



## MUNICIPAL EVALUATION SYSTEM AS A MANAGEMENT AND REGULATION INSTRUMENT OF EDUCATIONAL POLICIES

### *SISTEMA DE AVALIAÇÃO MUNICIPAL COMO INSTRUMENTO DE GESTÃO E REGULAÇÃO DE POLÍTICAS EDUCACIONAIS*

### *EL SISTEMA DE EVALUACIÓN MUNICIPAL COMO INSTRUMENTO DE GESTIÓN Y REGULACIÓN DE LAS POLÍTICAS EDUCATIVAS*

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**ABSTRACT:** This article is a synthesis of a master's thesis whose objective was to discuss the evaluation system of school performance in the municipality of Bebedouro (SP) as an instrument for improving the management and regulation of educational policies and unfolded in analyzing this process, investigating the possibility of improvement in schooling results and identify and discuss whether the instruments used contributed to adjustments in public educational actions. The methodological procedures emphasized the theoretical, exploratory and qualitative approach, materializing through bibliographic research and document analysis by considering three structuring dimensions: evaluation, management and educational policy. The results showed that the data extracted from this assessment offered subsidies to develop, monitor and improve public policies in the municipal territory, generating instruments for correcting directions, reassessing priorities and planning actions. Therefore, this experience acquires relevance by serving as a reference to other Brazilian municipalities.

**KEYWORDS:** Education. Municipal assessment. Educational management. Educational policies.

**RESUMO:** Este artigo é uma síntese de dissertação de mestrado cujo objetivo foi discutir o sistema avaliativo do desempenho escolar no município de Bebedouro (SP) como instrumento de aprimoramento da gestão e de regulação das políticas educacionais e se desdobraram em analisar esse processo, investigar a possibilidade de melhoria nos resultados da escolarização e identificar e discutir se os instrumentos empregados contribuíram para ajustes nas ações públicas educacionais. Os procedimentos metodológicos deram ênfase à abordagem teórica, exploratória e qualitativa, concretizando-se por meio de pesquisa bibliográfica e análise documental ao considerar três dimensões estruturantes: avaliação, gestão e política educacional. Os resultados evidenciaram que os dados extraídos dessa avaliação ofereceram subsídios para elaborar, monitorar e aprimorar as políticas públicas no território municipal, gerando instrumentos para a correção de rumos, a reavaliação de

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prioridades e o planejamento das ações. Sendo assim, essa experiência adquire relevância ao servir de referência aos demais municípios brasileiros.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Educação. Avaliação municipal. Gestão educacional. Políticas educacionais.

**RESUMEN:** Este artículo es una síntesis de una tesis de maestría cuyo objetivo fue discutir el sistema de evaluación del desempeño escolar en el municipio de Bebedouro (SP) como instrumento para mejorar la gestión y regulación de las políticas educativas y se desplegó en el análisis de ese proceso, investigando la posibilidad de mejora en los resultados escolares y identificar y discutir si los instrumentos utilizados contribuyeron a los ajustes en las acciones educativas públicas. Los procedimientos metodológicos enfatizaron el abordaje teórico, exploratorio y cualitativo, materializándose a través de la investigación bibliográfica y el análisis de documentos considerando tres dimensiones estructurantes: evaluación, gestión y política educativa. Los resultados mostraron que los datos extraídos de este diagnóstico ofrecieron subsidios para desarrollar, monitorear y mejorar las políticas públicas en el territorio municipal, generando instrumentos para corregir rumbos, reevaluar prioridades y planificar acciones. Por lo tanto, esta experiencia adquiere relevancia al servir de referencia para otros municipios brasileños.

**PALABRAS-CLAVE:** Educación. Evaluación municipal. Gestión educativa. Políticas educativas.

## Introduction

This article is an extract from the master's thesis whose results show evidence for scientific communication by approaching the municipal external evaluation as an object of study. It can be said that the importance of large-scale educational assessments follows a worldwide trend and in Brazil it has been accentuated since the 1980s with the decentralization of teaching, however, the emphasis is on scientific studies aimed at the federal and state whose results are consolidated to the regulations of educational policies. In searches on portals for scientific articles and periodicals, *municipal assessment* is presented as an underexplored topic, indicating the need for expansion and strengthening.

In this sense, Education seen as a public good must be understood in a social dimension of equity and promotion of rights, managed in a space of inclusion, universality and emancipation. However, in the face of numerous factors, municipal systems face greater difficulties in acquiring autonomy to implement their own evaluation systems. This work is linked to issues related to the early years of elementary education, in which about two thirds of enrollments in this segment are in municipal schools.

The general objective of the dissertation was to discuss the development of the implementation of a school performance assessment system in the municipality of Bebedouro (SP) as a management and regulation instrument for educational policies, which resulted in analyzing this process, investigating the possibility of improvement on the results of schooling and identify and discuss whether the instruments used contributed to adjustments in public educational actions.

The theoretical framework supported this experience with a focus on two axes that have been researched and analyzed by scholars in the field of education: education management and educational evaluation. Such matters are associated with the conceptions of evaluation, management, regulation, territoriality, educational policy, system, indicator and quality. The defense of centrality in municipal public management does not omit or ignore limits in the formulation of local educational policies, considering educational policy as a specific part of public policies and these perceived as a specific type of public action. From this perspective, “public policy is now treated as a form of exercising power in democratic societies, resulting from a complex interaction between State and society” (DI GIOVANNI; NOGUEIRA, 2015, p. 19, our translation).

Thus, to maintain the balance of any system, regulation is conceived as a “dynamic that uses all references to advance within the upper limits of possibilities” (DIAS SOBRINHO, 2008, p. 204, our translation). It allows, through its regulatory bodies, “to identify disturbances, analyze and process information related to a state of imbalance and transmit a set of coherent orders to one or more of its executors” (BARROSO, 2005, p. 728, our translation).

Although the evaluative experience of the municipality was anchored in real circumstances, when seeking answers to the questions, it was necessary to distance oneself from empirical knowledge and materialize this experience in a theoretical framework. For that, the methodological procedures of the dissertation highlighted the theoretical, exploratory and qualitative approach and, to contextualize the discussions, quantitative data taken from educational data providers were inserted. The work was developed through bibliographical research and exploratory documentary theoretical analysis, in which three structuring dimensions were considered: evaluation, management and educational policy.

According to the statistical notes of the 2021 School Census, a document published by the National Institute of Studies and Research Anísio Teixeira (Inep, Portuguese initials), the municipal network represents 69.6% of enrollments in the early years of elementary school

(BRASIL, 2022a, p. 8), that is, it has the largest contingent of students considering the federative spheres and the private education network.

Despite this percentage, the external evaluation focuses on the Basic Education Evaluation System (Saeb, Portuguese initials) and Inep points out that the objective is to carry out a diagnosis of Brazilian basic education and provide an indication of the quality in its administrative spheres. According to the Institute, the data survey presents information that offers subsidies to elaborate, monitor and improve public policies (INEP, 2021). Due to their certain interdependence, subnational educational actions are strongly influenced by the national assessment.

In 2020, Inep presented the *Report of the 3rd cycle of Monitoring the Goals of the National Education Plan*. When pointing out the achievements, limits and challenges of Brazilian education in this period, the studies indicated that the most worrying issues continued to be: “the low level of student learning, the great inequalities and the irregular school trajectory”, since they still affected a significant portion of the students from Brazilian public schools (BRASIL, 2020a, p. 13, our translation). In order to update the data in line with educational challenges, information was sought in the *Report on the 4th cycle of Monitoring the Goals of the National Education Plan/2022* and it was found that, in addition to a scenario that already contained numerous inequalities (access, completion, learning, socioeconomic level, infrastructure and opportunities) “the pandemic may have deepened the gaps that already divided national education, despite the advances of recent decades” (BRASIL, 2022b, p. 12, our translation). Based on this new scenario, the report pointed out significant challenges to achieving quality education in the country.

If school information has been extracted from external evaluations for years, why does Brazilian education not make significant advances when not promising data is published? Lemes (2021, p. 7) reinforces the question by saying that the expansion of schooling in Brazil in recent decades is undeniable, whether in basic education or in higher education, however, a qualitative equivalent of performance is not observed in the same proportion. The dissertation studies sought answers and the gaps that prevented better educational productivity by understanding the role of the municipality in this process.

It is possible to state that there has been a long search for quality in education and Balzan (2005, p. 119) points out that, in order to develop educational quality, it is necessary to evaluate, at the same time that there is a need to evaluate the evaluation itself, therefore,



quality it is not dissociated from evaluation. It is understood, then, that evaluation, process and quality move in a spiral.

When thinking about the evaluation and the federative units, there is relative autonomy at the municipal level and the studies by Nóvoa (1999) point to changes in attitudes, moving away from a regulatory situation (subordinated to the State) to a regulatory one (follow-up and evaluation logic). For the author, these changes would be urgent, however, after more than two decades, the solution did not find echo in educational policies. One of the problems is perhaps the interrelationship that exists between the executive branch, the economy and society. It is noteworthy that the alternation of educational managers who follow electoral calendars and insert new projects and programs in schools often end up implying the discontinuity of educational policies.

About this question, the approach of Bauer *et al.* (2015, 2016) converges with the research in focus by carrying out a thorough nationwide study on assessments in municipal contexts and, among the results obtained, highlights the establishment of large-scale assessment as an instrument of educational management (BAUER *et al.*, 2015, p. 326).

### **The municipality as a territory of local educational policies**

The decentralization of public education provoked significant educational reforms and gave autonomy to municipalities to create their own education systems, denoting a new educational configuration. “Decentralization allows for the emergence of experiences, the delegation of powers, the multiplicity of decisions and for each state and each locality to seek its vocation and its own solutions” (BRASIL, 2002, p. 7, our translation).

To discuss decentralization, it is necessary to think about public planning and Batista (2016) starts from the premise that “each social group has its situation, its diagnosis and its proposal for government intervention in its spatial reality, incorporates the idea of territory and contributes to a better government effectiveness”. In this way, in the face of local problems, it is up to the education departments and school units to have greater autonomy to plan actions based on analyzes of their field of action, that is, to regulate their actions.

When it comes to policy regulation, scholar João Barroso, from the University of Lisbon places knowledge at the center. For the author, in a concrete public action, the actors can produce, apprehend, transform, displace and apply knowledge, and the incorporation of knowledge is a cognitive, political and social process that transforms their own knowledge

and that of the actors in the various areas of activity (BARROSO, 2010, p. 38; 2013, p. 18). In this perspective, public action is not centered on interventions by the State and its administration but considers “the diversity of scenes and actors involved in the political process, at different levels, as well as their multiple interdependencies” (BARROSO, 2010, p. 39, our translation).

When talking about the educational field, it appears that there is a relationship between knowledge and politics, and Barroso (2010, 2013) debates this close relationship, presenting a new theoretical perspective and defends that knowledge is a fundamental component of politics and the opposite too, and what is at stake is “their reciprocal production of meaning and the use of knowledge as a 'knowledge based regulation tools’”. For the author, from the perspective of public action, this means “knowledge transformed by (in) politics”, that is, “knowledge that results from the interaction of different actors, at different levels of action” (BARROSO, 2010, p. 38, our translation).

So, more than a direct action on public policy makers, knowledge, including research, indirectly influences the process of public action, which occurs through the multiple learnings, which can be individual or organizational, that the various actors perform, either through reflection on their own practices or in more formal formative situations (BARROSO, 2013, p. 7).

Considering the external evaluation as an educational policy, the federative entities have their own objectives and the proximity of the municipal network among the educational actors facilitates the diagnosis and decision-making. These actions are linked to financial resources and, Batista (2016) points out that the public manager deals with resources that are not his and that he needs to be accountable to society. In this sense, each entity of the federation needs to evaluate and plan actions that use public resources in order to offer quality service to those who are part of public schools.

The Institutional Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Education (MEC) – 2020/2023 has as one of its objectives “Managing knowledge and evaluations about education”, which involves some goals of the National Education Plan – PNE/2014-2024 and describes:

Promoting actions and programs for collecting and analyzing data and educational information and for carrying out large-scale assessments and examinations to obtain a diagnosis of Brazilian education; promote access to excellent scientific and technological content; and identify factors related to student performance, considering the specificities of educational modalities in order to generate evidence for decision-making (BRASIL, 2020b, p. 20, our translation).

Therefore, after being clear about what must be done, it is necessary to know how to do it, with part of the national, state and municipal responsibility, leaving public policy makers to work together and provide answers about how public education is in their territory.

Pinhal (2014) is a defender of the territorialization of educational policies, and in an article that specifically deals with the regulation of education, highlighting the municipal space, he defends the idea of an educational territory, more precisely a model of community-based territorialization, promoting the construction of local policies. The author corroborates with the beliefs of Bauer *et al.* (2015) when emphasizing that the local community must have an educational project, need to consider the strategic importance of education and “accordingly, they must adopt their own educational policies, with options and priorities appropriate to the aspirations, needs and local interests, although evidently within the respect for national guidelines” (PINHAL, 2014, p. 11, our translation).

Although the most common concept of territory is that of governance space, Fernandes (2015, p. 999, our translation), describes it in a broader conceptual approach by saying “it is an inseparable set of processes, systems, relationships, movements, possessing materiality and immateriality, being creator and creation, producer and product, subject and object, so that it is produced by social relations and produces social relations”.

Although the evaluation history of the municipality in question does not explicitly appear a theoretical framework that has supported its actions, studies have shown that there are many authors who base this experience on discussing the importance of territoriality, as characteristic actions of a given social group. (BARROSO, 2015; BATISTA, 2016; BAUEL *et al.*, 2015; FERNANDES, 2015; PINHAL, 2014).

### **Why create your own evaluation system?**

The Basic Education Evaluation System (Saeb) is an important source of information and its objectives are focused on the actions of the federal government, but the MEC pays attention to states and municipalities building their own evaluation instruments, emphasizing that the data and results obtained articulate between the three powers (BRASIL, 2014b, p. 53). That same reference document says that “the evaluation must be systemic, understanding school results as a consequence of a series of extracurricular and intracurricular factors, which intervene in the educational process” (BRASIL, 2014b, p. 60, our translation).

In this sense, it is verified the existence of several other official documents that integrate the idea of autonomy of the municipalities so that they are not only dependent on Saeb indicators. In MEC Ordinance no. 826/2017, which provides for the National Pact for Literacy at the Right Age – PNAIC (Portuguese initials), in Art. 6, item III, Evaluation axis, evaluations such as Saeb and the National Literacy Assessment – ANA (Portuguese initials) are foreseen, but it opens space for the creation of municipal systems, by presuming, in paragraph c, periodic evaluations, applied by the education networks themselves, the from standardized instruments and the importance of registering in a system suitable for monitoring newly planned actions (BRASIL, 2017). Still, in the same ordinance, in Art. 10, in the attributions of states and municipalities related to literacy, there is the establishment of goals for each school, based on the analysis of both national external evaluations and other evaluation instruments (BRASIL, 2017).

In the PNE (2001/2010) that precedes the Plan in force (2014/2024), target twenty-six, which deals with elementary education, includes raising the level of student performance, providing for the implementation of a monitoring program that uses the Saeb indicators and the evaluation systems of the States and Municipalities that may be developed (BRASIL, 2001, p. 26). In other words, there have been guidelines for the evaluative autonomy of municipalities for decades.

This same condition is reinforced by Art. 11, paragraph 5 of Federal Law no. 13,005/2014, which establishes the PNE and deals with the evaluation of school performance, granting autonomy to municipalities to use data from national evaluations or maintain a cooperation agreement, if they maintain their own evaluation systems (BRASIL, 2014a).

Considering the regional asymmetries in a country with a large geographic dimension like Brazil, these excerpts from the national plans of the last two decades reveal that specific actions were expected from each federal entity, and, at the same time, the articulation between the three powers. In this way, it is postulated that there is space and incentive to expand evaluation systems in municipal territories and, thus, it was possible to invest in a system of its own and present the path of implantation and implementation.

Still, in the PNE/2014, in the third strategy of goal two, it is willing to “create mechanisms for the individual monitoring of elementary school students” (BRASIL, 2014a, our translation). Due to local characteristics, the municipality is in a better position to create instruments to follow the educational trajectory of each student, because:



In the same way that the union, states and municipalities built their ten-year education plans, with some common goals and strategies between spheres and others specific according to the educational demands of each territory, this same logic must be at the service of the evaluations of the student performance and, considering that the national and state evaluation (São Paulo) are in practice, it is essential that municipalities mobilize to create their instruments, favoring a broad and deep knowledge of the local educational reality and creating better conditions to regulate the system itself and formulate its educational policies (TOLEDO, 2019, p. 94, our translation).

In order to deepen knowledge on this topic, Bauer *et al.* (2015) draw a profile on assessment in Brazilian municipalities and seek to understand the relationships between assessments and educational management in these territories. The study, focused on large-scale assessment, carried out in 4,309 Brazilian municipalities, equivalent to 77% of the total, found that 1,573 (37%) had their own assessment systems. The results show a tendency for municipal managers to seek complementary instruments to guide educational policies. The research also presents the history that began in the 1980s, in which 2.2% of the municipalities adhered to their own evaluation and that from 2005 there was a significant expansion, and the apex of this period occurred in 2013, passing the percentage to 27.7%.

It should be noted that the municipality of Bebedouro followed this trend and presents an evaluation history with its strengths and weaknesses, briefly described below.

### **The evaluation practices of the municipality**

In the municipality of Bebedouro, the experience with self-assessment, presented by Bauer *et al.* (2015), began in 2002, through the Diagnostic Evaluation System of Municipal Education of Bebedouro – Sademb (Portuguese initials), without normative character.

Official records contain the occurrence of technical and operational problems related to the selection of content, preparation, application and correction of tests, in addition to the lack of indicators, as there is no common curriculum in schools. This implied returning the results to the school units after two years of application, and it was not possible to publish an official bulletin. Despite efforts to seek instruments capable of supporting decision-making, this process ended, with emphasis on:

All the difficulties encountered do not reduce the importance and need for evaluation as a concrete act of social responsibility and that does not aim to be a real radiography, but that brings aspects of what really happens, what is known and what is not known and that the community has the right to know (BEBEDOURO, 2002, p. 3, our translation).

In 2009, large-scale evaluation was institutionally resumed with the aim of outlining an educational panorama and obtaining data closer to the reality of each school. The tests were administered by teachers at the beginning of the school year (diagnostic assessment), at the end of the first semester and at the end of the second semester, with pre-established dates in the network. This type of evaluation, focused on pedagogical practice, continued to be carried in schools and, annually, underwent minor adjustments. Teachers, pedagogical coordinators and the pedagogical team of the then Municipal Department of Education (Demec, Portuguese initials), filled out data sheets that guided the planning of actions in classrooms, municipal schools and the teaching network, in search of better quality in the education offered.

The results were not disclosed to the population and the assessments, together with detailed reports, made up a portfolio that accompanied each student during their school journey. "In schooling, assessment is established in a process and, therefore, should enable the 'revelation', in the sense of knowledge of this changing reality" (LEMES, 2015, p. 140, authors' emphasis, our translation).

Although this evaluation in process was considered successful, certain objectives were fulfilled, but not enough to potentially help in educational policies. For Pestana (2016, p. 81), the national assessment system is becoming increasingly larger and more complex, and knowing the immediate consequences it has on individuals, schools and education systems, it is important to bear in mind that this initiative "is coherent, articulated and technically grounded and presents in a clearer and more transparent way the reason, for what, for whom, what and how to evaluate". These are the great challenges faced by municipalities with their own education systems.

Vianna (2003, p. 37) points out that evaluation proposals should reflect the educational reality and offer subsidies for self-knowledge of the system, while presenting this system to the community, providing better investments in human and material resources and, having a sequential validity, can, of course, become a competence certification process. The same author, in later studies, points out that the quality of education is not restricted only to the student's school performance, that it is also necessary to "verify other variables that are associated and condition school performance" (VIANNA, 2014, p. 36, our translation).

Making a connection between what Vianna points out about evaluation and the evaluation system implemented in Bebedouro, it appears that this was Sademb's commitment:

to better get to know each student, each classroom, each school and, consequently, the entire municipal public education system.

### **Description of the implementation path of the Municipal Assessment System of Bebedouro**

Feeling the need to invest efforts to better understand the educational potential of the Bebedouro network, in 2015, the municipality of Bebedouro officially adopted its own evaluation system, created by Municipal Ordinance no. 24/2015 (BEBEDOURO, 2015), a strategy foreseen in the Municipal Education Plan (PME), making it compatible with national evaluative actions. The acronym Sademb, adopted in 2002 and 2015, has different meanings for some letters, and the team responsible for the 2015 work was unaware of the 2002 system, revealed after searches for historical data from the dissertation work.

Due to the national and state evaluation experience, the legitimization of the municipal evaluation in terms of educational policy, had as reference the Saeb, implemented in 1990, and the School Performance Evaluation System of the State of São Paulo (Saresp, Portuguese initials), created in 1996. Sademb's general objective, described in Ordinance no. 24/2015, is to evaluate the quality, equity and efficiency of municipal public education, and the specific objectives unfold in:

I - subsidize the Municipal Secretary of Education in decision-making regarding the Educational Policy of the Municipality; II - verify the performance of students in the early years of Elementary School, in the different curricular components, in order to provide the Public Education System, the Technical-Pedagogical Team of the Municipal Education Department and the School Units with information that subsidizes: a) capacitation of teaching human resources; b) the reorientation of the pedagogical proposal of this level of education in order to improve it; c) the articulation of the evaluation results with school planning, the establishment of goals for the Pedagogical Project of each school (BEBEDOURO, 2015, our translation).

The exposed objectives give the dimension of the intentionality of municipal public education, which goes beyond the school performance of students, affecting management and public policies.

When realizing gaps in the educational practices adopted, some factors motivated the creation of this system, thus allowing, according to Luckesi (2011, p. 277), a diagnosis, because, for the author, evaluating is diagnosing, and in the case of evaluation, diagnosing is a

process of qualifying reality based on its description, based on relevant data and then obtaining the qualification by comparing it with a previously defined criterion.

Documentary contributions from the Bebedouro Municipal Department of Education – Semeb, revealed the coexistence of extra-school and intra-school factors that triggered the search for new evaluative instruments. One of the external factors is linked to the Municipal Management Effectiveness Index (IEGM, Portuguese initials), created by the Court of Auditors of the State of São Paulo (TCESP, Portuguese initials) in 2014, which seeks to evaluate the policies and activities developed by municipal public managers in seven sectors of the administration public sector, including Education (iEduca). A metric of management actions is established, in their sphere of responsibility within municipal public education, which affect both the quality of services and people's lives.

In the 2014 and 2015 forms, one of the topics was school evaluation and some questions included the application of a school performance evaluation program. If the municipality has its own system, the score achieved was worth three points; if it had adhered to Saesp, two points; in third-party assessment, one point; if no assessment had been applied, zero points (TCESP, 2016, p. 16). TCESP's actions consider the importance of municipal autonomy for inference in educational policies by saying the need for public management to be associated with results and, in education, it means the guarantee of learning, a constitutional right.

The second extracurricular factor was the cost for the municipality's participation in Saesp in 2015, in which expenses were not foreseen in the annual budget. In 2014, the participation of municipal education networks in Saesp was 84.6%, with State funding, and in 2015, the percentage dropped to 27%. This problem led to the anticipation of Sademb, scheduled for 2016, maintaining the same Saesp calendar for applying the tests.

There are also internal factors, linked to the Prova Brasil and the Basic Education Development Index (Ideb), mentioned below:

a) *General Results*: the results of the Prova Brasil are not released individually, making it difficult to search for individualized and/or specialized care.

b) *Time for analysis and dissemination of results*: the Prova Brasil, as it is applied throughout the national territory, presents the results in the following year. MEC/Inep logistics need that time, but it brings losses to municipalities. The difficulties caused by the late submission of Saeb technical reports are pointed out in studies by Alavarse, Machado and Bravo (2013, p. 196), Gimenes *et al.* (2013, p. 24) and Vianna (2003, p. 35).

c) *Reference Matrix and Curriculum*: as there was no national curriculum, the Prova Brasil reference matrix could not measure the curriculum proposals of the numerous municipalities. The matrices do not handle the learning processes by presenting content specifications (GATTI, 2012, p. 34) and preparing students for better performance and narrowing the curriculum (BAUER *et al.*, 2015, p. 332), consensual themes in academic debates. The MEC recognizes these problems, because in the Saeb Report (2005 to 2015), it warns that the reference matrices are a cut of the curricular contents, therefore, they do not encompass the entire curriculum, and it is not possible to confuse them with procedures, teaching strategies or even methodological guidelines (BRASIL, 2018, p. 26).

Several authors point out that the production of scales and indicators, such as the Ideb, causes comparisons between school institutions, facilitating curricular interferences (BAUER *et al.*, 2015; GIMENES *et al.*, 2013; LUCKESI, 2011; VIANNA, 2003, 2014). In the municipality of Bebedouro, descriptors were created for the elaboration and analysis of the tests and instruments for presenting the results, but scales and indicators were not developed.

d) *Minimum number of students*: there are two districts in Bebedouro and one village, with their own schools and regional characteristics and, as they did not meet the criteria defined by Inep, with at least twenty students enrolled, they did not sequentially participate in the external evaluations.

e) *Writing Competence*: Prova Brasil analyzes students' reading ability but does not provide data to identify the level of proficiency of written language standards. Soares (2016, p. 150) talks about the ineffectiveness of evaluating oneself only through multiple-choice tests, as questions with a higher degree of demand for higher cognitive skills are unlikely to be added. For the author, obtaining data on writing is essential.

After the presentation of the factors, the intra-school ones surpass in their importance, since it assumes that the evaluation is an instrument at the service of the teaching and learning process. “The use of external evaluations can and should be more comprehensive, demanding a coherent set of actions at different levels and directions based on the characteristics of each education department” (GIMENES *et al.*, 2013, p. 30, our translation).

The experience of this municipal space showed the effectiveness of the local assessment, while not disregarding the national assessments, as both have different purposes. This statement is theoretically based on research by Bauer *et al.* (2016, p. 130), when saying that “the expansion of evaluation initiatives by these federal entities does not necessarily mean the disregard of existing evaluations, coordinated by the federal and/or state instance”.



Thus, it is possible to “feed a dialogue between external and internal evaluation that allows networks and schools to gather conditions to advance their pedagogical projects” (ALAVARSE; MACHADO; BRAVO, 2013, p. 203, our translation).

### **Giving tests back to schools: an innovative action**

After the presentation and discussion of the results of the Sademb assessments, the batches of tests were returned to the schools. With this operation, archiving and accumulation of documents at the Department of Education was avoided and schools were favored in appropriating a set of data to identify didactic-pedagogical needs, in addition to the possibility of reviewing tests to understand the logic of student reasoning and error analysis. This does not mean that all schools followed this operation, but they had autonomy to create their devices.

Regarding the results of the Prova Brasil, important educational information is lost along the way, making it impossible to analyze errors, which announce cognitive paths and help in pedagogical planning (GATTI, 2012, p. 33).

### **School Action Plan**

After the results of Sademb, each school, based on its situational map, elaborated an action plan, attaching it to the Pedagogical Political Plan (PPP). This action can be identified as an institutional self-assessment, based on the understanding that additional information was extracted that transcended the results of the tests. For Dias Sobrinho (2008, p. 197, our translation) “Evaluation should seek not only explanation, but above all understanding and transformation of a given reality” and Tedesco (1998, p. 115, our translation) brings scientificity to these actions by checking “institutional identity” to the institutions that are co-responsible for the educational project of the educational system, providing better results from the existence of certain traditions and shared work methodologies, group work and responsibility for the results obtained.

The school action plan, supported by Semeb, was based on the premise of *Problematizing the school we have in an attempt to build the school we want*, with the following guidelines: analyzing the School Bulletin; identify weaknesses; survey students with learning difficulties; identify the descriptors that the students presented delay; define a

school action plan in joint work; set targets for overcoming problems and attach them to the PPP; and revise the lesson plan.

### Methodological discussion

Ghedin and Franco (2011, p. 40), when studying questions of methods in the construction of research in education, based on many authors, state that “education has a specificity that gives it the character of a complex activity, a character that needs to be contemplated in scientific investigations on the object in question”; and “discussing the scientific nature of an object of study means seeking a special way of legitimizing knowledge” (GHEDIN; FRANCO, 2011, p. 51, our translation).

The methodological procedures emphasized the theoretical, qualitative and exploratory approach. The direct relationship between the object of study and the actions of a municipal education department is in line with what Bogdan and Biklen (1994, p. 47-50, our translation) conceptualize as qualitative research:

In qualitative research, the direct source of data is the natural environment, with the researcher being the main instrument; 2- Qualitative research is descriptive; 3- Qualitative researchers are more interested in the process than simply the results or products; 4- Qualitative researchers tend to analyze their data inductively; 5- Meaning is of vital importance in the qualitative approach.

Because it is qualitative research, the investigation methodology emphasized the description, the induction, the grounded theory and the study of personal perceptions, proposed by Bodgan and Biklen (1994, p. 11).

The research object has a direct connection with knowledge, with the evaluative practices of a teaching network and with the real problems that affect the local society. For Severino (2007, p. 33), when building knowledge, built through the thematic relevance of research objects, social meaning is acquired; still, according to the author “research is fundamental, since it is through it that we can generate knowledge, to be necessarily understood as the construction of objects that need to be humanly appropriated” (SEVERINO, 2007, p. 34, our translation).

In addition to the theoretical framework that supported the dimensions of evaluation, management and educational policy, there was a need to seek quantitative statistical elements in electronic databases such as Inep and the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics -

IBGE, among others. The documentary corpus of the Bebedouro Municipal Department of Education was also analyzed through physical and digital files, since, according to Bodgan and Biklen (1994, p. 181, our translation) it has the potential to reveal information regarding “the official chain of command and official rules and regulations. They can also provide clues about leadership style and potential insights into the value of the members of the organization.

From the path traced by methodological criteria, it became possible to analyze, understand, discuss, describe and arrive at the results of the trajectory of implantation of the municipal evaluation system.

### Results obtained

Assessment, as an instrument of educational management, is seen by Dias Sobrinho (2008, p. 205) as a public asset when he considers it a mechanism that helps to understand and improve the performance of cognitive, psychosocial, structural and organizational processes, being the service of citizen formation for social life, at the same time, for the institutional development and the projects of the State.

It was for this purpose that, after the municipal management recognized that, despite the importance of Prova Brasil, its data were not sufficient for decision-making, it chose to create its own system that would provide complementary pedagogical information and broaden the focus for schools' self-assessment and the municipal public system. This experience allowed for a more precise detection of gaps involving administrative-pedagogical practices, identifying the exact points for a possible correction in the direction followed.

It was proven, from the data acquired in the results of Sademb, the need to invest more in mathematics. However, in Portuguese, actions have become emergency, especially with regard to writing proficiency, after it was found that in 2015, 35% of 2nd year students were below average, with 23% at an insufficient level, at the same time when it was identified that 90% of these students were literate. In this regard, the situation was more critical in relation to the results of the 4th year, with 67% below the average, with 54% at an insufficient level. It was detected that the problem was widespread in the education system, with a minimal difference in the level of writing ability between the schools with the highest and lowest Ideb index, above 7.0 and below 5.5 respectively.

Faced with these unexpected results, actions were immediate, as mastering language skills favors connections between other areas of knowledge and qualifies citizens to act in



society. In 1997, the National Curricular Parameters (PCN) stated that “The achievement of alphabetic writing does not guarantee the student the possibility of understanding and producing texts in written language. This learning requires systematic pedagogical work” (BRASIL, 1997, p. 23, our translation). There was the possibility of a pedagogical intervention after linguistic criteria were arranged in a category chart for the teacher's analysis and the detailing of data obtained in the results.

In 2016, the Sademb assessment reached the same students, although they were in the 3rd and 5th years of elementary school and, after investments in teacher formation, there were no significant changes in the data, with the overall result being 62%, summed the levels of regular and insufficient performance. Regarding writing competence, despite the permanence of these merely negative data, it was possible to extract relatively positive data in the comparisons of 2015 and 2016, when it was verified the increase in the regular level from 13% to 41% and a sharp drop in the insufficient level of 54% to 22%.

In 2015, text production was part of the Portuguese language test and was carried out on the same day, but when detecting mental fatigue among students, in 2016, the written assessment was carried out on a specific day. It should also be noted that before Sademb there were only indications about the lack of writing proficiency of students in the network, through data collected in school evaluations.

After two consecutive years of local evaluation, the acquired experience can be compared with what Vianna said (2003, p. 26, emphasis added, our translation):

The results of the evaluations must not be used solely and exclusively to translate a certain school performance. Its use implies serving in a positive way in the definition of new public policies, in projects for the *implementation and modification of curricula, in continuing education programs for teachers* and, decisively, in defining an element for *decision-making* that aims to provoke an *impact*, that is, changes in the thinking and acting of the members of the system.

In this way, evaluating is not limited to the performance of students in standardized tests extracted from content clippings, but in qualitatively diagnosing the educational situation of a given territory and guaranteeing a flow of information capable of instrumentalizing the actions of educational policies, which are sustained by starting from the base (school), and which, according to the PCN means “[...] constituting an intentional, systematic, planned and continuous action for children and young people during a continuous and extensive period of time” (BRASIL, 1997, p. 33-34, our translation).



The paths taken in an evaluation are not neutral and Toledo (2019, p. 129, our translation) extracts from his analyzes of the municipal evaluation system that:

Sademb provided the group of educators from the municipal system with a set of reflections on the results revealed, that is, the starting point for action. If you do not act, the evaluation will only serve as a simple (quantitative) finding. In the act of evaluating, there are two extremes, the power to prove (an extremely technical procedure) or the opportunity to seek qualitative change (an educational policy issue). The second choice leads to shared responsibility for the results and directs the theoretical, structural and political debate.

If the social, political and economic aspects are considered within a decision-making model for the type of public education that is intended to be offered, Silva and Ribeiro (2010, p. 62, our translation) make the connection between the local situation and the theoretical framework, by saying that assessment instruments “cannot focus only on students; it is necessary to evaluate, whenever possible, the educational system as a whole – teachers, institution, curriculum, investments, policies”.

This evaluation model can and should be improved with the collaboration of the educational actors of the local municipal system based on a meta-evaluation, which Elliot (2011, p. 943, our translation) defines as “the verification of the quality of the evaluation itself in the light of different criteria”.

### **Final considerations**

The municipal public education system is a diversified field of experiences and research and, by analyzing and describing the implementation process of a municipal evaluation system, it was possible to extract positive points (potentialities) and negative points (weaknesses).

One of the main positive points identified was the accuracy in the diagnosis of local education. Another favorable point was to discover the gap of students in written production and investments in corrective actions.

It is proved, even in the two versions of Sademb (2015, 2016), the process of correcting the tests and analyzing the data ended in the same academic year and the information was organized in *Bulletins of Results*, presented in a simple and operational way to teachers and school administrators at the beginning of the school year, in detail in: general



bulletin of the municipal system; general bulletin for each school unit and general bulletin for each classroom (data broken down by student).

The results helped to improve the dialogue between the municipal public network (early years of elementary school) and the state public network (final years of elementary school) during *the rite of passage*, making it possible to provide the greatest amount of information from students. *The rite of passage* is a practice that began in 2013, which provides for a meeting between managers of municipal and state schools, mediated by the Semeb team, where students' portfolios are passed on, cases are discussed in which visits are organized by students from municipal schools to the state schools to get to know the teachers, the subjects, the study routine and the new school space.

Another positive point is the possibility of reorienting the Municipal Department of Education regarding teacher formation, capacitation of pedagogical coordinators and improvement of school planning. Another factor is that assessments are no longer centered on the student and support teaching and learning by better investing in teaching materials, curriculum organization, pedagogical work and socio-political factors related to management.

As for the composition of the tests, it was possible to align it with the profile of the network, articulating a variety of items that allowed for greater data accuracy.

In general, the external evaluation enabled, in the first edition of 2015, an educational diagnosis of the network, a school self-assessment and of the educational system; in the subsequent edition, it was possible to reevaluate the process, thus becoming an information system.

The studies pointed out some problems faced, such as the impossibility of organizing a specific team when creating Sademb. In 2016, directors, pedagogical coordinators and teachers were part of Semeb's organizing team. Given the pedagogical nature of assessments, Luckesi (2011) and Gatti (2012) highlight the importance of involving teachers in assessment processes.

Despite technical and human resource problems, the benefits far outweigh the difficulties. Some of these problems were eliminated in the second edition of the Municipal Assessment and others required longer deadlines.

The research results indicate that it was possible to extract from Sademb a set of information about the municipal education network, many of which were invisible when other research instruments were used. In this way, this experience found support in what Inep



(BRASIL, 2018) points out, when it says that, within the school context, multiple internal and external factors must be considered, given the multidimensionality of the quality of education.

By analyzing and describing the trajectory of experience of one of the five thousand five hundred and seventy Brazilian municipalities, a picture of the educational reality in the country and possibilities for investments within its territory are presented.

The aim of this article is to present an excerpt from a municipal experience and with regard to educational policies, it was concluded that it is necessary to establish dialogue between academia (knowledge producers), public power actions (educational policy makers) and the applicators of these policies (departments of education and school institutions), thus fulfilling the student's subjective right to learning.

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