



Assessment of teachers within the National Pact for Literacy at the Correct Age (PNAIC)

Avaliação dos professores no Pacto Nacional pela Alfabetização na Idade Certa (PNAIC)

Evaluación de los profesores en el Pacto Nacional por la Alfabetización en la Edad Correcta (PNAIC)

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Abstract

This study aimed to analyze the teacher evaluation proposal included in the National Pact for Alphabetization at the Correct Age (PNAIC), a teacher education program created by the

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Ministry of Education in the beginning of 2013. The framework of analysis used was that assessment must be a part of the process of continuing teacher education, i.e., reflection in action. Official documents published by the Ministry of Education were examined, as well as materials that have been developed by partner Universities and offered for continuing teacher education, seeking to describe how teacher evaluation is conducted in the program. The study results suggest weaknesses in coordination between the Federal Union, States, Municipalities, Higher Education Institutions and teachers with regard to discussions of alphabetization and literacy. Furthermore, they show that it is premature to predict any relationship between the assessment of teachers conducted by the Pact and the evaluation of student performance at the end of the alphabetization cycle. It is concluded that the program needs to incorporate a broader conception of evaluation in order to legitimize the continuity of teacher education in the full exercise of pedagogical praxis.

Keywords: Teacher evaluation. Alphabetization. Continuing education.

Resumo

Este estudo teve como objetivo analisar a proposta de avaliação de professores presente no Pacto Nacional pela Alfabetização na Idade Certa (PNAIC), um programa de formação docente criado pelo Ministério da Educação no início de 2013. O referencial de análise utilizado foi o de que a avaliação deve estar inserida em um processo de formação docente continuada, ou seja, reflexão na ação. Foram explorados documentos oficiais publicados pelo Ministério da Educação, bem como materiais elaborados por universidades parceiras e ofertados para a formação continuada dos professores, buscando descrever como se processa a avaliação dos professores no âmbito do Programa. Os resultados do estudo sugerem fragilidades na articulação entre União, Estados, Municípios, Instituições de Ensino Superior e os docentes no que se refere às discussões sobre alfabetização e letramento. Além disso, evidenciam que é prematuro prever qualquer relação entre a avaliação dos professores realizada pelo Pacto e a avaliação do desempenho dos alunos ao final do ciclo de alfabetização. Conclui-se que é necessário incorporar uma concepção mais abrangente de avaliação, de forma a legitimar a continuidade da formação docente no pleno exercício da práxis pedagógica.

Palavras-chave: Avaliação de professores. Pacto Nacional Pela Alfabetização na Idade Certa. Formação continuada.

Resumen

El presente estudio tiene como objetivo analizar la propuesta de evaluación de profesores presente en el Pacto Nacional por la Alfabetización en la Edad Correcta – PNAIC, que es un programa de formación docente propuesto por el Ministerio de Educación a principios del año de 2013. El referencial de análisis utilizado es que la evaluación debe estar insertada en un proceso de formación docente continua, o sea, reflexión en la acción. Fueron analizados documentos oficiales publicados por el Ministerio de Educación, así como materiales elaborados por Universidades asociadas y ofrecidos para la formación continuada de los profesores, buscando describir cómo se procesa la evaluación de los profesores en el ámbito del Programa. Los resultados del estudio sugieren fragilidades en la articulación entre Unión, Estados, Municipios, Instituciones de Enseñanza Superior y los docentes en lo que se refiere a las discusiones referentes a la alfabetización y a la lectoescritura. Además, demuestran que es prematuro prever cualquier relación entre la evaluación de los profesores realizada por el Pacto y la evaluación del desempeño de los alumnos al final del ciclo de alfabetización. Se concluye que existe la necesidad de incorporar al programa una concepción más amplia de evaluación, que pueda legitimar la continuidad de la formación docente en el pleno ejercicio de la praxis pedagógica.

Palabras Clave: *Evaluación de profesores. Pacto Nacional por la Alfabetización en la Edad Correcta. Formación continuada.*

Introduction

This paper's aim was to analyze how teachers, within the *Pacto Nacional pela Alfabetização na Idade Certa* (PNAIC)¹ [National Pact for Literacy at the Correct Age], implemented in 2013 by the Brazilian

¹ PNAIC was a commitment formally assumed by the federal government, states, cities and institutions to literate children, by the end of the alphabetization cycle, up to the age of 8 years old (BRASIL, 2013, p. 5).

Ministry of Education (MEC), are assessed. For that, official papers published by MEC were consulted, as well as material developed by partner universities and supporting the continuing education of teachers, in order to describe how teachers in the Program are assessed. The findings were analyzed in light of theoretical frameworks addressing the assessment of teachers from the perspective of (meta) assessment. The analysis of teacher training programs, compared with theory from the field, is essential for appropriate qualification to be provided to teachers at increasing levels, in order to improve the profession and the service provided to the population.

Assessing faculty members is already a tradition in many countries. Ventura (2012), interviewed by Goulart, says that assessment models are heterogeneous. In France, the school's pedagogical staff does the assessment, while in England the school's principal and external referees perform the assessment. In Portugal, the teachers themselves assess each other. According to Ventura, there is no consensus concerning the best model and he recommends a model that combines external and internal referees, thought it is an expensive and seldom-used alternative.

The assessment of teachers in Brazil is heterogeneous when comparing the assessment implemented by public and private institutions, in which each has its own methodology and objectives. In terms of national policies, this subject is still being discussed in Brazil. Since 2010, MEC, through Anísio Teixeira National Institute of Educational Studies and Research [Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais Anísio Teixeira – INEP], presents the possibility of assessing teachers through the *Exame Nacional de Ingresso na Carreira Docente*² [National Examination of Entrance in Teaching Career]. In March 2013, INEP

² The National Examination to select candidates for the teaching career is an initiative of INEP within the policies of the Ministry of Education to value teaching professionals in Brazil. The purpose of the national test is to support the States, the Federal District and cities to implement public contests to hire primary education teachers. This test is applied every year in the entire country to select candidates to teach in the public primary school network (INEP, 2011).

invited institutions with undergraduate and graduate programs in pedagogy to collaborate in the development and review of items of its *Banco Nacional de Itens* (BNI) [National Bank of Items] (INEP, 2013).

According to INEP (2013), the test, still under discussion in Brazil, is supposed to select the desired profile of future teachers. This initiative is intended to improve the hiring of teachers, both in terms of quality and quantity, with a view to hire better qualified teachers with improved conditions for teaching practice.

Therefore, a large-scale assessment of teachers is still under discussion and in the process of being implemented, while a large-scale assessment of students has been already institutionalized and its results are widely disseminated. Such results enable reaching a diagnosis of the situation regarding the teaching and learning process and also show weaknesses in the training of teachers, among other issues.

This fact was analyzed through an important indicator of national quality, the Elementary Education Development Index [Índice de Desenvolvimento da Educação Básica – IDEB], which is the responsibility of INEP, and combines information concerning student performance in the final stages of education on standardized tests — *Prova Brasil* [Brazil test] and Saeb — with information concerning students' school performance (academic success). In regard to results from 2011, the national average was 5.0 on a 0 to 10 scale for elementary school. *Prova Brasil* assesses the students' level of reading proficiency. The results show that the students did not perform satisfactorily in their native language; that is, they presented limited reading and comprehension skills for texts written in Portuguese. The students finished elementary school without fully developing abilities that should already have been developed at the end of this period of education. Nonetheless, merely diagnosing the problems of students by analyzing the results obtained from tests is not sufficient. Effort is required to address problems and improve the performance of these students, providing conditions so to ensure quality education for all, as stated by Hoffman (2000, p. 58): "an assessment is a reflection transformed into action and cannot be static nor have a sensitive

and qualifying nature”. Therefore, an assessment process is not idealized without a glimpse of a continuous and mediating construction.

In this sense, reflection upon action is currently one of the most widely disseminated processes of teacher training. This process emphasizes the importance of the practical thought of teachers, that is, “reflection, skills, and cognitive and metacognitive processes promote the analysis of teaching practices” (ROMANOWSKI, 2012, p. 141).

Metacognition refers to the process of developing knowledge of the cognitive processes themselves, as well as to the regulation and control of these processes. Whether it is intentional or not, the fact is that the practice of educators contributes to the development of metacognitive skills in their students, which help students to plan learning strategies, in the application and control of such strategies, as well as in assessments and modifications in their way to approach problem situations (GUIMARÃES; STOLTZ, 2008).

However, in the face of the growing flow of information and changes to which people are exposed, not only students but teachers as well, have to engage in a continuous learning process. Continuing education requires constant improvement of teaching as a practice to prepare individuals for a more flexible job market with dynamic technological changes, one in which only those who “learned how to learn” are apt to perform their professions (POZO, 2002, 2004, 2007).

In this sense the continuing qualification of teachers, in the same way as the training of students, should be based on the development of strategies that qualify them to relate knowledge in a significant way, which enables them to learn about their own learning process, as part of a search for learning that does not cease. Continuing training requires teachers to reflect upon themselves so that they not only recognize themselves but also think about themselves. In other words, to be the protagonist of a learning-teaching process that causes expressive socio-educational changes, the teacher should focus on his/her own qualification and practice to reflect upon his/her own pedagogical practice with the goal of constant improvement.

Therefore, the learning process of teachers is closely linked to opportunities available in the training field. Hence, it is important to note that it is the role of teachers to reflect upon their learning conceptions, as well as upon the need to constantly invest in continuing education so that there is no mismatch in the inter-relationship between theory and practice in regard to the selection of more appropriate teaching methods and learning strategies, considering they can encourage situations in which one reflects upon his/her own practice and the construction of knowledge already established.

Hence, PNAIC, which was suggested by the federal government to meet the need to improve the qualification of teachers and as a response to the challenge of ensuring that all Brazilian children are literate by the time they reach the age of 8 years old, is analyzed in light of these frameworks addressing assessments. In this sense, this study addresses the following questions: How does the material developed for the PNAIC continuing training address issues concerning assessments? How does the material developed for the PNAIC continuing training address the assessment of those who teach alphabetization? Is there any assessment procedure for PNAIC teachers? How does assessing teachers from PNAIC contribute to improving the students' results concerning reading and writing? Responding to these questions required investigating the program under study, looking for references concerning both assessments in general and that of teachers.

Method

The methodological approach guiding this study is exploratory-descriptive. Hence, we explored and described the *Pacto Nacional pela Alfabetização na Idade Certa* (PNAIC) concerning the aspects that enabled analyzing how professionals working in this program (University coordinators and educators, city coordinators, study advisors and teachers) are assessed.

For that, official documents published by MEC were examined, as well as material developed by partner universities provided for the teachers' continuing education. Meetings were also held with two teachers (one educator and one PNAIC city coordinator) to obtain clarification concerning assessments implemented by the program's online monitoring system.

This study was submitted to and approved by the Institutional Review Board at the Federal University of Paraná, Health Sciences Sector through *Sistema Plataforma Brasil* (PB), referee report 646,993 CAAE: 30377414.3.0000.0102, in accordance with Resolution 466/2012 CNS. The participants are identified as PNAIC educator and coordinator in order to keep their confidentiality. Two of the meetings were held with these teachers in a private office in the city of Curitiba, PR, Brazil. The interviews took one hour and a half on average, though no limit of time was established. The questions addressed the assessment performed by the PNAIC's online monitoring system.

Data were analyzed and discussed in light of the theoretical framework presented in this study's introduction.

Results

In order to achieve the PNAIC's most significant goal, which is to make all children literate by the age of 8 years old, the PNAIC's actions were organized into a structure axis, namely: continuous education of those who teach alphabetization; distribution of teaching and pedagogical material; assessments; and social control and mobilization. The implementation of actions concerning the continuous education of teachers is endorsed by *Política Nacional de Formação de Profissionais do Magistério da Educação Básica* [National Policy for the Training of Elementary School Teacher], instituted by Decree No. 6,755, on January 29, 2009.

The Program's actions related to the training of teachers foresees that elementary school teachers will participate in a 2-year course

administrated in a face-to-face setting with a workload of 120 hours/year: one year will focus on linguistic alphabetization and another year on numerical ordering in mathematics. The methodology involves studies and activities focusing on reflections on the alphabetization and literacy process with an emphasis on practical applicability. The meetings with teachers are conducted by study advisors, supported by educators linked to higher education institutions.

In regard to the information obtained through the meeting with the PNAIC educator and coordinator and from the online system's manual, we obtained the description of assessment procedures within the system. Therefore, MEC made available an online monitoring system called SisPacto to assess the formative chain involved in the Program's training process, as well as to support the network, and ensure its different stages. All the agents involved (coordinators and educators from the partner Universities, coordinators, study advisors, and teachers linked to the City Teaching Network) have to follow the Program actions by SisPacto. There is a link within the system so that all the participants both make assessments and are assessed. This assessment is linked to the function of each individual within the Program, focusing on issues such as attendance and the performance of tasks assigned to each. These assessments have a direct relationship with scholarships, which involve different amounts for each group of participants and are funded by the *Sistema Geral de Bolsas do Fundo Nacional de Desenvolvimento da Educação* (FNDE) [General System of Scholarships of the National Fund of Education Development]. Therefore, any Program participant not complying with obligations does not receive a scholarship and may be removed from the Program if not complying with the minimum workload.

Another aspect linked to the assessment of alphabetizing teachers, in addition to complying with the course load, is related to the application of the methodology proposed by the Program to be implemented in classrooms teaching alphabetization and feedback reporting practices to the educator's institution.

There is another assessment method via SisPacto available to those who teach alphabetizing. They have a page dedicated to the assessment of students. On this page, each teacher selects the classroom(s) to which they teach, fill in the classroom's profile and the number of students who either met the requirements and skills listed for the alphabetization cycle or who failed to do so. MEC proposed expanding the system's assessment by introducing the results from the *Prova Brasil* and ANA to each classroom receiving alphabetization instruction. Therefore, the System will enable identifying the context of each classroom and increase possibilities related to assessment. Therefore, SisPacto can be considered a system that controls the actions of the agents involved in different stages of the training program.

Official documents available from MEC, concerning the PNAIC's training dimension, describe frameworks concerning assessments. According to the PNAIC (2012) presentation document, transformations that took place in education accrue from various factors: with the entry of 6-year-old children into elementary education, educators need to more clearly define what is expected from a school regarding its youngest students; the dissemination of results of large-scale tests such as *Prova Brasil* [Brazil Test], prompting managers needs to more objectively explain strategies intended to improve the learning of students and the quality of teaching and the supply of continuing training by MEC and Education Departments, encouraging the explanation of different perspectives concerning alphabetization. This ideology also promoted a closer relationship between elementary school teachers and those who work with the education and continuing training of teachers, enabling a reflection upon the different contexts of Brazilian schools, jointly seeking tangible strategies to deal with diversities (BRASIL, 2012).

One of the document's propositions is related to the establishment of a profile for teachers covering alphabetization. For that, the document establishes minimum criteria teachers of alphabetization need to meet in order to teach in elementary schools. They are:

[...] mastering the knowledge necessary to teach reading and writing from the perspective of literacy; skills to interact with children, making the pedagogical process dynamic and promoting playful learning situations; being diligent and punctual, committed to pedagogical processes; being sensitive enough to deal with social, cultural, gender and ethnic diversity (BRASIL, 2012, p. 12).

The document also establishes that teachers working in elementary schools have experience in teaching, are hired from teaching networks and meet the minimum criteria mentioned in this topic, suggesting that Teaching Networks organize a council, under the coordination of a central staff to develop consistent continuing training coherent with the principles defended in the curricular proposal. There are considerations in the document concerning education departments to assess their management of the network and schools to find action modes that increase the possibilities of work and achieve the objective bringing all children to literacy by the age of 8 years old. These suggestions can be starting points so that each system, considering the specificities of each, outlines their own functioning modes (BRASIL, 2012).

The document highlights the importance of establishing a diversified continuing training for teachers, managers, and teaching-support staff and that this action should be based on the results of assessments, while training should be based on teaching practice because “theorization of practice should constitute the core axis of training actions” (BRASIL, 2012).

The proposal to assess the Program’s staff involves the training or continuous dimension of assessment at the expense of a merely technical or bureaucratic assessment. According to the document:

[...] the assessment needs to ensure learning and not punish those who did not learn – as previously happened in schools around the world. The objective is a training assessment focused on the permanent

redefinition of priorities and continuous planning of pedagogical practice. Diagnostic assessments used to know children and detect the knowledge they have mastered are starting points to plan strategies to accustom children to school (BRASIL, 2012).

The proposal is that, based on data from diagnostic assessments, we can define which strategies to use, considering the estimated time needed for learning. The Program provides that assessment is also a way to propose other ways to socialize how learning is enabled. “For that, however, school-based professions need to know very clearly what the main knowledge, skills and capabilities to be consolidated in each year of elementary school are” (BRASIL, 2012, p. 22).

Therefore, according to the document, the importance of assessment for teaching should be very clear. The teacher should know what to assess and also know how to construct appropriate assessment instruments to enable better understanding of children’s learning. In this process,

pedagogical coordination has the role of promoting socialization among teachers regarding assessment instruments and the results obtained by students. Hence, it is important to encourage shared management boards so that the pedagogical staff analyzes each case and collectively choose the best strategies to ensure learning (BRASIL, 2012, p. 23).

The document proposes that teachers also consider *Prova Brasil* and other large-scale assessments, as well as portfolios, learning diaries, and record books, among other ways to file and monitor the development of children. All the instruments and assessment strategies should help school professionals to define goals and plan actions that enable the development of all children (BRASIL, 2012).

In regard to the teachers’ training, the text acknowledges the need, however also shows that not only should teachers be assessed, but the entire system:

It is necessary to highlight that not only do students need to be assessed, but also teachers, pedagogical coordination staff, the programs developed by education departments, the document of curricular guidelines, among others. The assessment should be viewed as a research process in which those integrating the school analyze the teaching and learning conditions and establish strategies to improve the quality of work performed with children (BRASIL, 2012, p. 24).

Hence, PNAIC's documents provide indications regarding the assessment of the teaching and learning process and issues that can be considered in the assessment of teachers, such as the profile desired for teachers who teach alphabetizing.

Discussion

In regard to the assessment of teachers, while a test to enter a teaching career has not been implemented yet, teachers as well as managers and education networks are indirectly assessed through the dissemination of results obtained from large-scale assessments such as *Prova Brasil*. The PNAIC documents contain direct references to this issue through suggestions that schools and teachers use the results of large-scale assessments, as well as the results of assessments implemented in classrooms using diverse instruments to analyze the proposition of actions directed to the continuing training of teachers and teaching interventions intended to promote learning.

Therefore, it is important to note that, based on constitutive analysis of the assessment chain proposed by PNAIC, we verified that SisPacto is organized by MEC as a control instrument of the assessment program process. The organized assessment dimension, however, does not foresee a systematized opportunity for discussions and dialogues among the different segments that compose this Program.

It is also worth noting that the analysis of results obtained from large-scale assessments can help to reach a diagnosis and make decisions

that enable actions directed to the improvement of teaching at diverse levels: federal, state, and city. It is important to overcome assessments' technical and bureaucratic dimensions in the school sphere and invest in the training or continuing education dimension. The assessment in this dimension can fulfill its real role of reflection transformed into action and become an important instrument to promote the students' teaching and learning process.

Final considerations

This study showed a strong tendency to use the results of large-scale tests to assess teaching and teaching management in Brazil. The analysis of these tests has enabled decision-making intended to overcome difficulties. One of these actions is the implementation of PNAIC. Large-scale tests, however, do not replace school tests with training and having a continuous nature, from the perspective of reflection transformed into action.

The results also show the fragility of the Program due to an absence of permanent cooperation among the government, states, cities, higher education institutions, and teachers to increase discussions concerning alphabetization and literacy. Hence, the program goes against what Romanowski (2012) defends; the training of reflective and critical professionals requires active and continuous interaction of individuals, in a movement of awareness, construction and reconstruction of knowledge originating from socio-cognitive models and the continuing training of teachers.

Based on this assumption, the assessment of teachers is no longer analyzed based merely on quantifiable aspects, but glimpses a broader conception of training in which the continuity of teacher education in the full exercise of pedagogical practice is legitimated, not as an attempt to suppress gaps left by the initial academic education or even dilute the ills

of illiteracy, but as a process that can trigger learning essential to teachers' ability to compose their professional identity.

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