


**PRODUCTIVISM IN UNIVERSITIES: EVALUATION AS AN INSTRUMENT OF  
NEOLIBERAL LOGIC IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Article history:</b> <b>Received:</b> January, 15<sup>th</sup> 2024 <b>Accepted:</b> March, 18<sup>th</sup> 2024</p>	<p><b>Objective:</b> This study aims to explore the influence of academic productivism within the framework of Brazilian public Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) since the adoption of the new postgraduate evaluation policy by CAPES (Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel) in 1977. It seeks to understand how neoliberal productive logic applied to universities as organizations correlates with the assessment policies in Brazil.</p>
<p><b>Keywords:</b> Academic Productivism; Higher Education Policy; Neoliberalism; Assessment Practices.</p>	<p><b>Theoretical Framework:</b> The research is grounded in the concepts of productive and reproductive work, aiming to establish a connection between neoliberal productivist logic in universities and the close relationship with evaluation policies. Key theories and models explored include the knowledge society and market-oriented capitalist productivity within academic settings, providing a solid foundation for the study's context.</p>
	<p><b>Method:</b> The methodology involves a historical contextualization of the university as an object of study, supplemented by a bibliographic analysis. Data collection was based on an extensive review of literature pertinent to the evolution of university roles under neoliberal capitalism and the impact of quantitative assessment tools serving market-oriented educational paradigms.</p>
	<p><b>Results and Discussion:</b> Preliminary findings indicate a significant influence of market-driven productivity logic on academic environments, shaped by the assessment mechanisms perceived as instruments serving this logic. These results are discussed in relation to the theoretical framework, highlighting the implications and connections identified, with a consideration of potential discrepancies and limitations of the study.</p>
	<p><b>Research Implications:</b> The practical and theoretical implications of this research provide insights into how the findings might be applied or influence practices in the field of higher education management. These implications extend to areas impacted by neoliberal assessment policies and their effects on academic productivity.</p>
	<p><b>Originality/Value:</b> This research contributes to the literature by offering a historical perspective on the transformation of universities under neoliberal capitalism, analyzed through the lens of academic productivism and assessment policies. Its value lies in the elucidation of how these dynamics affect higher education in Brazil, offering implications for policy and practice in the sector.</p>
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## PRODUTIVISMO NAS UNIVERSIDADES: A AVALIAÇÃO COMO INSTRUMENTO DA LÓGICA NEOLIBERAL NA EDUCAÇÃO SUPERIOR

### RESUMO

**Objetivo:** Este estudo tem como objetivo investigar a influência do produtivismo acadêmico no contexto das Instituições de Ensino Superior (IES) públicas brasileiras desde a implementação da nova política de avaliação de pós-graduação pela CAPES em 1977. Busca-se compreender como a lógica produtivista neoliberal aplicada às universidades enquanto organizações se correlaciona com as políticas de avaliação no Brasil.

**Referencial Teórico:** A pesquisa fundamenta-se nos conceitos de trabalho produtivo e reprodutivo, visando estabelecer uma conexão entre a lógica produtivista neoliberal nas universidades e a estreita relação com as políticas de avaliação. Teorias e modelos chave explorados incluem a sociedade do conhecimento e a produtividade capitalista orientada para o mercado em contextos acadêmicos, fornecendo uma base sólida para o contexto do estudo.

**Método:** A metodologia envolve uma contextualização histórica da universidade como objeto de estudo, complementada por uma análise bibliográfica. A coleta de dados baseou-se em uma revisão extensa da literatura pertinente à evolução dos papéis universitários sob o capitalismo neoliberal e o impacto de ferramentas de avaliação quantitativas servindo a paradigmas educacionais orientados para o mercado.

**Resultados e Discussão:** Os achados preliminares indicam uma influência significativa da lógica de produtividade orientada para o mercado em ambientes acadêmicos, moldada pelos mecanismos de avaliação percebidos como instrumentos a serviço desta lógica. Esses resultados são discutidos em relação ao referencial teórico, destacando as implicações e conexões identificadas, com consideração de possíveis discrepâncias e limitações do estudo.

**Implicações da Pesquisa:** As implicações práticas e teóricas desta pesquisa fornecem insights sobre como os achados podem ser aplicados ou influenciar práticas no campo da gestão do ensino superior. Essas implicações estendem-se às áreas impactadas pelas políticas de avaliação neoliberal e seus efeitos sobre a produtividade acadêmica.

**Originalidade/Valor:** Esta pesquisa contribui para a literatura ao oferecer uma perspectiva histórica sobre a transformação das universidades sob o capitalismo neoliberal, analisada através da ótica do produtivismo acadêmico e das políticas de avaliação. Seu valor reside na elucidação de como essas dinâmicas afetam o ensino superior no Brasil, oferecendo implicações para políticas e práticas no setor.

**Palavras-chave:** Produtivismo Acadêmico, Política de Ensino Superior, Neoliberalismo, Práticas de Avaliação.

## PRODUCTIVISMO EN LAS UNIVERSIDADES: LA EVALUACIÓN COMO INSTRUMENTO DE LA LÓGICA NEOLIBERAL EN LA EDUCACIÓN SUPERIOR

### RESUMEN

**Objetivo:** Este estudio tiene como objetivo investigar la influencia del productivismo académico en el contexto de las Instituciones de Educación Superior (IES) públicas brasileñas desde la implementación de la nueva política de evaluación de posgrado por CAPES en 1977. Se busca comprender cómo la lógica productivista neoliberal aplicada a las universidades como organizaciones se correlaciona con las políticas de evaluación en Brasil.

**Marco Teórico:** La investigación se basa en los conceptos de trabajo produtivo y reproductivo, con el objetivo de establecer una conexión entre la lógica productivista neoliberal en las universidades y la estrecha relación con las políticas de evaluación. Las teorías y modelos clave explorados incluyen la sociedad del conocimiento y la productividad capitalista orientada al mercado en contextos académicos, proporcionando una base sólida para el contexto del estudio.

**Método:** La metodología involucra una contextualización histórica de la universidad como objeto de estudio, complementada por un análisis bibliográfico. La recolección de datos se basó en una revisión extensa de la literatura pertinente a la evolución de los roles universitarios bajo el capitalismo neoliberal y el impacto de herramientas de evaluación cuantitativas que sirven a paradigmas educativos orientados al mercado.

**Resultados y Discusión:** Los hallazgos preliminares indican una influencia significativa de la lógica de productividad orientada al mercado en entornos académicos, moldeada por los mecanismos de evaluación percibidos como instrumentos al servicio de esta lógica. Estos resultados se discuten en relación con el marco teórico, destacando las implicaciones y conexiones identificadas, con consideración de posibles discrepancias y limitaciones del estudio.

**Implicaciones de la Investigación:** Las implicaciones prácticas y teóricas de esta investigación proporcionan perspectivas sobre cómo los hallazgos pueden aplicarse o influir en prácticas en el campo de la gestión de la educación superior. Estas implicaciones se extienden a las áreas impactadas por las políticas de evaluación neoliberales y sus efectos sobre la productividad académica.

**Originalidad/Valor:** Esta investigación contribuye a la literatura al ofrecer una perspectiva histórica sobre la transformación de las universidades bajo el capitalismo neoliberal, analizada a través del prisma del productivismo

académico y las políticas de evaluación. Su valor radica en la elucidación de cómo estas dinámicas afectan la educación superior en Brasil, ofreciendo implicaciones para políticas y prácticas en el sector.

**Palabras clave:** Productivismo Académico, Política de Educación Superior, Neoliberalismo, Prácticas de Evaluación

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Reflecting on academic work in the 21st century confronts us with two central issues: on one hand, the neoliberal capitalist logic applied to the labor of intellectual work, along with the instruments used as mechanisms of coercion and bargaining to manage these processes; on the other, the quantitative assessments applied as metrics for the successful research teacher. In the Brazilian context, the productivist logic we discuss in this paper is more prevalent in public institutions.

Being a university in the 21st century means living in an eternal comparative game among peers on the lists of the top X universities by evaluator Y. Or struggling for funding from agencies where the ultimate weight is on who receives the resources, and often, who publishes more. In institutions, it is not uncommon for the quantity of publications per year to be closely related to career progression to the detriment of other academic activities such as teaching and extension.

So, what is the role of the university after the 20th century? Is it still to be a center where those interested in teaching gather? To answer, it is necessary to historicize the object of the University and understand the process that led the academic space to adopt the neoliberal capitalist productivist logic. What role does evaluation play in keeping this logic functioning? Drawing a logical line of reasoning for the understanding of these questions with a solid base and formulation of the problem are the objectives of this work.

As for the methodology, a historical and bibliographic review on the topic was conducted, allowing for reflections on the interfaces of the University, the productivist logic of the 20th century, the instruments that foster the modus operandi that has been installed, and the quantitative assessments of intellectual production. The work was structured in the following stages: the first locates the object University in terms of its historicity, the second its dialogue with the 20th century and neoliberal capitalism, the third the interface with the control instrument of the machinery, that is, the evaluation, and finally, the concluding considerations.

## 2 THE UNIVERSITY AS AN OBJECT FROM A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

For medieval historians, it is a consensus that the creation of universities dates to the Middle Ages (12th - 13th centuries), signifying the systematization of an organization dedicated to teaching, as noted by Haskins (2015) and Verger (2002). According to Haskins, medieval traditions persist in the contemporary understanding of the university, including the very word "university," which refers to an association of master's and students with a common goal: dedication to studies; the first organized curricula and academic degrees (bachelor, master, doctor); the structuring as an organizational body; and the activities of training and research.

Another important aspect highlighted by Verger (2002) in the entry on the university in the "Thematic Dictionary of the Medieval West" concerns the social function of these organizations, meeting a demand from a growing educated elite and serving as a means of individual promotion. The medieval cities in the Late Middle Ages were centers of activity and intellectual life, becoming attractive hubs for nobles and merchants, as Verger (2002) points out. Regarding methodology, the medieval university was based on *lectio* (reading), interpretation, and debates (*disputatio*) - dialectics. The division in terms of knowledge structure maintained the Carolingian tradition: the trivium (grammar, rhetoric, and logic) and the quadrivium (arithmetic, geography, astronomy, and music). To thought, the birth of the university is linked to scholasticism (reconciling Christian faith with a rational methodology through dialectics), as highlighted by Alessio (2002).

Born together, the university and scholasticism are linked to one another: the university is the closed body constituted by the masters, and scholasticism is the magisterial teaching that the university is meant to provide. They live for one another: there is no university without scholasticism, nor scholasticism without the university. After centuries of establishment in Europe (with 70 university seats by the end of the 14th century), they also merge in their common decline: the humanism that asserts itself from the 15th century onwards is a free culture, radically anti-scholastic and alien to the university institution. (Alessio, 2002, p. 367).

The space's effervescence field, even under the watchful eyes of the papal church, allowed the emergence and dissemination of thought that culminated in the rise of Humanist Renaissance emphasized by Alessio (2002). In the historicization of the university, this process resulted in a second moment for the structuring of the organization under the lenses of Enlightenment from the 17th century, marking the emergence of the modern university where official science was intended to be neutral through empiricism and rationalism, Bianchetti (2017).

This historical period is marked by disputes in the field of ecclesiastical theory. During the period of the Religious Reforms and Counter-Reformation, figures such as Luther (1483-1546) and John Calvin (1509-1564) directly influenced the educational area and, in this case, regionally, as Bianchetti (2017) highlights. Countries like the Iberian and Iberian America, with a stronger Catholic influence, remained under strong monastic influence, while the Anglican and Lutheran Church occupied North America, which came to be called English America.

To understand the next two university models, it is essential to reference the historical processes that marked this period and directly influenced the so-called Modern University: the French Revolution (1789), which brought the debate on the public and secular character of the university, Chauí (2003), and the Industrial Revolution (18th century) with its utilitarian demand for the field, production of a professional body. This process became known as the formation of Nation-States (early 19th century), where European unifications gave rise to contemporary states, with the idea of nationality being a strong tool to be constructed, and the university serving to an end.

The two major exponents are, on one side, the German-Humboldtian model, and on the other, the French-Napoleonic model. The Humboldtian model finds its bases mainly in Kant (1724-1804), especially in his work "The Conflict of the Faculties" from 1794, as described by Silveira and Bianchetti (2016). He argues the distinction between the private use of reason and the public use and strives to reconcile the autonomy of knowledge with obedience to the State, Silveira and Bianchetti (2016). Thus:

[...] the Humboldtian model conceives the university as an institution that enjoys relative autonomy in knowledge production, closely related to the interests of the State, with science as the unifying force that the State needs to legitimize the project of nationality". (Silveira & Bianchetti, 2016, p. 84)

The interests of the State were the first task of the Humboldtian university; the second was promoting the development of science. As Pereira (2009) highlights, it was about a dual formation, objective for science and subjective moral. The French model, on the other hand, looked mainly to Descartes (1596-1650) for its university ideals,

[...] emphasizing the instrumental character of the university as an institution of objective knowledge and provider of professional forces that, in theoretical and practical terms, aimed for order and progress through the dominion and instrumentalization of nature. (Silveira & Bianchetti, 2016, p. 86)



This model is characterized by meeting the needs of the workforce, instrumentalization of the University by the State, and a dominant class, as Silveira and Bianchetti (2016) emphasize. With the Napoleonic educational reforms, the University became a control instrument, tasked with spreading doctrine, serving as a broadcasting center of the Napoleonic ideals. Pereira also points out the paradox in Humboldt; the purpose of his model is the moral enrichment of the Nation and the individual, but it prevails over the French for having a utilitarian emphasis. The contemporary university still possesses characteristics of Humboldt's postulates.

The essential principles postulated by Humboldt – generally defended to this day as formulations that give the university its unique character – are essentially: education through research; the unity of teaching and research; interdisciplinarity; the autonomy and freedom of the institution's administration and the science it produces; the integrated yet autonomous relationship between the State and the University; the complementarity of elementary and secondary education with university education. (Pereira, 2009, p. 31)

A third way emerges post-1960s, the North American university model, which, according to Silveira and Bianchetti (2016), breaks with tradition in a manner that not only the elite shows itself as an institution with a democratic character and aims at the powers for the progress of American society. The focus is the utilitarian economic interest of science, with the ideals of teaching and research converging towards the economic progress of American society. There is a change in the direction of university production.

The time of knowledge production changes with the advent of technologies and the progress of the sciences, and with it, the function of knowledge in post-20th-century capitalist society also changes. For Bauman (2009), education is a product to be consumed quickly or to be thrown away, given that in liquid society time is different, and the logic of production is different. If the production logic is different, it is because it serves other interests, as Professor Dias Sobrinho (2005) so precisely translates in his words:

In the past, the university was thought of by intellectuals of the caliber of Humboldt, Kant, Fichte, Karl Jaspers, Heidegger, just to cite a few Germans. Today, those who tell developing and underdeveloped countries what a university should be are economists and officials from the World Bank, IDB, IMF, OECD, EC, and, at the national levels, technicians from the Ministries of Finance and Planning. (Dias Sobrinho, 2005, p. 10)

The evolution of the university as an institution reflects a complex interplay between historical forces, societal needs, and intellectual traditions. From its medieval origins, where it served as a communal space for learning and scholarly debate, to the modern era, where the

university has become a crucible for the intersection of state interests, economic imperatives, and the pursuit of knowledge, the transformation is evident. The Humboldtian and Napoleonic models, each with their distinct philosophies and objectives, underscore the diversity in the conceptualization of university education and its role in society.

The contemporary university, while still retaining elements of its historical antecedents, is increasingly influenced by neoliberal policies and market forces, a shift that challenges traditional academic values and roles. This change, characterized by an emphasis on quantifiable outputs and efficiency, raises critical questions about the purpose and future of higher education. The pressure to conform to market-driven definitions of success threatens to undermine the foundational principles of academic freedom, comprehensive education, and the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake.

As we move forward, it is imperative to re-examine the role of the university in the 21st century. There is a need for a balanced approach that honors the rich heritage of the university while adapting to contemporary challenges. This entails fostering an environment where teaching, research, and community engagement are equally valued, and where the university can act as a bastion of critical thought, innovation, and societal development. The path ahead requires a nuanced understanding of the past, a clear vision of the desired future, and a commitment to the core values that have long defined the academic enterprise.

### 3 METHODOLOGY

The methodological framework of this research is descriptive in nature, aimed at presenting a theoretical reflection through the historicization of the subject matter. Concurrently, it aligns with the production of a theoretical-conceptual research by concluding with a literature review, as mentioned by De-La-Torre-Ugarte-Guanilo et al. (2011).

Referencing Gil (2008) for determining the methodological framework, the logic of the research is inductive, starting from a bibliographic framework linked to the historicization of objects where hypotheses and reflections are formulated. This aspect positions the article to address the problem qualitatively, also incorporating contributions from Morgan (1980) as a structural aspect of the research, situating the article within an interpretivist worldview. In line with the dynamics of qualitative investigation, this chosen worldview emphasizes the value of subjects' perceptions, allowing the phenomenon to be interpreted through individuals' experiences within their contexts. Thus, the results follow the logic of an inductive approach,

ensuring that the conclusions pertain specifically to the studied object while allowing for adaptations to other contexts.

Regarding data collection, the sources are categorized as secondary, i.e., articles that are secondary sources by nature, given their prerogative to work with primary sources. The problem's approach was quantitative. The outcome is fundamentally theoretical, relying on two instruments: historicization and bibliographic analysis. In terms of taxonomies, the research follows the approach highlighted by Souza et al. (2007), as the study is exploratory in nature; it seeks to translate an affinity between two constructs that have not been extensively explored, also aiming to strengthen the literature related to the theme. It is descriptive, as it outlines the challenges and results of an alignment that is systematically constructed from the objectives proposed in the article. Reflections arising from a literature review are drawn from the field and will be addressed through content analysis, structuring the respective messages emanating from the contributions (Bardin, 1979).

In sum, this research employs a descriptive and theoretical-conceptual methodology to delve into the intricate evolution of the university within a neoliberal context, guided by a comprehensive literature review and historical analysis. Through an inductive approach, it interprets the academic and social transformations of higher education, ensuring a nuanced understanding rooted in secondary data analysis. The conclusions drawn not only shed light on the historical and contemporary dynamics of universities but also set the stage for the forthcoming section, where we will present and discuss the results, further elucidating the impact of neoliberal policies on the academic landscape.

## **4 RESULTS**

The findings of this study are presented preliminarily and divided into two main areas for reflection. The first focuses on the relationship between productivist logic and the academic environment through the lens of neoliberalism, as objectified by the knowledge society and its interface with evaluation mechanisms that sustain this practice. The second area examines the metric of evaluation through indicators and their appropriation within westernized capitalism, especially in Brazilian universities. It is important to note that while indicators are necessary and highly useful, the application and the meaning attributed to these concepts over time and space directly impact academic productivity.



#### 4.1 REFLECTIONS ON MARKET-ORIENTED CAPITALIST PRODUCTIVITY IN THE ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT

In a capitalist world driven by profit and productivity, the intersection of Social Sciences and Economics is expressed not only theoretically but also empirically, in the relationship between theory and critique. Karl Marx, in 19th century Germany amidst the Second Industrial Revolution, established key concepts such as surplus value and worker alienation to understand labor relations in the emerging capitalist mode of production, particularly in his seminal work, "Das Kapital."

Given that capitalism is the essence of the 21st-century economy, to the extent that alternative economic organizations are inconceivable, all aspects of individual life are also anchored in its ideals, including the productivist logic leading to a homogenization of labor. Capitalism, a product of the Industrial Revolution, champions productive work that yields financial return in the form of profit and consumption. Therefore, this logic extends beyond its original industrial context to permeate all labor relations, from manual to intellectual, regulated to informal. Accordingly, academic work also falls within the scope of market-oriented productivist logic, as defined by Marx's concept of productive labor:

[...] the concept of productive labor becomes narrower. Capitalist production is not just commodity production, but essentially surplus-value production. The worker does not produce for himself but for capital. It is not enough for him to produce in general. He must produce surplus-value. Only the worker who produces surplus-value for the capitalist or serves the self-valorization of capital is productive. (Marx, 2017, p. 578)

In orthodox capitalism, certain central elements must be present for a formation to be considered capitalist, i.e., a variety of ways in which these elements are materialized over time and space. I define the following elements as constitutive of capitalism: class division between owners and producers; institutionalized commodification and commercialization of wage labor; capital accumulation dynamics; and market allocation of productive inputs and social surplus. Bianchetti (2017) outlines this process in the university setting in the work "From University to Commodity City or How and When, If Education/Training Is Sacrificed on the Altar of the Market, the Future of the University Would Be Somewhere in the Past."

Chauí (2003) highlights the 21st-century society as a knowledge society, where knowledge and information become capital, and the professionals involved in their production become productive forces. As knowledge and information become productive forces, they

become part of the capital itself, which depends on them for its accumulation and reproduction. Given that, in the current form of capitalism, economic hegemony belongs to financial capital rather than productive capital, information takes precedence over knowledge itself, as financial capital operates with purely virtual wealth, whose existence is reduced to information itself. (Chauí, 2003, p. 24)

However, these central characteristics interact with other factors and manifest in real historical circumstances, breaking with an apparent homogeneity of individuals within the capitalist economic space. This includes the institutionalization of free labor based on the assumption that workers are free and equal, supported by liberal ideals, as discussed by Fraser and Jaeggi (2020):

Jaeggi| [...] I want to emphasize that the notion of freedom in a 'double sense' does not mean that freedom and equality in capitalism are fictitious or some kind of hypocrisy. These notions are ideological in the deep sense invoked by Adorno when he said that ideologies are true and false at the same time. The point is that freedom and equality are indeed realized in capitalism and, in fact, need to be realized for the system to function. At the same time, they are not realized, given that the reality of capitalist labor relations seems to undermine and contradict these norms - and not accidentally. Fraser| I would say that capitalism realizes weak and liberal interpretations of freedom and equality, while systematically denying the social prerequisites for deeper and more appropriate interpretations, to which it simultaneously invites and insensitively frustrates. (Fraser & Jaeggi, 2020, p. 31)

From Fraser and Jaeggi's notion of freedom within capitalism and the process of homogenization, I propose a reflection on the academic environment. Higher education institutions are tasked with transmitting/producing knowledge, a task that, while seemingly straightforward, is extremely complex. The act of writing itself is not one of the easiest tasks; establishing the relationship between sign and meaning as the concept is conceived requires effort, clarity, and the ability to put oneself in the reader's or target audience's place, resulting in a constant process of writing and rewriting. In the words of Alcadipani (2011):

writing and academic work follow the logic of craftsmanship, which is very different from the Fordist or Toyotist production logic typical of the corporate world. Academic writing usually involves conducting research, an activity of significant complexity. (Alcadipani, 2011, p. 345)

Thus, the time for knowledge production and academic teaching does not align with industrial time, whether for students or faculty. The work of teaching, researching, developing,

and concluding is not dependent on machines, nor can it be measured in hours, but must be seen as a process made and dependent on people, occurring in the realm of knowledge, guided by professors and advisors. This development becomes even more intense considering that individuals are unique, think, act, and behave differently, in addition to each one's educational background, making it complex to establish a standard student profile, even though entry is through a general knowledge exam.

Upon entering the academic space, students immediately find themselves compelled to fit their writing into a production standard, a product of the productivist logic that caters to what can be termed academic capitalism created within neoliberal structures in the United States but applicable to Brazil. Costa and Goulart define the concept of academic capitalism from the following perspective:

this category seeks to identify the multiple forms and meanings through which market and pro-market behaviors have been adopted by American universities to create integration processes with the so-called new economy in search of alternative funding sources. (Costa & Goulart, 2018, p. 396)

However, the productivist notion entered Brazil even before the 2000s, resulting from policies in the late 1960s adopted by the civil-military dictatorship following the University Reform of 1968, which proposed "legislation for education during the military period, in the form of the principles of rationality, efficiency, and productivity, with the corollaries of 'maximum result with minimum expenditure' and 'no duplication of means for identical ends'" (Saviani, 2008, p. 297), in addition to establishing an exclusive dedication regime for faculty, linking research activity to teaching and considering titling as a factor and index for career progression. In other words, the faculty member with a higher number of publications in their name would occupy a higher position in the progression.

The collective productivity scenario worsens when considering the molds and criteria for grades and concepts attributed to undergraduate and graduate courses. Undergraduate courses are evaluated by collective grades from the National Student Performance Exam (ENADE) in partnership with the Ministry of Education (MEC) by students nearing the completion of higher education to assess teaching at a given Higher Education Institution. Graduate courses, on the other hand, are evaluated by the concepts established by the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel, whose criteria are determined based on the productivity index of each program from the work of students and

faculty members, considering the number of publications, book participation, academic events, internationalization, among others, reinforcing the imposition of a standard.

From this, Alcadipani (2011) proposes a market-oriented view in the teaching and learning relationship in higher education, where the student assumes the role of the client and the professor as a service provider to be valued based on constant productivity evaluation indices, akin to the logic of consumption-satisfaction, as follows:

Academia is about to become fast food. The managerial model has come to be seen as the solution to the problems of educational organizations. Performance evaluations of professors that mimic the assessment processes of executives have begun to develop, career plans are increasingly similar to those of companies, students have come to be seen as clients, and courses as products. Embedded in such logic, professors are rewarded or punished, often based primarily on student satisfaction with the course taught by the professor. (Alcadipani, 2011, p. 346)

The university worker is subjugated in this dynamic, like other workers, as they must meet market demands legitimized by institutional spheres, which use evaluation as a tool to ensure efficiency in the name of quality excellence at the expense of the worker themselves. The academic worker ends up consumed by their own productivism.

#### 4.2 INTERFACES WITH EVALUATION: THE FUEL OF ACADEMIC PRODUCTIVISM

The role of the professor as a university worker, and the defined tasks of teaching, research, and extension within our constitution (Article 207), often become overshadowed by the focus on academic production and publication indices. The Folha de São Paulo newspaper, in 1988, published a list of University of São Paulo (USP) professors who had not published between 1985/86, an incident that became known as the list of the unproductive. The regulation of Higher Education in Brazil dates back to the 19th century with the creation of the first universities. However, according to Zambelli (2009), the topic of Higher Education Evaluation is more recent, originating in 1977 with the postgraduate evaluation instituted by CAPES (Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel). Initially established in 1950 to support teacher training, CAPES shifted towards a focus on researcher training during the civil-military dictatorship, marking a significant turn towards the demand for quantifiable production.

The evaluative model of the National Postgraduate System emphasizes quantitative indicators and bibliographic production, promoting a policy centered on productivity, which

has various consequences at both individual and collective levels. Academic productivism arises because of the SNPG evaluation. (Lima & Vitulo, 2017, p. 16)

If capitalism commodifies knowledge production, evaluation becomes the primary control tool for managing universities. It is through evaluation processes, in the form of indices and rankings, that the management of institutions is determined. Thus, evaluation has become an instrument of productivism and a control mechanism for knowledge production, which must comply under the threat of disciplinary sanctions, within the framework of quality assessment, Schmidt (2011). This quality is produced by valuing publication over any other practice intended for the university institution, such as teaching and extension. Governed by management contracts and evaluated by productivity indices, calculated to be flexible, the operational university is structured by strategies and programs of organizational effectiveness, thereby by the particularity and instability of means and objectives. Defined and structured by norms and standards entirely foreign to knowledge and intellectual training, it is fragmented into micro-organizations that engage its faculty and bend its students to external demands unrelated to intellectual work. (Chaufé, 2003, p. 24)

The logic of this type of evaluation is quantifying, overlooking other aspects of a broad and formative assessment. When we refer to academic productivism in this work, we are discussing "an evaluation policy that counts production merely by its numbers, an evaluation model that considers only the quantification of production data, related to the scales of the publishing vehicles (A1, B2, etc.)" (Kuhlmann, 2015, p. 841) or international rankings systematized by acronyms like impact factors that calculate production versus citation, keeping the cycle turning. Living outside this logic does not seem to be an option; living within this logic in a healthy manner and striving for work with substance, conducted in the time of academic research, with the peculiarities of each field in mind, seems to be the common chorus throughout the literature.

Evaluation is a process open to multiple meanings but should not be dispersive. Therefore, the evaluation of higher education must not lose its main focus, to also not lose its social and pedagogical effectiveness. In other words, its central reference are the essential roles of higher education. This poses the serious problem of facing a definition, albeit rudimentary, regarding the purposes and essential roles of higher education – a topic also always laden with ideology, and therefore, with values and interests. (Dias Sobrinho, 2008, pp. 194 -195).

The discussion goes beyond the regulatory plane, and evaluation is not control, but control is part of evaluation, Dias Sobrinho (2008). For the 2021-2025 evaluation cycle, CAPES

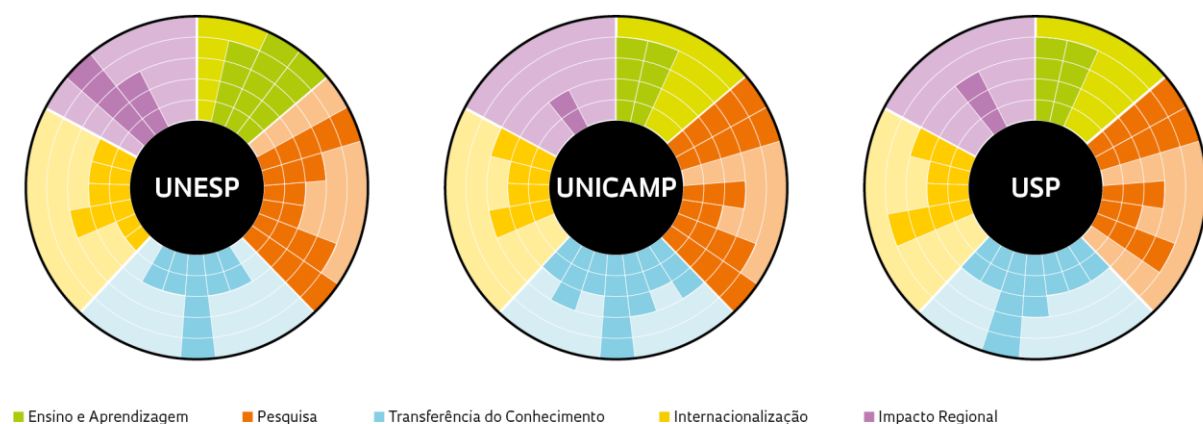
proposes an evaluation in 5 dimensions: "Teaching and Learning, Knowledge Production, International and Regional Insertion, Innovation and Knowledge Transfer, and Impact on Society." However, as of 2021, the details of this proposal are still unclear to HEIs. There are independent movements like the project developed by FAPESP (São Paulo Research Foundation) for the São Paulo state universities "Performance Indicators in São Paulo State Universities 2022." The work led by Professor Jacques Marcovitch (2019) at FAPESP aims to adapt the U-Multirank system to the local reality, in the case of São Paulo state institutions.

## Figure 1

### *The Impact of Universities*

#### O impacto das universidades em cores ▲

Nos diagramas abaixo, a metodologia do U-Multirank é aplicada às universidades estaduais paulistas. Cada barra preenchida representa um indicador, como número de artigos, quantidade de formados e patentes em coautoria com empresas. Quanto mais células preenchidas em cada barra, mais próxima a instituição está da excelência



FONTE: UMULTIRANK.ORG

Source: Diagram taken from <https://revistapesquisa.fapesp.br/avaliacao-em-5-dimensoes/>, accessed on Oct 18 2021.

In the professor's argument, progress requires measurement, and the example of Utrecht University in the Netherlands, which completely abolished quantitative metrics in favor of purely qualitative evaluation, would also be an inadequate solution. The advantages and limits of both approaches. 'Bibliometric indicators are rational and objective, but they are known to provoke behavioral distortions and are incapable of capturing dimensions such as the quality of teaching in the classroom,' he states. Meanwhile, a detailed analysis of the scientific and academic contribution of researchers is more laborious and poses complex challenges. 'Naturally, this involves a much longer and more difficult process to carry out,' Marcovitch asserts.



In conclusion, the debate around the effectiveness of quantitative versus qualitative evaluation methods in academia is complex and multifaceted. While quantitative indicators offer a semblance of objectivity and efficiency, they fall short in assessing the nuances of academic contribution and teaching quality. The experience of Utrecht University serves as a provocative case study, challenging the prevalent reliance on metrics but also highlighting the difficulties inherent in purely qualitative assessments.

The tension between these approaches underscores a broader discourse on the values and objectives of higher education. The pursuit of a balanced evaluation system that honors both measurable outcomes and the intangible aspect of academic work remains a significant challenge. This quest for balance necessitates a nuanced understanding of the purposes of evaluation, one that transcends simplistic binaries and embraces the complexity of academic endeavor.

Furthermore, the discussion emphasizes the need for continuous dialogue among educators, policymakers, and the academic community to forge a path forward. The evolving landscape of higher education, characterized by rapid technological advances and shifting societal expectations, demands adaptive and innovative assessment methodologies. Ultimately, the goal should be to cultivate an academic environment that encourages excellence, fosters intellectual growth, and contributes meaningfully to society. Achieving this requires a commitment to re-evaluating and potentially redefining the metrics and processes by which we gauge academic success, ensuring they align with the fundamental mission of universities to educate, inquire, and innovate.

## **5 CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS: REASSESSING THE PARADIGMS OF ACADEMIC PRODUCTIVITY AND EVALUATION**

Like any other social organization, the University is a historical construction embedded within the temporal logic in which it is analyzed. The pace demanded of scientific production has undoubtedly accelerated, yet this doesn't align with the knowledge production and consumption logic of neoliberal capitalism, nor should it be viewed in such terms. Even though the knowledge society is one of Science and Technology (S&T), the process of scientific creation is closer to that of a craftsman than a machine; the mind has not yet been industrialized. If this is the case, why are quotas set on the minimum number of publications per year to avoid being categorized as "unproductive" in an ethical response to society? Why is the logic applied

the same as that of industries, where efficiency is pursued in the name of "quality excellence" measurable in arbitrary indices?

Evaluation is a significant tool for socio/institutional change when it forms the basis for educational reforms at both the macro and micro levels of society. Any change in an educational institution involves an evaluative process, whether pre or post. The theme of higher education evaluation has come to the forefront of educational policy discussions at the end of the 20th century, driven by the sector's growth and a minimum requirement for quality standards, according to Dias Sobrinho (2006). However, it has been used as a means of control and coercion, not just selecting the best in rankings X or most cited in lists Y.

None of the references reviewed present a practical path for changing the current situation, partly because this extends beyond a national issue. We suggest another aspect to achieve balance: ensuring that other tasks of university teaching carry the same weight as research. Valuing Teaching and Extension could be a pathway. Currently, for these areas to hold any weight in terms of teaching output, they must become research, must be publicized to attract funding, and allow for faculty career progression. This proposal could be further developed in future works.

As preliminary results, we observe a devaluation of teaching and extension relative to research. In a crisis context, with the policy of dismantling research in Brazil, especially from 2016 onwards and exacerbated by the Covid-19 health crisis, other issues are magnified, such as the need to rank high to maintain funding from sponsoring agencies, following successive cuts in scholarship policies and the lack of adjustments to them. As a consequence, researchers find themselves compelled to seek other means of sustenance beyond research, thus dealing with various pressures. Lastly, with ongoing demands, the metrics in the current time-space of Brazilian public universities do not account for the diversity of knowledge production in each scientific field, highlighting the totalizing logic of capitalism.

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