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EVALUATION MODEL FOR STRICTO SENSU POST-GRADUATION PROGRAMS: PROFESSIONAL CAPABILITIES INDEX FOR THE PUBLIC GOOD

Modelo de avaliação à pós-graduação stricto sensu: index das capabilities profissionais
pró-bem-público

Modelo de evaluación para la posgrado stricto sensu: índice de capacidades
profesionales orientadas al bien público

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Abstract: Based on the principle that stricto sensu post-graduation (PG) education in a specific area is important, but that it should primarily contribute to a broader perspective focused on the multidimensionality of human life, this article proposes a capabilities index that can be used as a normative training instrument for PG. For this purpose, it draws on the concepts of the Capability Approach and uses the Public Good Professional Capabilities Index as a reference. Through the Delphi method, the index (of professionalism for the public good based on capabilities) is submitted to critical scrutiny by experts familiar with the approach, particularly adapting it to the context of stricto sensu PG, with the research locus in community universities in southern Brazil. After adjusting and validating the index, the article presents an evaluation model with six broad public-good-oriented professional capabilities, which can serve as a reference for PG programs at higher education institutions seeking to expand their formative dimension.

Keywords: capabilities approach; public good; post-graduation.

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Resumo: Parte-se do princípio de que a formação em pós-graduação (PG) *stricto sensu* em uma área específica é importante e, sobretudo, deve contribuir para uma perspectiva mais ampla, voltada à multidimensionalidade da vida humana. Este artigo propõe um índice de *capabilities* que pode servir como instrumento normativo de formação para a PG. Para isso, recorre às concepções da *Capability Approach* e utiliza como referencial o *Public Good Professional Capabilities Index* (Índice de Capacitações Profissionais para o Bem Público). Por meio do método Delphi, o estudo submete o índice (relativo ao profissionalismo para o bem público, baseado nas capacitações) ao escrutínio crítico de especialistas conhecedores da abordagem, adequando-o particularmente ao contexto da PG *stricto sensu*, tendo como locus de pesquisa as universidades comunitárias do Sul do Brasil. Após ajuste e validação, apresenta-se um modelo de avaliação composto por seis amplas capacitações profissionais pró-bem-público, apto a servir de referência para programas de PG de instituições de ensino superior que busquem ampliar sua dimensão formativa.

Palavras-chave: *capabilities approach*; bem público; pós-graduação.

Resumen: Partiendo del principio de que la formación en posgrado (PG) *stricto sensu* en un área específica es importante, pero que, sobre todo, debe contribuir a una perspectiva más amplia orientada a la multidimensionalidad de la vida humana, este artículo propone un índice de *capabilities* que puede ser utilizado como instrumento normativo de formación para la PG. Para ello, recurre a las concepciones del *Capability Approach* y utiliza como referencia el *Public Good Professional Capabilities Index* (Índice de Capacidades Profesionales para el Bien Público). A través del método Delphi, somete el índice (del profesionalismo para el bien público basado en las capacidades) al escrutinio crítico de especialistas conocedores del enfoque, particularmente para adecuarlo al contexto de la PG *stricto sensu*, teniendo como locus de investigación las universidades comunitarias del sur de Brasil. Tras ajustar y validar el índice, presenta un modelo de evaluación con seis amplias capacidades profesionales orientadas al bien público, que puede servir de referencia para programas de PG de instituciones de educación superior que busquen ampliar su dimensión formativa.

Palabras clave: *capabilities approach*; bien publico; posgrado.

1 INTRODUCTION

This study is grounded in the premise that meaningful social transformation depends, among other factors, on democratic, equitable, and high-quality educational training for all. The aim here is to advance the discussion by emphasizing that true education for the development of skills shaping humanity, as advocated by Nussbaum (2015), requires, from early childhood through *stricto sensu* graduate education, a broad, comprehensive formation oriented toward the multidimensionality of human life and aimed at expanding valuable capabilities such as freedom, dignity, autonomy, social justice, and human well-being.

According to Walker and McLean (2013), the acquisition of a high level of specialized knowledge (technical expertise) is a *sine qua non* condition for becoming a competent professional. However, such knowledge must go beyond technical mastery and be committed to the public good. In other words, professional knowledge should evolve into a humanistic understanding capable of fostering social justice and dignity for all. Otherwise, as Nussbaum (2015, p. 80) warns, "it is likely that our human interactions will be mediated by the inadequate norms of commercial exchange, where human lives are considered primarily as instruments for profit" and remain exclusively utilitarian. She also reminds us that "citizens cannot adequately engage with the complex world around them solely through factual knowledge and logic" (Nussbaum, 2015, p. 95). Thus, technical and factual education requires humanistic refinement, since the humanities provide meaning and significance to principles such as ethics, respect, empathy, and other values essential to any professional, whether a lawyer, physician, engineer, or otherwise.

Historically, universities have proven capable of training excellent technical professionals, specialists with remarkable expertise. However, they have also produced individuals with narrow or poorly informed worldviews and limited appreciation for civic and human duties. This may, in part, explain why many highly educated individuals today defend limited, intolerant, discriminatory, and regressive agendas (such as misogyny, homophobia, racism, and other forms of devaluing human dignity and diversity). To overcome these shortcomings, Nussbaum (1998) recommends, in her book *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education*, that higher education create space for the development of humanity-shaping skills, an orientation equally applicable to *stricto sensu* graduate education.

Addressing these and other issues related to broader education is crucial to confronting the erosion or scarcity of humanity, whether social, political, economic, or cultural, among individuals, peoples, and nations. Reflecting on how to build a more supportive society, attentive to the needs of the disadvantaged, aware of the finitude of natural resources and the necessity of their rational use, respectful in its interactions with the environment, animals, and people, and ensuring that professionals, regardless of their field, use their knowledge and skills to advance such a vision is a vital agenda for creating a better world.

In this sense, the present work draws on human development and Nussbaum's thought to advocate for broader education that allows individuals to live more fulfilling lives. It then explores and builds upon her theoretical contribution to the Capability Approach, which offers a set of concepts to envision an education that is inclusive, diverse, and plural, capable of meeting the demands of contemporary society more effectively.

Grounded in the robust theoretical framework of the Capability Approach and its key authors, Sen (1985, 2001, 2010) and Nussbaum (2000, 2011), this study also engages with the work of Walker and McLean (2013), who present a perspective of professional training oriented toward the public good. This approach promotes a differentiated type of education aimed at preparing professionals who are more benevolent imbued with humanity, respect for diversity, empathy, trust, and a critical and sustainable vision of their profession.

In alignment with the conceptual foundations guiding this research, the study was conducted within community universities, an institutional model notable for its historic mission of social commitment and regional development. Community Higher Education Institutions (CHEIs) advocate ideals such as human emancipation, the expansion of public and democratic spaces, freedom, and social equality. These values strongly connect with the principles of the Capability Approach and the index of public-good-oriented professional capabilities, particularly those related to Affiliation (solidarity) and Social and Collective Struggle.

Before presenting the guiding criteria for education oriented toward the public good, adopted in this study to create a specific evaluation model for *stricto sensu* graduate programs, a brief discussion follows on the general concepts of the Capability Approach, based on the perspectives of Sen and Nussbaum.

2 CAPABILITY APPROACH

The capability approach, also referred to as the capabilities approach, emerged from the seminal contributions of the economist and philosopher Amartya Sen (1985, 2001, 2010), who applied this perspective to evaluate quality of life, and of the philosopher Martha Nussbaum (2000, 2011), who developed it further as a partial theory of social justice.

According to Alkire (2005) and Robeyns (2016), the central concepts of the capability approach include functionings, capabilities, and agency. Functionings correspond to what people are and do, that is, the various states and activities of human beings. Capabilities represent the genuine freedoms or real opportunities individuals have to achieve functionings; they are sets of functioning vectors that reflect the freedom to pursue a chosen way of life. Agency refers to the ability to pursue goals one values and has reason to value.

Scholars such as Bruni, Comim, and Pugno (2008) highlight the capability approach as an alternative to overcome the rigid boundaries of conventional economic perspectives on well-being. Consequently, it has been widely applied to issues of injustice, poverty, and inequality, as well as to the planning of social welfare policies across different regions and contexts. The literature shows that the approach's flexible and plural normative structure enables its use in various evaluative exercises, particularly those concerning quality of life, social arrangements (including social and distributive justice), and public policies aimed at social transformation. The Human Development and Capability Association (HDCA, n.d.) emphasizes that the capability approach prioritizes what people are able to be and do, as well as their opportunities to realize these states, such as genuine opportunities for education, mobility, and supportive social relationships.

The capability approach values human lives, experiences, and achievements. In this framework, "social achievements are evaluated in terms of the capabilities people actually have,

rather than in terms of their utilities or happiness (as Jeremy Bentham and other utilitarians recommend)" (Sen, 2011, p. 49). This perspective contrasts with narrow conceptions of well-being focused solely on individual income or gross national product (GNP) growth. From this standpoint, money and economic growth should be understood as means to expand people's capabilities, not as ends in themselves.

Robeyns (2016) underscores that the theoretical framework of the capability approach rests on two fundamental normative claims: first, that the freedom to achieve well-being holds primary moral importance; and second, that this freedom should be understood in terms of people's real opportunities, their capabilities, to do and to be what they have reason to value. Thus, "expanding the freedoms we have reason to value not only makes our lives richer and freer but also allows us to become more fully social beings, exercising our volition, engaging with the world we live in, and influencing that world" (Sen, 2010, p. 29). Sen (2010) further highlights the crucial role of education as a resource for promoting substantive freedoms. Education directly influences the expansion of human freedoms overall, which is essential because the enjoyment of freedom contributes to improving quality of life and to shaping more complete, socially empowered individuals. Freedom enables people to make choices, care for themselves, interact with others, and transform their world.

At its core, the capability approach focuses on individuals' freedoms and opportunities to achieve functionings, the beings and doings people attain or are able to attain, aligned with what they value. The concept of agency is equally central, understood as the capacity to act in accordance with one's values or, as Sen (1985, p. 203) defines it, "what a person is free to do and achieve in the pursuit of whatever goals or values he or she regards as important.

In Brazil, the capability approach, as clarified by Comim (2021) and Bagolin (2005)³, is still underexplored and is often simply or mistakenly referred to as the "capacity approach," which greatly diminishes its meaning. Nevertheless, because it is broad and sensitive to different contexts and social groups, the approach has guided significant research in various parts of the world.

Another critical debate in the literature concerns the selection and weighting of relevant capabilities, particularly who should define them and how this process should unfold. This raises the question of whether to endorse a predefined list of capabilities. Nussbaum (2000), in her version of the approach, proposes an objective yet incomplete and revisable list of ten valuable human capabilities that should be incorporated and respected by governments worldwide. Sen (2010), by contrast, argues against the existence of a predetermined, "canonical" list, preferring to leave evaluative exercises open to public dialogue and democratic deliberation.

³ The term *capability* arises from the convergence of *capacity* and *ability*, aiming to express individuals' power to expand their own capacities. In the Brazilian context, it has often been mistakenly translated as "capacidade" (*capacity*), a rendering that significantly narrows its conceptual scope. Such translation overlooks fundamental dimensions of autonomy and agency inherent in the notion of *ability*, which enables individuals to shape and choose their own capacities. As a result, the human development dimension associated with the *capability approach* is lost. Several authors argue that the term *capabilities* has never found a fully satisfactory translation into Portuguese or other Romance languages, thus remaining a concept whose semantic complexity demands careful interpretation.

Nussbaum (2000) notes that, although Sen (2010) did not establish a specific list, he acknowledged the particular centrality of certain capabilities, such as health and education. She also emphasizes the importance of human dignity, a concept deeply embedded in her version of the approach.

To determine the capabilities necessary for a society aspiring to social justice, Nussbaum (2011), true to her liberal-egalitarian perspective, places freedom at the core of a dignified human life. She suggests that fundamental capabilities essential to the harmonious development of individuals should be the object of public policy and that governments should prioritize them to ensure conditions for the full development of their citizens.

Nussbaum's (2011) list of ten central human capabilities is grouped into four macro-dimensions: a) Body – Life; Bodily health; Bodily integrity. b) Mind – Senses, imagination, and thought; Emotions; Practical reason. c) Relationships – Affiliation (friendship and respect); other species. d) Environment management – Play; Control over one's environment (political and material). She asserts that "securing these ten capabilities for all citizens is a necessary condition of social justice" (Nussbaum, 2011, p. 40).

3 THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPING THE INDEX FOR STRICTO SENSU GRADUATE EDUCATION

Drawing on the theoretical framework of the capability approach and Nussbaum's ten central capabilities, this study also incorporates the public⁴ professional capabilities proposed by Melanie Walker and Monica McLean (2013) in Professional Education, Capabilities and the Public Good.

In their research, Walker and McLean investigate the university's role in promoting human development, seeking to identify how professional higher education⁵, can contribute to the public good, particularly in reducing poverty. They introduce the term public-good professionalism to convey the idea of "professionals with values, knowledge, and skills to provide public services that expand opportunities for better lives (capabilities) and achievements (functionings) that their users have reason to value" (Walker, McLean, 2013, p. 1–2, our translation). The authors argue that graduates working with vulnerable populations, those living in severe poverty, should aim for greater justice and reduced inequality. Accordingly, they assign universities the role of educating and guiding professionals toward the public good, while expecting competent public-good professionals to uphold human development, democratic values, and social justice.

⁴ The concept of "public good" adopted in this study is grounded in an understanding that integrates contributions from different intellectual traditions, giving rise to an innovative formulation, Public Good Professionalism. From this perspective, the knowledge produced and acquired by professionals is conceived as a public good capable of contributing to social justice and the improvement of societies. The public good is understood as a central aim of higher education, supporting the idea of a university committed to consistent values and to the promotion of human well-being.

⁵ The expression "university-level professional education," as used by the authors, should not be understood by Brazilian readers as referring to "Higher Technology Courses" (CSTs), which have existed in Brazil since 1970.

Walker and McLean's (2013) work led to the construction and validation of the Public Good Professional Capabilities Index (PCI) an evaluative framework designed to guide thinking about education and professional practice oriented toward the public good within universities.

Considering the original context of the Walker and McLean (2013) index⁶, this study adopted, as its initial reference, the eight public-good-oriented qualities presented in Figure 1 to support the subsequent construction of an evaluative index tailored to *stricto sensu* graduate education.

Figure 1 – Public-good professional capabilities

Functionings →	Capability Professional
Understanding how the profession is shaped by the current national and global political, historical, and socioeconomic context; recognizing how structures shape individual lives; imagining alternative futures and improved social plans; commitment to economic development and fair (equitable) opportunities; environmental awareness.	Informed Vision
Accepting obligations toward others; showing care and respect for diversity; understanding the lives of the poor and vulnerable; building relationships and empathy across social groups and status/prestige hierarchies; critically respecting different cultures; communicating professional knowledge accessibly with courtesy and patience.	Affiliation (Solidarity)
Persevering under challenging circumstances; recognizing the need for professional boundaries; fostering hope; developing a sense of career security.	Resilience
Empowering communities and promoting human rights; contributing to policy formulation and implementation; identifying spaces for transformation and leading social change to reduce injustice; working in professional and interprofessional teams; engaging in public reasoning and listening to diverse voices; building and sustaining strategic relationships and networks with organizations and governments.	Social and Collective Struggle
Practicing empathy and narrative imagination; showing compassion; fostering personal growth and self-care; integrating rationality and emotion; engaging in critical emotional reflection on power and privilege.	Emotional Reflexivity
Acting ethically; taking responsibility and showing commitment to communities and colleagues; demonstrating honesty; striving to deliver high-quality service.	Integridade

⁶ Originally, the index was applied within South Africa's post-apartheid university context, amid social transformation and a call for professionalism oriented toward the public good. It was subsequently operationalized in the United Kingdom, and more recently it featured in a case study conducted in Spain

Expressing and affirming professional priorities; contributing to policy-making; having confidence in the value of one's professional work; possessing the courage to act toward transformation.	Security and Confidence
Possessing a solid and critical disciplinary and academic knowledge base; valuing indigenous and community knowledge; maintaining a multidisciplinary and multiperspective stance; being inquisitive, critical, evaluative, imaginative, creative, and flexible; integrating theory and practice; solving problems; keeping an open mind.	Knowledge and Skills

Source: adapted from Walker and McLean (2013, p. 82, our translation).

Because this index was originally designed in a distinct context and aimed at higher education more broadly, it was necessary to assess carefully whether the eight public-good capabilities proposed by Walker and McLean (2013) could be directly transferred to the *stricto sensu* graduate education setting or required adjustments such as adapting terminology, excluding or including elements, or refining categories.

To ground this process scientifically, the study gathered expert opinions to reach a reasonable consensus regarding the configuration of the capability list appropriate for this context. The Delphi⁷ method, developed by Dalkey and Helmer (1963), was used to subject the eight public-good capabilities from Walker and McLean (2013) to critical expert review and validation. The Delphi process followed the steps proposed by Munaretto, Corrêa e Cunha (2013).

Once the research problem was defined, specialists were selected based on their recognized expertise in the capability approach, representing diverse academic backgrounds (sociology, economics, philosophy, among others). They were actively engaged in *stricto sensu* graduate education within community universities and willing to deliberate on the relevance and applicability of the index for master's and doctoral programs, thus legitimizing the construction of an evaluative tool adapted to this context⁸.

After assembling the expert panel, the first round of questionnaires was prepared and distributed anonymously. Responses were analyzed to check for consensus. Because initial agreement was not achieved, complementary information was provided, and a revised questionnaire was distributed for a second round (in the Delphi method, successive rounds continue until predefined criteria achieve consensus or near-consensus). Controlled feedback summarizing group opinions was shared after each round.

⁷ The Delphi method aims to obtain the most reliable consensus of opinions from a group of experts through a series of intensive questionnaires, interspersed with controlled feedback on the participants' responses.

⁸ In judgment (purposive) sampling, the researcher selects participants according to a personal strategic criterion, for example, those who possess deeper knowledge of the problem under study or those who are more easily accessible

In the first questionnaire, experts were asked to critically assess the functionings and public-good professional capabilities of the Walker and McLean (2013) index, considering the specific context of *stricto sensu* graduate education in community universities (the research locus). They were invited to evaluate the adequacy of each dimension and indicate the relevance of each capability for the qualified training and professional performance of master's and doctoral graduates oriented toward the public good.

In Table 1, the experts' responses regarding the relevance of professional capabilities for the public good within the strict sense of Public Governance (PG) are presented. On a scale from 1 to 5, the values assigned by the experts were as follows:

Table 1 - Relevance of public-good capabilities to the context of graduate education

Variables Capabilities	Experts		
	A	B	C
1. Informed Vision	5	5	5
2. Affiliation (Solidarity)	5	5	4
3. Resilience	4	3	3
4. Social and Collective Struggle	5	5	4
5. Emotional Reflexivity	4	3	4
6. Integrity	4	5	3
7. Security and Confidence	4	4	3
8. Knowledge and Skills	5	5	4

Attribute: Relevance (1 = low; 3 = medium; 5 = high).

Source: authors' elaboration.

According to the experts, the most relevant capabilities for the graduate education context are: 1. Informed Vision; 2. Affiliation (Solidarity); 4. Social and Collective Struggle; 8. Knowledge and Skills. The less relevant capabilities are: 3. Resilience; 5. Emotional Reflexivity; 6. Integrity; 7. Security and Confidence.

Figure 2 presents selected comments and justifications from experts regarding their relevance ratings.

Figure 2 – Experts’ comments on the relevance of public-good capabilities

Capabilities	Comments from Experts A and B
Informed Vision	<p>A “Extremely relevant given the unequal social reality graduates will face. Strongly aligned with the community university model”.</p> <p>B “Highly relevant. Suggest renaming to Critical and Conscious Professional Vision (or more literally: Well-informed Professional Vision)”.</p>
Affiliation (Solidarity)	<p>A “Essential for working in unequal contexts such as Brazil’s (particularly in the South). Many graduates will teach in higher education institutions where inequality is present among students and communities served”.</p> <p>B “Affiliation seems more related to Belonging, Commitment, and Empathy than merely to relationship and solidarity”.</p>
Resilience	<p>A “Fundamental, especially for those involved in planning and implementing public policies”.</p> <p>B “Important, but postgraduate students may already develop resilience throughout their academic trajectory; graduate challenges tend to reinforce it”.</p>
Social and Collective Struggle	<p>A “Extremely relevant for community universities, whose core mission involves regional community development”.</p> <p>B “The term Engagement in Social and Collective Transformation better reflects this capability”.</p>
Capabilities	Comments from Experts A and B
Emotional Reflexivity	<p>A “Very important for any professional, whether from community universities or other models”.</p> <p>B “Important, but I do not see graduate programs as capable of fostering emotional intelligence”.</p>
Integrity	<p>A “Again, highly important for any professional profile”.</p> <p>B “For the Brazilian context, it might be better to call this Ethics and Professional Integrity”.</p>
Security and Confidence	<p>A “Also fundamental for any professional”.</p> <p>B “The translation of assurance as ‘security’ weakens the meaning. It relates more to Self-esteem and Confidence than to safety”.</p>
Knowledge and Skills	<p>A “Pursuing professional excellence in technical competence is critical for higher education institutions seeking regional and national recognition for quality”.</p> <p>B “Should be translated as: having a solid and critical academic disciplinary knowledge base”.</p>

Source: authors’ elaboration based on experts’ statements.

The comments above show that, beyond relevance assessments, one expert suggested terminology refinements for five capabilities, which were then submitted for group analysis.

Still in the first questionnaire, experts were invited to propose new capabilities they considered more suitable to the graduate education context. One suggested four additional items: Tolerance for Divergent Views, Creativity, Capacity for Continuous Updating, and Valuing the Human Being. These proposals were also analyzed and deliberated upon by the panel.

Since the first Delphi round did not yield sufficient consensus, due to suggested additions and terminology adjustments, the study proceeded to a second round. Necessary clarifications were provided, a new questionnaire was prepared, and responses were collected again.

In the second questionnaire, experts evaluated five key questions, responding with agreement, disagreement, or alternative positions, and providing written comments. Figure 3 compiles these deliberations.

Figure 3 – Experts' agreement on the selection and adaptation of public-good capabilities for graduate education

Question	Experts' responses		
	A	B	C
1. The capabilities Informed Vision, Affiliation (Solidarity), Social and Collective Struggle, and Knowledge and Skills are highly relevant and should remain in the list	Agree	Agree	Agree
2. The capabilities Resilience, Emotional Reflexivity, Integrity, and Security and Confidence are less relevant than those above	Agree	Disagree	Agree
3. Resilience and Emotional Reflexivity are of low relevance and could be excluded	Agree	Agree	Agree
4. Evaluate suggested name changes for five capabilities			
a. Informed Vision → Critical and Conscious Professional Vision	Agree	Agree	Agree
b. Affiliation (Solidarity) → Belonging, Commitment, and Empathy	Agree	Agree	Agree
c. Social and Collective Struggle → Engagement in Social and Collective Transformation	Agree	Agree	Agree
d. Integrity → Ethics and Professional Integrity	Agree	Agree	Agree
e. Security and Confidence → Self-esteem and Confidence	Disagree	Agree	Disagree
5. Evaluate the inclusion of four proposed new capabilities			
a. Tolerance for Divergent Views	Other	Disagree	Other
b. Creativity	Other	Disagree	Disagree
c. Capacity for Continuous Updating	Other	Agree	Disagree
d. Valuing the Human Being	Other	Disagree	Other

Source: authors' elaboration.

Specifically, regarding Question 5 presented in the figure above, which addresses the inclusion of four new capabilities, the experts' positions are shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4 – Posicionamento dos especialistas com relação à inclusão de novas/outras capabilities ao index

Experts	Experts' Positions
A	Letters a, b, c, d: "I believe it would be appropriate to try to identify these capabilities within those proposed by the authors, and only introduce a new category if all possibilities in that regard have been exhausted".
B	Letter a: "This is already covered by the capability Belonging, Commitment, and Empathy." Letter b: "This is already covered by the capability Knowledge and Skills – being curious, critical, evaluative, imaginative, creative, and flexible; integrating theory and practice; solving problems; keeping an open mind." Letter d: "This is already covered by the capability Belonging, Commitment, and Empathy".
C	Letters a and d: "I believe these last capabilities can be summarized as: tolerance for human development (which involves updating and integrating with other and new knowledge). Tolerance already encompasses the conditions and ability to relate to differences. The capability should not be redundant".

Source: own elaboration based on the experts' statements.

After completing the second Delphi round and gathering all expert feedback, the consultation process concluded, and participants received a final summary of the group's deliberations.

4 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS AND PRESENTATION OF THE EVALUATION MODEL FOR STRICTO SENSU GRADUATE EDUCATION

This section highlights the consensuses and near-consensuses identified during the investigation and presents the outcome of the work: the construction of the index of public-good-oriented capabilities for *stricto sensu* graduate education⁹.

The experts reached consensus that six public-good professional capabilities from Walker and McLean's (2013) index are particularly relevant and pertinent to the *stricto sensu* graduate context: Informed Vision, Affiliation (Solidarity), Social and Collective Struggle, Knowledge and Skills, Integrity, and Security and Confidence. All six therefore compose the analysis model or index proposed for *stricto sensu* graduate education.

There was also consensus that two capabilities are of low relevance for the set of public-good professional capabilities directed to *stricto sensu* graduate education: Resilience and Emotional Reflexivity. These two capabilities are thus excluded from the graduate index.

During the analysis, terminology changes were proposed for five capabilities. The experts unanimously agreed that four of them should be renamed in the research instrument: a) Informed Vision - Critical and Conscious Professional Vision; b) Affiliation

⁹ A more detailed analysis, with deeper conceptual and theoretical examination of the capabilities included in the index for *stricto sensu* graduate education, as well as their application to master's and doctoral graduates, will be addressed in a subsequent study to be published following this article.

(Solidarity) - Belonging, Commitment, and Empathy; c) Social and Collective Struggle - Engagement in Social and Collective Transformation; d) Integrity - Ethics and Professional Integrity. For Security and Confidence, the experts did not reach consensus regarding renaming; accordingly, this capability retains its original designation in the graduate model.





The experts suggested adding other capabilities to the graduate list. However, there was near-consensus that the proposed additions, Tolerance for Divergent Views, Creativity, Capacity for Continuous Updating, and Valuing the Human Being, already appear (implicitly or explicitly) within the capabilities identified by Walker and McLean (2013). As such, these items were not incorporated into the index.



Since the expert review did not recommend changes to the broader dimension of functionings for the graduate context, the model retained Walker and McLean's (2013) original descriptions.

After concluding and validating all research stages, the study defined the six public-good professional capabilities for the *stricto sensu* graduate context, constructed, agreed upon, and consolidated by experts through the Delphi method. The graduate index comprises: (a) Critical and Conscious Professional Vision; (b) Belonging, Commitment, and Empathy; (c) Engagement in Social and Collective Transformation; (d) Ethics and Professional Integrity; (e) Security and Confidence; (f) Knowledge and Skills. These capabilities may serve as a reference or as a normative instrument to strengthen the formative dimension of *stricto sensu* programs.

Figure 5 below presents the evaluation model, or index, of public-good-oriented capabilities constructed for *stricto sensu* graduate education.

Figure 5 - Index of public-good-oriented capabilities for stricto sensu graduate education

Meta-functionings	Functionings	Graduate Capabilities
<p>recognize the full dignity of every human being.</p> <p>Act for social transformation and the reduction of injustice.</p> <p>Make sound, well-informed, balanced, and imaginative judgments.</p> <p>Work and act with others to expand the comprehensive capabilities of people living in poverty.</p>	<p>Understanding how the profession is shaped by current national and global political, historical, and socioeconomic contexts; recognizing how structures shape individual lives; imagining alternative futures and improved social plans; commitment to economic development and fair (equitable) opportunities; environmental awareness.</p> <p>Accepting obligations toward others; demonstrating care and respect for human diversity; understanding the lives of poor and vulnerable populations; developing relationships and empathy across social groups and status/prestige hierarchies; exercising critical respect for different cultures; communicating professional knowledge accessibly, with courtesy and patience.</p> <p>Adopting a community-empowerment orientation and promoting human rights; contributing to policy design and implementation; identifying spaces for transformation and leading and managing social change to reduce injustice; working in professional and interprofessional teams; participating in public reasoning and listening to all voices in the "conversation"; building and sustaining strategic relationships and networks with organizations and government.</p> <p>Acting ethically; assuming responsibility and commitment toward communities and colleagues; demonstrating honesty; striving to deliver high-quality service.</p>	<p>1 Critical and Conscious Professional Vision</p>  <p>2 Belonging, Commitment, and Empathy</p>  <p>3 Engagement in Social and Collective Transformation</p>  <p>4 Ethics and Professional Integrity</p> 
Meta-functionings	Functionings	Graduate Capabilities
	<p>Expressing and affirming one's professional priorities; contributing to policy; maintaining</p>	<p>5 Security and Confidence</p>

	<p>confidence in the value of one's professional work; possessing confidence to act for transformation.</p> <p>Possessing a solid and critical disciplinary and academic knowledge base; valuing Indigenous and community knowledge; adopting a multidisciplinary and multiperspective stance; exercising inquiry, critique, evaluation, imagination, creativity, and flexibility; integrating theory and practice; solving problems; maintaining an open mind.</p>	 <p>6 Knowledge and Skills</p> 
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Source: adapted from Walker and McLean (2013, p. 81-82).

Graduates of *stricto sensu* programs, higher education faculty and researchers, are expected to value the capabilities listed above and to contribute to reducing inequalities and expanding the public good (that which is central to the well-being of individuals and communities). As faculty members, they should promote formative experiences that advance solidarity, inclusion, empathy, belonging, critical vision, knowledge and skills, social justice, and citizenship. As researchers, they should produce knowledge and develop sustainable projects and outputs oriented toward environmental stewardship and, above all, toward the real lives of people, in accordance with ethical standards and human dignity. As Walker and McLean (2013) emphasize, the goal is to educate professionals with values, knowledge, and skills capable of delivering public services that enable better lives.

The principle of the public good, as an ethical concept and a moral vision of society's interest, according to Sekera (2014), inspires action for greater social justice, human rights, democracy, and respect for diversity. The public good can guide social, educational, and scientific practice, encouraging commitments to overcoming inequalities in local and global contexts. These challenges require the strengthening of human capabilities (freedoms, opportunities, achievements, agency, and well-being) and the consolidation of policies and practices that value what is common and collective. It is also essential to cultivate an ethic oriented toward the public good and the common good, capable of confronting the many forms of oppression that constrain freedom and compromise quality of life. As Sen (2010) argues, the task consists of removing substantive deprivations that inhibit human freedom, thereby enabling more dignified lives.

On this broader understanding of formation and social commitment rests the present work. Discussing professional education oriented toward the public good, understood as that which is fundamental to society's well-being, within a context shaped by market logics and productivity may appear contradictory or even utopian. Precisely in such a context, however, reflective efforts become necessary in order to challenge the limits of training focused solely on individual competencies and to propose approaches that offer academics a more critical, ethical, and theoretically grounded orientation toward the public good.

5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The index of public-good-oriented professional capabilities for graduate education (*stricto sensu*) developed in this study serves as a starting point for reflection and dialogue, aiming to broaden social awareness and strengthen the orientation toward the public good beyond formative perspectives limited to utilitarian approaches. Achieving this, however, requires that graduate education, its agents, and its policies engage with the vision and arguments of Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum.

Pursuing a dream requires dreamers; thus, all are invited to imagine and build a better world a world where people are free, make comprehensive and well-informed choices, have opportunities, enjoy human dignity, cultivate educated and critical minds, form affective and supportive relationships, experience quality of life, and practice respect. Such a world is possible, but realizing it depends on each person contributing more intentionally to collective well-being. In this sense, valuing education oriented toward human development and the public good may be an important first step.

Finally, it is hoped that this study will contribute meaningfully to the field of education and to the literature on capabilities. Above all, it aspires to have practical impact on universities and their *stricto sensu* Graduate Programs (PPGs), particularly regarding the evaluation of Brazilian graduate education, encouraging a broader formative scope. The goal is for master's and doctoral graduates from diverse fields to reaffirm their commitment to the public good, social justice, and the country's socioeconomic development, especially given Brazil's enduring status among the most unequal nations in the world. If used as a guiding reference for future directions, this index can help graduate programs strengthen their formative processes, preparing professionals capable of driving meaningful societal transformation.

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Conflict of interest statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest regarding the article "Evaluation Model for Stricto Sensu Graduate Programs: Index of Public-Good-Oriented Professional Capabilities".

Data availability

The data underlying this research are contained within the article.

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