



## Access policies to Higher Education: why assess?<sup>1</sup>

*Políticas de acesso à Educação Superior: por que avaliar?*

*Políticas de acceso de Educación Superior: ¿por qué evaluar?*

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### Abstract

This paper discusses the assessing public policies and how the studies on this subject are, and in this context, investigates the assessment of Higher Education access policies. The importance of studies on assessment of policies, in particular the social nature, lies in the fact that it is precisely the assessment that allows the feedback provision of the government to the population, which means that it is a necessary process to democracy. It also intended to identify in theses and dissertations (2011-2012), from Higher Education Personnel Training Coordination (CAPES) database, the frequency of papers related to the assessment of higher

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<sup>1</sup> Discussion started in ANPAE (2011), extended, modified, with research data increase.

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education access policies. From the study it can be concluded that researches on evaluation of public policies in general are still incipient, and, with regard to higher education access policies, although there is a consistent significant production on the subject, the focus is on analysis of the forms of access and retention in higher education from different social groups and different programs. There are few studies in education that investigated, specifically, the evaluation of access policies; it is still an unexplored field of research.

**Keywords:** Assessment. Educational policies. Access to Higher Education.

### **Resumo**

*Neste trabalho, busca-se discutir a avaliação de políticas públicas e como se apresentam os estudos na literatura contemporânea sobre essa temática, e, nesse contexto, investigar a avaliação das políticas de acesso à Educação Superior. A importância de estudos sobre avaliação de políticas, em especial, as de natureza social, está no fato de que é justamente a avaliação que permite uma prestação de contas do governo à população, o que significa que é um processo necessário para a democracia. Buscou-se, ainda, identificar em teses e dissertações (2011-2012), no banco de teses da Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior (CAPES), a frequência de trabalhos referentes à avaliação das políticas de acesso à Educação Superior. A partir do estudo realizado, pode-se concluir que as pesquisas sobre avaliação de políticas públicas, de modo geral, ainda são incipientes, e, no que se refere às políticas de acesso à educação superior, embora exista uma produção significativa sobre a temática, o foco está voltado para análise das formas de acesso e permanência na Educação Superior de diferentes grupos sociais e diferentes programas. São poucos os estudos realizados na área da educação que investigaram, especificamente, a avaliação das políticas de acesso, constituindo-se ainda em um campo de pesquisa pouco explorado.*

**Palavras-chave:** Avaliação. Políticas educacionais. Acesso à Educação Superior.

### **Resumen**

*Este artículo discute la evaluación de las políticas públicas y la forma de presentar los estudios en la literatura sobre este tema, y en este contexto para investigar la evaluación de las políticas de acceso a la Educación Superior. La importancia de los estudios de evaluación*

*de las políticas, en particular, la situación social, radica en el hecho de que es precisamente la evaluación que permite la prestación de un gobierno responsable a la población, lo que significa que es un proceso necesario para la democracia. Hemos tratado de identificar incluso en tesis y disertaciones de la CAPES (2011-2012) la frecuencia de los trabajos relacionados con la evaluación de las políticas de acceso a la educación superior. Del estudio se puede concluir que la investigación sobre la evaluación de las políticas públicas en general, son aún incipientes, y, con respecto a las políticas de acceso a la educación superior, aunque hay una importante producción coherente sobre el tema, la atención se centra en el análisis de las formas de acceso y permanencia en la educación superior de diferentes grupos sociales y los diferentes programas. Existen pocos estudios en la educación para investigar específicamente la evaluación de las políticas de acceso, convirtiéndose en un campo aún inexplorado de la investigación.*

**Palabras Clave:** *Evaluación. Las políticas educativas. Acceso a la Educación Superior.*

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## Introduction

This text discusses how the assessment of access policies to higher education, such as any public policy requires taking into account the power relations which take place in its formulation. As Aguiar (2010, p. 709) explains in his text on review of the National Education Plan (NEP), that evaluate an educational policy means

[...] enter the discussion of educational policy and its determinants, having in mind the context of the development of the country and knowing that the achievement of its objectives and targets derived from the results of concrete struggles among social groups with different interests which contest for hegemony in the process.

Similarly when referring to education as a social right Dourado (2010, p. 680) states that its “[...] realization occurs in a context characterized

as a conceptions of dispute field and projects and, thus, demarcated for political positions not only different, but substantively contradictory”.

In this study will be considered the discussion of public policies understood as a government strategy which consists of plans, projects and documents, which contain guidelines for the different social sectors, economic and political aspects of society, having in mind that when we refer to policy assessment it cannot be ignored that the clashes now lock at the time of formation of the agenda, that is, when deciding on the policies to be considered in the social protection system.

The prioritization of the study on the assessment of public policies, in particular the social nature, in this study of an educational policy is justified because it is precisely the assessment that allows the feedback provision of the government to the population, which means that it is a necessary process to democracy. It is through the participation of the population that materializes a right of citizens in a democratic society. It is, thus, assumed that the policies assessment in a participatory manner is a strategy for democracy, but in general, the assessment has been used to serve political interests, seeking to fulfill the targets set by international organizations and they want you to believe that their actions are being considered appropriate to the population. This practice has already occurred in shaping the public policy agenda when seeking to obey the interests that are not necessarily the population's interest and no stakeholder participation in the formulation and, much less, in the assessment.

Although not analyzed in this study the participation of the population in all the so-called “policies cycle”, it is important to note that this participation is important in the whole process, particularly, in the formation of the policy agenda. It is understood, too, that such participation is not an easy task, as it requires, as a starting point for the assessment of educational policies<sup>2</sup>, methods that enable the critical analysis of the proposals, which for the bindings and guidelines are regulatory.

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<sup>2</sup> Among the methods, we agree with what Mainardes (2006, p. 48) says that “the policy cycle approach” is a great contribution to the analysis of educational policies. This approach, explains

In this context, depending on the type of participation of the group involved, according to Gohn (2007, p. 14), the process becomes democratic or simply just go to “reiterate regulatory mechanisms”<sup>3</sup>. So it is important to analyze how the participation of the population occurs in the production of a policy text when assessing educational policies.

Even if the different social groups are articulated to the claims, they pass, according to Offe (1984), for ideological filters. It is searched to accommodate the conflicts, which means that a political decision presupposes institutionalized fight. So how government policies are formulated, implemented and evaluated, is related to the solutions found in each country, from its level of development, its links to international organizations<sup>4</sup> and the priority given to social protection policies.

With the support of the policy cycle method<sup>5</sup> it is possible to infer the difficulties of entering an issue in the public policy agenda, as well as monitor the process from formulation to assessment because Ball’s researches, according to Mainardes and Marcondes (2009, p. 303) “offer interesting intellectual resources that allow us to understand how policies are produced, what they want and what are their effects”.

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the author, “was formulated by the English sociologist Stephen Ball and colleagues (Bowe, Ball; Gold, 1992; Ball, 1994a) and has been used in different countries as a framework for analyzing the trajectory of social and educational policies (Corbitt, 1997; Vidovich, 1999; Walford, 2000; Looney, 2001; Kirton, 2002; Vidovich & O’Donoghue, 2003; Lopes, 2004)”.

<sup>3</sup> We take the word regulation in Barroso’s explanation (2005, p. 727), that to be “associated, in general, the objective of devoting symbolically another status to state intervention in the conduct of public policies. Many of the references that are made to the ‘new’ regulatory role of the state serve to demarcate the proposed ‘modernization’ of public administration of the traditional practices of bureaucratic control by the rules and regulations that were (and still are) the prerogative of state intervention”.

<sup>4</sup> United Nations (UN), World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Latin Center US Administration for Development (CLAD).

<sup>5</sup> It is based on this method we can analyze the trajectory of policies and educational programs, through five contexts: influence context, the context of text production, the practice context, the context of the results/effects and the context of political strategy.

We corroborate with Arretche (2002, p. 1) that the assessment is of democratic order, because when implementing a policy is spent taxpayer money and is essential to government accountability and, thus, enable social control over spending. In Brazil, we highlight the creation of public policy management councils<sup>6</sup> with the enactment of the Federal Constitution (BRASIL, 1988), which represent an important strategy for achieving participatory democracy, since, with the performance of such boards, there is a possibility of the population's participation to monitor and question government policies and programs from their formulation to their implementation in practice and the results/effects, in other words, to assess the policies proposed and implemented by governments. There is the expectation that as boards, as indicated by Gohn (2007, p. 108), "[...] become active, inspection of the actions of government whistleblowers and the economic lobbies pressing and dominate State apparatus, they are building the foundations of a democratic management". These management councils of public policies, according Tatagiba (2005, p. 209): "are a major experiment in participatory democracy [...] represent an undeniable achievement from the point of view of building a democratic system between us".

Advances in the Constitution of 1988 resulted from the involvement of social groups seeking greater attention to social problems. However it was also a time when the neoliberal strand began to constitute political orientation of countries and among them Brazil. Although the country has been the last in Latin America to make structural adjustments that are part of the proposals of the neoliberal project according to Filgueiras (2006)<sup>7</sup>, the emphasis on compensatory policies was taken quickly through targeted programs. Such did not favor changes in social

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<sup>6</sup> The institution of popular participation is defined in multiple devices of the Constitution: art. 29, XII; art. 194, sole paragraph VI; art. 198, III; art. 204, II; art. 206, VI and art. 227 § 1<sup>st</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> This fact was due on the one hand, the difficulty of welding the different interests of the various fractions of the capital so far present in the dying Model of Import Substitution of (MSI) and on the other, the political activity developed by the working classes in the decade of 1980 (FILGUEIRAS, 2006, p. 180).

relations in order to meet social rights and to encourage greater participation. In this policy, according to the author, the hegemony belongs to the great financial capital, and it is these interests that are served with the economic policies of the country, which restricts social rights and, in a sense, compromise the population's participation. And it is precisely in this context that the assessment of public policies went on to win greater emphasis for the purpose of ascertaining the results with little investment, especially in the social area, by international organizations.

In this context, the study on assessment of access policies to higher education becomes relevant, since it currently has government initiatives<sup>8</sup> related to access such as the diverse selection processes and the quota system, the enrollment increase (REUNI) and (UAB), financing (FIES) and a scholarship scheme in private institutions (ProUni). Such programs intended to expand the possibilities of access to higher education, which is why it is important to review in order to know the impact that such programs have had to young people's access to higher education in the country.

### **Studies on public policies assessment**

Researches on public policy are gaining centrality as research field in the country, only in the late 1970s and in the 1980s, especially in Political Science and Sociology.

Educational policies, in turn, become the object of study in the 1980s, in particular, due to the creation of the Working Groups in 1981 at the 4th Meeting of National Association of Graduate Studies and Research in Education [Associação Nacional de Pós-Graduação e Pesquisa em Educação – ANPED]. In 1986 the WG is created on “Policy, Management

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<sup>8</sup> Program University for All [Programa Universidade para Todos – ProUni; Restructuring and Expansion of Federal Universities [Reestruturação e Expansão das Universidades Federais – Reuni]; Open University of Brazil [Universidade Aberta do Brasil – UAB]; Financial Aid Student Fund [Fundo de Financiamento Estudantil – Fies].

and Educational Planning” and already in 1987 this WG passed, according to Azevedo and Aguiar (2001, p. 55), to “[...] bring together studies whose central axis was the relations between state, society and education in Brazil”. It is also at this moment, according to the authors, that the name of the WG changed and now includes analyzes that favored macro-structural approaches, becoming “State and Educational policy”.

According to Azevedo (2001), the reasons that favored policy studies, during the process of political opening, are due to the fact that this process has unveiled how the economic policies of the military regime contributed to deepen the denial of social rights to the majority, although the formal extension of social policies. The studies, according to the author, passed to include the international economic crisis of the 70s and the repercussions of the crisis in the country. The most emphasized topics were: “the fiscal crisis of the state and the needs of its reform, neo-liberal propositions, threats to state social welfare in advanced democracies; the debacle of socialism [...]” (AZEVEDO, 2001, p. 2).

The new social and economic context motivated studies, in particular in post-graduate and debates promoted by scientific associations were denser, which was evident in education at WG of ANPEd: “State and Education Policy”. It can therefore be understood that the characteristic of the researches was mainly influenced by the political agenda of the country.

As a reminder, in the United States, according to Frey (2000), studies have already started in the 50s, but in Europe only started in 1970, next to the date on which were initiated in Brazil. In the 1980s it was observed already a considerable increase in production on public policies, it turns out, however, that this accumulation of knowledge is still problematic, since, according to Souza (2003, p. 2): “[...] there is plenty of sectorial studies, in particular, case studies, providing the area of diversification of empirical objects that expand horizontally without vertical strengthening of production”.

In relation specifically to studies on public policies assessment is observed great need, which is closely related to the development of the own research field of public policies in the country. According to Hochman



(2007), only in the 1990s there is strength on the assessment in governance in the countries of the Western democracies, including Latin America.

So the studies and research on the assessment of public policies are still incipient, first, because the performance of evaluation in government is recent and, secondly, because there is a lack of studies on public policy in general. Existing studies, according to Melo (1999, p. 68), are associated mainly to the contribution from industry experts, many of which produce jobs in the state bureaucracy.

According to Bobbio (1979, p. 35):

[...] it is never been sufficiently considered the fact that there is a very narrow logic between the results obtained and the procedure by which they are achieved and, above all, not just the results are based on measurable criteria that allow us to distinguish the desirable outcomes of undesirable results, but they are superimposed on value judgments also procedures forms [...].

The most common studies on public policies assessment in Brazil are found mainly in the area of public administration, especially in journals in the field, such as: *Revista do Serviço Público* (Journal of Public Service), *Revista de Administração Pública* (Journal of Public Administration), and also in *Cadernos de Pesquisa* (Research Notebooks) and *Estudos em Avaliação Educacional* (Studies in Educational Assessment), the Carlos Chagas Foundation, in addition to Applied Economic Research Institute [Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada – IPEA] publications. It is possible to notice that almost all works follow a normative and prescriptive bias in their approach, which stems, in part, by the proximity of this area to the public agencies and multilateral organizations (FARIA, 2005; SOUZA, 2003).

The still existing silence on the public policies assessment deserves special attention, because the first studies related to the implementation, according to Souza (2003, p.3), “[...] are overly focused on failures, little concerned with policies issues and strongly seated on the assumption that the formulation and implementation of policies are [...] disconnected from political processes”. Thus, a move towards a deeper understanding is

necessary to “[...] identify the variables that impact on policy outcomes”. That is, studies which take as their object the assessment of public policies.

It is evident, therefore, according to the authors cited in this study that there is little accumulation of knowledge by researchers in the field; that most of these studies are focused on social policies without the necessary development; and many others are of normative and prescriptive nature, hindering the understanding of the actual processes involved in the formation of policies. In addition, few studies include analyzes of the assessment of public policies, including education policy. This assessment is essential to understand the whole process of forming a government policy, since the evaluation can be understood as a key mechanism of democratic control of the population about the actions of government and in this sense, is necessary the connection with political participation.

### **Assessment of access to higher education policies**

Evaluating policies of access to higher education is an important contribution to enable the advancement of democratization of higher education, understanding access in view of the entry, maintenance and training quality. Although there are government initiatives targeting to increase enrollment in higher education institutions, the country is still far from having a higher education system democratized, as shown by Oliveira (2013, p. 273):

The history of access to higher education in Brazil reveals a permanent tension between continuity and rupture with the mechanisms of social selectivity, but with the prevalence of continuity of the models or the best selection processes according to individual abilities, though grounded in general in the discourse of equal opportunities and even democratization of access.

It is known that the assessment of large-scale policy does not constitute itself as an easy task to perform considering the regional diversity

between institutions of higher education in terms of types of institutions (universities, universities, colleges, federal institutes), administrative arrangements (public, private) so what more evidence are studies by government agencies such as the Ministry of Education with the Census of Higher Education and also the IBGE with the National Household Survey [Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios – PNAD]. Such data allow the monitoring of the development of access to higher education from enrollment rates, enrollment number, freshmen and senior list and the evolution of enrollments over the years studied (Table 1).

The 2013 Census on higher education also shows a short number of the proposed on the National Education Plan (2001–2010) (BRASIL, 2001) which provided 30% of enrollments in higher education of young people among 18–24 years old. It is observed also a marked difference in freshmen and graduates, demonstrating significant evasion.

The new National Plan for Education, Law No. 13,005/2014 contemplates two goals for higher education and a goal for *stricto sensu* graduate in order to promote the expansion of social inclusion strategies with the quality of formation, in its goals 12, 13 and 14.

Target 12: raise the gross enrollment ratio in higher education to 50% (fifty percent) and the net rate to 33% (thirty-three percent) of the population of eighteen (18) to 24 (twenty four) years, ensured the quality of provision and expansion to at least 40% (forty percent) of the new registrations in the public sector.

Target 13: raise the quality of higher education and increase the proportion of masters and doctors of the university in effective practice throughout the higher education system to 75% (seventy five percent), and of the total, at least 35% (thirty five percent) PhDs.

Target 14: gradually increase the number of enrollments in *stricto sensu* graduate, in order to achieve the annual titration of sixty thousand (60,000) masters and 25,000 (twenty five thousand) PhDs (BRASIL, 2014a).

**Table 1** - Summary: general statistics of higher education, by administrative category, Brazil (2013)

Basic statistics	Administrative category				
	General total	Total	Federal	State	Private
Number of institutions	2,391	301	106	119	2,090
<b>Higher education - undergraduation</b>					
Courses	32,049	10,850	5,968	3,656	21,199
Enrollment	7,305,977	1,932,527	1,137,851	604,517	5,373,450
Total enrollment	2,742,950	531,846	325,267	142,842	2,211,104
Graduates	991,010	229,278	115,336	82,892	761,732
<b>Sequence of specific formation Higher Education</b>					
Enrollment	16,987	489	100	208	16,498
<b>Higher education – Post-graduation <i>Stricto-Sensu</i></b>					
Enrollment	203,717	172,026	115,001	56,094	31,691
<b>Higher Education total</b>					
Enrollment Total	7,526,681	2,105,042	1,252,952	660,819	5,421,639
Practicing Professors formation <sup>1,2</sup>	367,282	155,219	95,194	48,275	212,063
Practicing professors <sup>3</sup>	321,700	152,166	94,354	47,823	181,302

Source: BRASIL, 2014b.

Notes: <sup>1</sup> Corresponds to the number of teachers links to institutions of higher education;<sup>2</sup> Does not include teachers who work exclusively in the Post-graduate broad sense;<sup>3</sup> Number of different social security numbers of practicing teachers from each administrative category.

From the new National Education Plan (BRASIL, 2014a) there is a major challenge to achieve the proposed goal, which requires public policies that contribute to a basic education of good quality and that provide access to higher education. In this perspective, studies that take as their object the evaluation of access policies can contribute to the advances that are needed.

A survey conducted at the Bank of thesis from CAPES - Years 2011 and 2012 in the Area of Education (BRASIL, 2014c) shows that in the knowledge field of education were defended 6,283 theses and dissertations, of which 113 are research work carried out on access to higher education, in just two years in Brazil, 11 of these refer specifically to assess of access/stay (Table 2).

It is evident that the works, presented in Table 2, refer specifically to the evaluation of higher education access policies, geared to government programs, focusing on specific realities, courses and institutions or social groups, not allowing the extension of the conclusions to the reality of the country. This is a common situation in research on the subject, already mentioned by Souza (2003), which refers to the abundance of sectorial studies, and many of these case studies. Another aspect to highlight is that most studies are dissertations that have a very limited research period, preventing large-scale studies.

It still is necessary to resume studies of Faria (2005) indicating that the 1990s that have been evident in Western democracies in general and in particular in Latin America, a greater emphasis on evaluation function in government management, motivated, according the author by “[...] need for ‘modernization’ of public management in a search context of promotion and legitimation of state reform” (FARIA, 2005, p. 97), whereas this evaluation perspective would be consistent with manuals presenting the evaluation and the last stage of the called policy cycle<sup>9</sup> as,

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<sup>9</sup> Faria (2005) when referring to “the policy cycle” uses not towards the “policy cycle” method, according to Ball (1994), cited in Mainardes (2006).

**Table 2 - Theses and dissertations on assessment of access to higher education policies, education area (2011–2012)**

(Continues)

Year	Title	Study objective	D	AM	PM
2011	Democratizando o acesso à educação superior: o caso da UFScar Campus Sorocaba	Provide subsidies starting from the students themselves to the development of these policies, since these should be the main subjects of these actions.		1	
2011	Eu falo: os alunos da escola pública. Democratização do acesso à educação superior – políticas de ação afirmativa	Examine how federal educational institutions - IFES built the process of content teachers formation for the production of printed educational materials and System-Tec Brazil in the light of references for preparation of teaching materials for Distance Education.		1	
2011	O ProUni como política pública de ação afirmativa: uma análise do impacto sociocultural na trajetória de egressos, oriundos das camadas populares, do ProUni da PUC-MG	Analyze the socio-cultural impact of ProUni, as public policy of affirmative action in the path of graduates stock, originating in the popular layers, from the Pontifical Catholic University of Minas Gerais (PUC-MG), in view of the limitations and possibilities of this program crossed by trademarks of neoliberal ideology in the educational field.		1	
2011	Políticas de educação a distância para ensino superior: o foco no aluno da UAB/UFAL	Identify the profile of the students of the system UAB/UFAL analyzing whether the institutional conditions offered by the system UAB/UFAL approach the needs, objectives, expectations and demands of formation of the students, as a result of a universal policy (access) and expansion of the DE in the past eight years, and the UAB System as one of its main policies.		1	
2012	O ProUni e seus egressos: uma articulação entre educação, trabalho e juventude	Investigate whether ProUni while Public Policy for Access to Higher Education, enabled better integration conditions in the labor market, as well as improvements in socioeconomic status of its graduates.	1		
2012	A inclusão de alunos com deficiência na UEPB: uma avaliação do programa de tutoria especial	Assess the contributions of the Special Mentoring Program at the State University of Paraíba (UEPB) to stay and good academic performance of their students with disabilities in higher education.	1		

Table 2 - Theses and dissertations on assessment of access to higher education policies, education area (2011–2012)

Year	Title	Study objective	D	AM	PM
2012	Universidade Zumbi dos Palmares: uma proposta alternativa de inclusão do negro no ensino superior	Discuss, in the light of the academic and intellectual debate broke out in the country in the last decade, the alternative proposal to include the black in higher education designed and implemented by the University of Citizenship Zumbi dos Palmares.	1		
2012	Políticas públicas para o ensino superior: estudo sobre a inclusão e o desempenho acadêmico dos bolsistas do ProUni em uma IES privada de Minas Gerais	Analyze if the ProUni has managed to establish itself as a social-educational inclusion policy of its fellows; if the scholarship students from ProUni students have been successful or had academic failure, translated in rates of evasion / permanence and repetition.	1		
2012	Avaliação da política de cotas da UEPG: desvelando o direito à igualdade e à diferença	To perform an assessment of the effectiveness of the policy as to favor the expansion of access to higher education for black students from public schools and students from public schools.	1		
2012	O Programa REUNI na Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora	Evaluate the program at the Federal University of Juiz de Fora (UFJF), in order to verify their contributions to the improvement of undergraduate education through indicators Ratio Pupil Teacher and Graduation Completion Rate.			1
2012	A acreditação no sistema federal de ensino superior e seus reflexos na rotina institucional da UFJF	To analyze whether the federal system of accreditation of the federal university in Brazil, combining regulation and evaluation of undergraduate emerging diplomas that establish parameters and inputs that must be met for the supply of graduate students or by the private network or by federal public network.			1
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>

Note: D = PhD; AM = Academic Master Degree; PM = Professional Master Degree.

Source: BRASIL, 2014c.

[...] activity designed to assess the results of a course of action whose life cycle ends [and that could then] provide input for the design of new interventions or for the improvement of policies and programs [also] as part of accountability and accountability of state actors, that is, as a central element of accountability (FARIA, 2005, p. 97-98).

From this understanding of the public policies assessment, Faria (2005) considers that it is a priority of the regulatory aspects, technical and with emphasis on its role as a management tool that has been occurring since the 1990s in Latin America at the service of State reform, an appraiser and subjected to the logic of the market state.

The assessment strategy, with managerial approach, occurs most often when you want to rationalize resources and see which programs should be continued and which should be extinct and how programs that remain, or new ones that will be deployed may have higher yield. Thus, the evaluation of public policies in the reform of the State is presented as a central instrument, because it should give credibility to the actions implemented.

When it comes to higher education access policies, although in the debate throughout the history of higher education in the country, is in the 1980s that incorporates the social role of the university and starts a debate within the social movements and academic context on the need for its expansion, that it is, therefore, a recent research topic.

## **Final thoughts**

It is not possible to ignore that an assessment of public policies to achieve their intrinsic purposes is carried out without proper scientific rigor; that some models are simpler other more complex or developed further; which can, in evaluating a policy or policies, take into account the entire process from the initial design of the policy, its formulation, implementation and the proposed pre-existing review or evaluate only



the final result; and also that the reliability of the assessment is related also with the possibility of obtaining reliable data.

But the question of greater relevance is: what is the importance of public policies assessment? (In this case the access to higher education policies) If democracy rulers elected by the population are committed to represent them and meet their needs, it is certain that this population has the right to take note of its proposals and actions, but also to effectively participate in the evaluation of the actions implemented. The question is to decide on what matters in the evaluation and, especially, how the public can participate in the assessment of public policies.

About what is important in the assessment, we agree with some criteria set by Arretche (2002, p. 3), stating that an assessment of public policies is considered:

[...] good when it is useful (in other words, refers to a relevant policy); is timely (in other words, performed in a timely manner); is ethical (in other words, was performed with criteria and fair and appropriate measures) and is accurate (in other words, employed proper procedures).

Although agreeing with the indicated criteria means that a fundamental requirement is that those affected by the policies have the right to demonstrate, not only through questionnaires or interviews, but that constitute monitoring groups with a say on the policies to be put into practice, as well as the evaluation and the formulation of new policies. It is also essential that the analytical framework deals with the entire process and that is what we agree with Mainardes (2006, p. 47) that the policy cycle method “is a useful analytical framework that allows a critical analysis and contextualized educational programs and policies from formulation to implementation in the context of practice, and the results/effects”.

Regarding access policies to higher education, which has been set in Brazil as a set of compensatory programs without an effective monitoring and evaluation, we reiterate the proposal on the importance of

participation of groups benefited in the evaluation processes, given the valuable contribution to improve these processes and to advance the democratization of access to higher education.

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