicators may be associated with factors such as a decrease in the number of students post-pandemic, and not necessarily a qualitative transformation of the educational process. According to Freitas (2018), the reduction in enrollments may be related to silent exclusion processes, in which students with greater difficulties leave school, artificially contributing to the elevation of indicators. This phenomenon reinforces the criticism of the centrality of indices as a measure of quality.

Furthermore, the improvement prior to the implementation of Projeto Somar, as in the case of the first school, calls into question the narrative of the necessity of intervention. As Santos (2007) highlights, contemporary educational reforms operate to reduce the role of the State as a guarantor of rights, transferring responsibilities to the private sector under the argument of efficiency. In this sense, the school's evolution cannot be directly attributed to the project but must be understood within a broader process that includes demographic, institutional, and political variables.

The risk, in this case, is that Project Somar presents itself as responsible for results it did not produce, reinforcing its legitimacy and expanding its potential for expansion. Thus, the indicator results from the three schools share a common pattern: the data do not consistently support the initial justification for implementing Project Somar. On the contrary, they indicate that improvement processes existed prior to the intervention; educational indicators are insufficient to measure quality; and structural problems remain unaddressed.

However, regarding these data, the then Secretary of State for Education, Igor de Alvarenga, stated in a SEE/MG note in 2024 that Ideb scores were indeed one of the criteria for selecting Project Somar schools: "We selected schools with low or unregistered Ideb, considering the complexity faced. Our focus was to support the schools that needed it most, and the results demonstrate that this approach was effective"[8].

In other words, when the Secretary of Education himself makes this assertion, we have confirmation that Project Somar is part of a state reconfiguration logic, in which education ceases to be primarily treated as a social right and becomes organized according to principles

[8] Note granted on August 21, 2024. Available at: https://www.educacao.mg.gov.br/escolas-do-projeto-somar-melhoram-desempenho-no-ideb-2023-e-superam-a-media-estadual/. Accessed on: March 27, 2026.

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of efficiency, performance, and management, opening space for the involvement of private agents. This interpretation aligns with the understanding that such policies do not primarily aim to improve education, but to reorganize its management model, aligning it with market demands. Therefore, there is a shift in the debate: from the material and structural conditions of the school to the accountability of management and results.

In addition to the indicators, we also analyzed the technical monitoring reports of the three schools, which were prepared annually between 2022 and 2025 by CETEB and published by SEE/MG on the official website[9] of Projeto Somar. These reports were an obligation of the company, already informed in the project's launch tender. Upon reading these reports, we once again encountered the Ideb indicators as the sole justification for the schools' improvement through Somar. In the 4 monitoring reports published, all used Ideb as the main justification. Furthermore, the last report, released on September 16, 2025, provides a general overview of Somar's actions in each school, informing the conclusion of the partnership:

> [...] REPORT CONCLUSION[10]: Based on the reported descriptions and analyses performed, was it possible to conclude that the results established in the respective Collaboration Agreement were achieved? ( ) YES ( ) NO (X) PARTIALLY. Throughout this report, we present some considerations regarding the achievement of the results established in Collaboration Agreement No. 1261001004/2021 and the signed Work Plan. Nevertheless, it is concluded that the goals were partially achieved. It is noteworthy that some goals have already been met, while others remain ongoing. This is due, in part, to the fact that certain goals are scheduled to be achieved at the end of the academic year. Furthermore, some goals have not yet been fully achieved, despite continuous efforts to reach them. (E. E. Francisco Menezes Filho, 2025, p. 18).

> [...] REPORT CONCLUSION[11]: Based on the reported descriptions and analyses performed, was it possible to conclude that the results established in the respective Collaboration Agreement were achieved? ( ) YES ( ) NO (X) PARTIALLY. Throughout this report, we present some considerations regarding the achievement of the results established in Collaboration Agreement No. 1261001011/2021 and the signed Work Plan. Nevertheless, it is concluded that the goals were partially achieved. It is noteworthy that some goals have already been met, while others remain ongoing. This is due, in part, to the fact that certain goals are scheduled to be achieved at the end of the academic year. Furthermore, some goals have not yet been fully achieved, despite continuous efforts to reach them (E. E. Cel. Adelino Castelo Branco, 2025, p.13).

> [...] REPORT CONCLUSION[12]: Based on the reported descriptions and analyses carried out, was it possible to conclude that the results established in the respective Collaboration Agreement were achieved? ( ) YES ( ) NO (X) PARTIALLY.

[9] Available at: https://www.educacao.mg.gov.br/acoes/principais-programas-e-projetos/. Accessed on: March 27, 2026.
[10] Technical Report 17 - EEFMF- 2025/1 (122322216) SEI 1260.01.0105415/2022-45 / pg. 18.
[11] Technical Report 18 - EECACB- 2025/1 (122390844) SEI 1260.01.0105415/2022-45 / pg. 13.
[12] Technical Report 19 - EEMAR -2025/1 (122404146) SEI 1260.01.0105415/2022-45 / pg. 12.

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> Throughout this report, we present some considerations regarding the achievement of the results established in Collaboration Agreement No. 1261001005/2021 and the signed Work Plan. However, it is concluded that the goals were partially achieved. It is noteworthy that some goals have already been met, while others are still in progress. This is due, in part, to the fact that certain goals are expected to be achieved at the end of the academic year. Furthermore, some goals have not yet been fully achieved, despite continuous efforts to reach them (E. E. Maria Andrade Resende, 2025, p.12).

The final report for 2025 informs us of a central element that deserves problematization: the recurring use of Ideb as the main evaluation parameter and the homogeneous conclusion of "partial achievement" of the goals in the three schools. This pattern is not only descriptive but expresses a specific educational policy rationality that needs to be questioned because this constant choice of Ideb as the structuring axis of the reports is not neutral. On the contrary, it affirms the adoption of an evaluation logic based on quantitative performance indicators, characteristic of educational reforms guided by managerialism. As Freitas argues, the centrality of indices produces a "reduction of educational quality to what is measurable" (Freitas, 2018, p. 54), shifting the focus from human development to standardized results.

In this sense, the analyzed reports do not evaluate education in its totality, including dimensions such as critical thinking, teacher working conditions, or social inequalities, but operate from a restricted metric, aligned with the logic of accountability. Such a perspective aligns with what Laval (2019) calls the "new world order," in which schools are managed according to business principles, focusing on efficiency, targets, and productivity.

Another striking aspect is the standardization of conclusions across the three reports: all schools present the same diagnosis, "partially achieved goals," accompanied by similar justifications. This homogeneity suggests that the report serves more as a function of political legitimization of the project than as an effective critical evaluation. The phrasing "partially achieved" operates as an ambiguous category that avoids both the acknowledgment of failure and the need to fully prove success.

From a theoretical standpoint, this strategy can be interpreted by Peroni (2018), who points out that public-private partnerships in education tend to produce mechanisms of continuous self-justification, in which results are always presented as "in progress," ensuring the maintenance and possible expansion of these policies. Furthermore, by stating that some goals will still be achieved by the end of the academic year, the reports shift the evaluation to the future, suspending the possibility of a conclusive analysis. This is a typical movement of

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policies under a target-based regime, in which the deadline for fulfillment is constantly postponed.

Another striking element is the emphasis in the reports on schools' "continuous efforts" to achieve targets. This seemingly positive phrasing is embedded in a logic of institutional accountability, characteristic of neoliberal educational reforms. As Evangelista (2013) argues, this type of discourse shifts responsibility for results to the school and its agents, obscuring the State's role in guaranteeing the material and structural conditions necessary for the functioning of public education. Thus, the fact that targets have not been fully met is not interpreted as a limitation of the policy itself, but as part of an ongoing process that depends on the continuity of local efforts. This displacement is fundamental to understanding how policies like Project Somar are sustained, even without concrete evidence of their effectiveness.

Furthermore, the conclusion that targets were only partially met after five years of implementation is interesting data. Considering that the project was presented as a solution to urgent performance problems, more consistent results would have been expected at the end of the cycle. However, what is observed is the maintenance of the same fragilities, now reinterpreted within a logic of "gradual progress". This reinforces the criticism that such policies do not confront the structural problems of education but rather manage them. As Frigotto (2010) states, neoliberal educational reforms operate through an "administration of the crisis," rather than its overcoming. In this sense, Project Somar does not resolve educational inequalities, but reorganizes their management, incorporating control and evaluation mechanisms typical of the private sector.

This movement is in line with what Ball (2014) calls "policies as discourses," in which official documents not only describe reality but also produce meanings and guide interpretations. Thus, reports are not merely technical instruments but political devices that construct a particular reading of educational reality, aligned with the logic of privatization and business-oriented education reform.

In this context, the analyzed results not only confirm the manipulation of the Projeto Somar's effectiveness as an educational policy but also affirm its ideological and strategic nature in advancing the privatist logic over public education. As critical analyses of educational policy point out, the rise in indicators may be associated with regulatory mechanisms and not necessarily with a substantive improvement in teaching quality. In this sense, the Ideb (Basic Education Development Index) begins to operate as an instrument for legitimizing policy, reinforcing what Freitas (2018) calls the "fetishization of indicators".

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Therefore, the most consistent interpretation is that Projeto Somar appropriates an already existing growth trend, using it as evidence of its effectiveness, while simultaneously shifting the debate from structural conditions to the managerial dimension.

Final Considerations

The analysis of Projeto Somar, implemented in the state of Minas Gerais, requires its understanding beyond an isolated educational management initiative, situating it within the contemporary reconfigurations of the State's role and educational public policies under the aegis of neoliberalism. In this sense, the aforementioned project can be interpreted as a concrete expression of broader processes of redefining the boundaries between the public and the private, in which the management of public education becomes progressively mediated by actors and logics originating from the private sector (Evangelista, 2018; Freitas, 2018).

Throughout its five years of implementation, the Somar Project highlights the consolidation of a management model based on the transfer of responsibilities from the State to social organizations, establishing forms of governance that strain the historically constructed principles of Brazilian public education. This movement is not limited to an administrative dimension but implies the incorporation of managerial rationalities, centered on results, performance, and efficiency, which then guide pedagogical and organizational practices within schools.

From the perspective of historical-dialectical materialism, this process should be analyzed as part of the contradictions inherent in the capitalist mode of production, as per Gramsci (1966), in which education is simultaneously configured as a social right and as a strategic field for accumulation and the dispute of hegemony. In this direction, the privatization of management is not reduced to the formal transfer of services but expresses itself as a deeper movement of reconfiguration of social relations within the school, impacting teaching work, curriculum organization, and control and evaluation mechanisms (Evangelista, 2013).

Furthermore, the Somar Project can be understood as an instrument for building consensus around certain conceptions of educational quality, management, and efficiency, operating in the articulation between civil society and the expanded State. In this sense, privatization policies not only reorganize administrative structures but also produce meanings and orientations that seek to legitimize the insertion of private actors in the conduct of public education, contributing to the naturalization of these practices in daily school life.

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Thus, the analysis of the paths taken by Project Somar over five years demonstrates not only the expansion of mechanisms for the privatization of educational management but also the intensification of disputes over the meaning of public schooling, its social role, and the forms of organizing pedagogical work. These processes demand, from educational research, epistemological rigor in apprehending the concrete totality and ethical sensitivity regarding the impacts of these policies on the subjects involved, especially students, teachers, and school communities (Pereira, Paiva, and Rodrigues, 2024). Therefore, understanding Project Somar implies situating it within the set of structural transformations in Brazilian educational policies, recognizing it as an expression of a broader historical movement of state reconfiguration and the intensification of public-private relations in education.

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