

**MIDDLE LEVEL BUREAUCRACY AND EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT:
RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN INITIATIVES OF THE STATE OF CEARÁ AND
THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT**

***BUROCRACIA DE MÉDIO ESCALÃO E AVALIAÇÃO EDUCACIONAL: RELAÇÕES
ENTRE INICIATIVAS DO ESTADO DO CEARÁ E DO GOVERNO FEDERAL¹***

***BUROCRACIA DE NIVEL MEDIO Y EVALUACIÓN EDUCATIVA: RELACIONES
ENTRE LAS INICIATIVAS DEL ESTADO DE CEARÁ Y EL GOBIERNO FEDERAL***

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ABSTRACT: The objective of this study is understand how Middle Level Bureaucracy from Ceará enter to the relationship established between brazilian national government and Ceará educational public policies, with a focus on Spaece, Saeb and Enem. It was observed that Seduc's organization has a “semi-horizontal” structure, allowing autonomy and involvement of professionals and positively affecting the technical quality of the actions developed. The evaluations are historically present in state actions and schools, having their consolidation through the accomplishment of data collection directly by the state, without the teachers or the school as intermediaries, and by the creation of Coave. It is observed that the state management is careful to guarantee the principle of equity among students in the Ceará. According to the interviewees, it is impossible for states and municipal governments not to establish relations with the Brazilian federal government, since there are advantageous policies for education that must be implemented.

KEYWORDS: Mid-level bureaucracy. Public bureaucracies. Ceará. Educational assessment. Evaluation Policy.

RESUMO: O objetivo deste trabalho é compreender como Burocratas de Médio Escalão cearenses se inserem na relação entre políticas públicas educacionais nacionais e cearenses, com foco no Sistema Permanente de Avaliação da Educação Básica do Ceará (Spaece), no Sistema de Avaliação da Educação Básica (Saeb) e no Exame Nacional do Ensino Médio (Enem). Observou-se que a organização da Secretaria de Educação cearense tem estrutura “semi-horizontal”, permitindo autonomia dos profissionais e afetando positivamente a qualidade técnica das ações desenvolvidas. As avaliações estão presentes nas ações estatais e nas escolas, consolidando-se por meio da coleta de dados realizada diretamente pelo Estado e

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pela criação da Coordenadoria de Avaliação e Acompanhamento da Educação (Coave). Observa-se cuidado da gestão estadual com a garantia do princípio de equidade entre os alunos da rede cearense. Na visão dos entrevistados, é impossível que governos subnacionais não estabeleçam relações com o governo federal na implementação de políticas educacionais.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Burocracia de médio escalão. Burocracias públicas. Ceará. Avaliação educacional. Política de avaliação.*

RESUMEN: *El objetivo de este trabajo es comprender cómo los Burócratas Medios de Ceará se ubican en la relación establecida entre las políticas públicas educativas de Brasil y Ceará, con foco en Spaece, Saeb y Enem. Se observó que la organización de la Seduc tiene una estructura "semihorizontal", permitiendo la autonomía y el involucramiento de los profesionales, lo que incide positivamente en la calidad técnica de las acciones desarrolladas. Las evaluaciones están históricamente presentes en las acciones estatales y en las escuelas, teniendo su consolidación por medio de la recolección de datos directamente por el Estado, sin los docentes o la escuela como intermediarios, y por la creación del Coave. Se observa que la gestión estatal es cuidadosa en garantizar el principio de equidad entre los estudiantes cearenses. Para los entrevistados, es imposible que los gobiernos estatales y municipales no establezcan relaciones con el gobierno federal brasileño, ya que hay políticas ventajosas para la educación que deben implementarse.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Burocracia de nivel medio. Burocracias públicas. Ceará. Evaluación educativa. Política de Evaluación*

Introduction

In this work, especially based on the study of Bravo (2021), it is aimed to understand how public agents called, in the literature, "Middle-Escale Bureaucrats" (BME in the Portuguese acronym), with a cut in the state of Ceará, are inserted in the relationship established between Brazilian national and Ceará educational public policies, focusing on the policies of educational assessment for high school materialized in the Permanent System of Basic Education Assessment of Ceará (Spaece), in the System of Basic Education Assessment (Saeb) and in the National High School Exam (Enem). We took as object of analysis the educational assessment policy of the state of Ceará, due to the accumulation and amplitude of such policies developed by the state government, and the assessment policy of the Brazilian federal government, considering its various specific programs and actions, in both spheres as initiatives associated with improving the quality of education. To apprehend and characterize these EMBs, we established the discourse of public bureaucracy as the axis of analysis.

It is worth noting that, in the literature, we find the term "educational assessment" used for many investigative perspectives and with equal conceptual amplitude, being, for example,

associated with the idea of "educational measurement", or even with government initiatives that make use of large-scale standardized testing. In this framework, as explored by Alavarse (2013), it should be explained that evaluation goes beyond measurement, because the term "evaluation", coming from the Latin *a-valere* ("to give value to"), presupposes a process that must involve, ultimately, judgments. In the scope of educational assessment, the object to be evaluated would be directly related to school aspects, which are commonly the students' proficiency, the result of learning school contents, in certain skills, especially when we refer to large-scale learning assessments, that is, when it is decided to assess the results of measurements.

For the purposes of this paper, we adopted the concept of evaluation presented by Lukas Mujica and Santiago Etxebarria (2009, p. 92, our translation), who define evaluation as:

[...] the process of identifying, collecting and analyzing relevant information - which may be quantitative or qualitative - in a systematic, rigorous, planned, directed, objective, reliable and valid way, in order to make value judgments based on pre-established criteria and references to determine the value and merit of the educational object in question, in order to make decisions that help optimize that object.

Thus, an evaluation policy, with nuanced means and procedures, must contain elements that have as their origin problem or, in the extreme, objectives that relate to components that integrate the conceptual scope of the evaluation. With this in mind, analyses of the relations established between the evaluation policy of Ceará will be presented, notably the actions related to the Spaece, given its longevity and history of articulation with other strands of educational policy; and the federal government's evaluation policy, especially the actions related to Enem, which is the main instrument of selection for enrollment in public Higher Education in the country and, supposedly, becomes a reference and an instrument of curricular changes for High School, thus often becoming a test whose results would lead to an evaluation of schools and networks, even if it is not fully organized for this purpose; and Saeb, due to its theoretical and methodological proximity to Spaece and its political influence on evaluation initiatives by the other federal entities.

It is pointed out that an evaluation policy, especially when it comes to learning evaluation, developed by a given government is not restricted to elements related to large-scale evaluations, although this type of evaluation is configured as a strong expression of the materialization of an evaluation policy and contributes to its understanding, given the reach that standardized procedures, by themselves and their results, allow. According to Bravo (2021, p. 79, our translation),

It is understood, therefore, that an "evaluation policy", according to the established objective, must consist of a systematic collection of data, which generate political actions aimed at the development of indicators, indexes and goals to support actions, programs and public policies, often becoming a means or a tool for other policies. In education, the object of the evaluation policy must be related to it and, in order for such policy not to extrapolate its functions and object, taking on the guises of other educational policies, it must be clear about its potential and limitations, which must be contemplated in the use of its results. We can consider that the State, through evaluation policies, implements a government project through programs and actions aimed at specific sectors of society, with educational evaluation as the focus or axis.

It is also worth noting that some initiatives, despite the rigorously listed devices, do not constitute evaluation, or, if they are evaluation, it remains to be seen whether their object is learning or some other aspect of the school work, such as, for example, the teaching work or the school as a whole.

Methodology

This article is grounded in fieldwork, as well as documentary research, and presents a treatment of spontaneous speeches ⁴, in perspective with the literature, of middle-ranking bureaucratic actors from Ceará in order to understand the relationship established between public policies of federal entities at different levels, but with educational assessment policies for the same stage of basic education, in this case high school, marking elements that demonstrate how these actors are actively linked to a policy of educational assessment in the state, influencing, although not completely, in its implementation. It is noteworthy that, despite exploring aspects of policy implementation, this work does not address developments and implications in the field of public policy implementation, something that should explore all the phases that methodologically divide studies focused on the analysis of public policies (agenda, formulation, implementation, evaluation and termination), as pointed out by, among others, Palumbo (1998).

The analysis considered one of the bureaucratic levels established by the literature on public policies, the Mid-level Bureaucracy, understood as the link between the top level and the executors of public policies, that is, public actors located in intermediate positions in the

⁴ In 2017, a telephone interview was conducted with the Former Deputy Secretary (2007-2014) and Former Secretary of Education of the State of Ceará (2014-2015) and a visit to the Secretariat of Education of the State of Ceará, located in the city of Fortaleza. The collection of information in loco occurred through observations and semi-structured interviews with managers and technicians of the State Secretariat of Education, which were later transcribed and analyzed by the researcher.

hierarchical structure of the organization. This bureaucracy includes managers, directors, supervisors, and agents in charge of operationalizing the strategies that the top level of the bureaucracy formulates (Cf. CAVALCANTE; LOTTA, 2015; FUSTER, 2016; PIRES, 2012).

The material derived from in-depth interviews of Bravo's research (2021), pointed out the possibility of discussing whether there is and, if so, what are the marks of the federal evaluation policy in the Ceará state initiatives (and vice versa) and how these evaluation policies managed at the federal and state levels have developed in the perspective of their implementations.

The interviews were conducted with managers and technicians from the State Department of Education of Ceará (Seduc in the Portuguese acronym), responsible for the Coordination of Evaluation and Monitoring of Education (Coave); the Coordination of Planning and Educational Policies (Coped); and the Coordination of School and Learning Development (Codea).

Because of the complexity of the patterns of social interactions involved in the formulation and management of public policies, we draw on the theories of Public Policy Analysis, described as a set of knowledge provided by various disciplines of the human sciences, used to seek to solve or analyze concrete problems in public policy (BARDACH, 1998). This analysis methodology takes into account the political aspects of the policy-making process and the understanding that its development involves decisions and the elaboration of actions over time.

Public Bureaucracies

The importance of exploring how the BME understands the relationship between the evaluation policy of the state of Ceará and the evaluation policy of the Brazilian federal government, and how these are linked to the actions developed in the state education network, lies additionally in the need to better understand the functioning of the Brazilian state. Bureaucrats are understood as a set of permanent State actors with the capacity to achieve efficiency in work processes, since, according to Pinheiro (1978, p. 31 apud BRESSER-PEREIRA, 2007, p. 11, our translation), the political action of the public bureaucracy "will depend on the concrete functioning of the State apparatus and on the relations of the State with the various social classes".

Considering a chain of agents with transformative power that act between the process of public policy formulation - be it at the federal, state or municipal level - and the local

implementation of these policies, policy studies that consider the different bureaucratic layers have the potential to examine the actions of the agents responsible for the formulation of general policy rules and norms, the High Level Bureaucrats (BAE); of the agents directly responsible for formulating the operations and implementation processes of the policy, the EMBs; and, finally, of the actors responsible for delivering the policy to its users when implementing the public policy, the Street Level Bureaucrats (BNR), as Lotta and Pavez (2010) point out.

At the empirical level, a process of expansion of the intermediary bureaucracy in Brazil has been observed since the late 1990s, suggesting that the performance of the middle-ranking bureaucracy has been the target of important and relevant transformations for government activity. These actors, as well as their power resources in negotiating their autonomy and participation, influence the process of production and implementation of public policies, that is, the middle echelon of the bureaucracy, as well as the types of knowledge and work they produce, cause dissonances between the formal and legal aspects of policies and the practices and empirical knowledge that shape their local implementation (PIRES, 2018).

Given the Brazilian federative model - a combination of autonomy and interdependence among federative entities in a context of high heterogeneities and inequalities and proposals for universalization of policies (ARRETCHE, 2004; BICHIR; BRETTAS; CANATO, 2017) - understanding implementation processes of nationally designed policies and their local appropriation is a relevant topic, because, whether in the context of unified policies or of incentive and induction, they favor the study of implementation, especially when there is centralized formulation (with varying degrees of standardization) combined with local adaptation (LOTTA *et al.*, 2018).

Results

For a more contextualized understanding of the EMBs' action and to locate it in relation to relevant factors of educational policy, the following contents were explored: i) Organizational structure of the Secretary of Education of the State of Ceará (2007 to 2019); ii) Indicators, indexes and goals; iii) Monitoring data and educational policies; iv) Bonus, accountability and funding policies; v) Professional training policies; and vi) Relationship of Ceará state policy with the federal government.

Organizational structure of the Secretary of Education of the State of Ceará (2007 to 2019)

The analysis of the arrangement established between positions and functions, the modifications and permanences in the organizational structure of the Secretariat of Education of the State of Ceará, in the period from 2007 to 2018, provided evidence of how the agents circulate through this structure and how they relate to each other. This time cut comprises from the creation of an evaluation coordinator within the structure of Seduc, with Decree No. 29.139 of December 26, 2007, until the modification made in this organization through Decree No. 33.048 of April 30, 2019. It was also investigated the Superior Management, the Superior Management, the Programmatic Execution Organs, and the Local and Regional Execution Organs, for containing subdivisions and coordinatorships that are directly related to the establishment of an educational evaluation policy in the state.

For Pires and Gomide (2014), the institutional arrangement, composed of rules and formal and informal processes, defines the particular way in which actors and interests are articulated in the implementation of a specific public policy, something that supports the understanding of the characteristics of the contexts and institutional arrangements that would give political sustainability, i.e., conditions that enable some policies to achieve their results and others not. One should add to the study the factors that affect the implementation context and, therefore, the ability of a policy to achieve the expected results (LOTTA *et al.*, 2018).

According to the interviewees, Seduc presents a "semi-horizontal" organizational structure, which would allow the involvement of professionals from different areas and hierarchical layers in part of the decisions made for the formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies. One of the interviewees, corroborating other statements, pointed out that

Seduc is a sector. It is organized hierarchically in a semi-horizontal way. So, the priorities are defined in the executive committee, which brings together all the Seduc coordinators from all areas, plus the coordinators of the regional coordinators. Then, with the direction of the secretary, we establish priorities, and [...] we try to find the best programs and projects to dialog with the priorities (Codea Coordinator of Pedagogical Management)

This structure also reflects in the technical quality of the actions developed by Seduc, once the processes of collecting diverse information are carried out, both to support the agenda formulation, and to implement, monitor and evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of the proposed guidelines, which rely on feedbacks made by professionals at the tip, street-level bureaucrats.

The different interviewees are congruent in their speeches, presenting conceptions, methods, and work systems that are very similar. This shows a high degree of agreement among the different actors, and probably among the other bureaucratic levels. Managers focus their actions on improving school results, and use performance data and other contextual data to guide their actions.

Elaboration of own indexes

Seduc's educational data collection is based on two main systems: i) Spaece, which collects school performance data through large-scale learning evaluation and contextual data through socioeconomic questionnaires applied to students, teachers and principals; and ii) Integrated School Management System (Sige Escola), which collects data on learning and attendance, among others, directly from schools. These collections and the systemic practices of data analysis and interpretation by the state government of Ceará are the basis for the elaboration of its own educational quality indexes, giving support to a series of state educational policy actions.

Since 2009, the state of Ceará has had a quality indicator - the School Performance Index (SPI) - with synthetic results per school, associated with: i) the proficiency obtained by the school in the Spaece (converted to a scale of 0 to 10); ii) the rate of student participation in the assessment; and iii) the adjustment factor for universalization of learning, which aims to encourage schools to include a higher percentage of students in the appropriate levels. As a result, the SPI-Alpha, the SPI-5, the SPI-9 and the Medium SPI, respectively, are created for the first two years, for the 5th and 9th grades of elementary school and for high school, both similar to the IDEB, but released annually. The average SPI does not include the adjustment factor of the other indicators.

For Machado, Alavarse, and Arcas (2015, p. 672, our translation), "[t]he creation of quality indicators by the states, following the policy adopted by the federal government, indicates that this is a strong trend in the educational policies underway in the country. However, even though the indexes developed by the management of Ceará have similarities with the Ideb, it is pondered that the insertion of the "adjustment factor for universalization of learning," understood as an indicator of educational equity, points to the management's concern in addressing inequalities present in the network.

The Ideb and the Ceará SPIs are used to establish performance goals for students that, in turn, are also understood as goals for the work of all those involved in the educational chain,

from teachers and technicians, to the Municipal Secretaries of Education, considering the coordination of the networks carried out by the state government. The coordinator of Codea, in her interview, highlighted the importance of the Ideb as a device of national visibility, which could indicate how the creation of the state's own indicators simultaneously reflects a federal policy with developments, especially in articulation with it, and establishes its own field of policy making.

The state of Ceará also has the Educational Quality Index (EQI), elaborated in 2008, which can be understood as a mechanism of financial induction to the improvement of educational quality, since, by means of Decree No. 29306, of June 5, 2008, which changed the rules of distribution of the share of the Tax on Circulation of Goods and Services (ICMS), its distribution to the municipalities was linked to municipal indicators, with greater weight to the EQI. It is noteworthy that this is a policy devised by the state government and applied to the municipal governments of Ceará.

The EQI average considers the relative and comparative performance of the municipal networks and stimulates a "competition" among the municipalities, taking into account the proficiency of the students and the inequality of performance among the students of these networks, valuing those municipalities with the largest number of children in the adequate level and penalizing those with the largest number of children in the lower levels of proficiency. In its calculation, the proficiency level of the students in the reference year and the evolution in relation to the previous year are considered.

Despite the various data collection dynamics of the network, in terms of management indicators for the activities developed by the BME, it is observed that Seduc bases the fulfillment of goals based on the results of school performance of students in the network in standardized tests, which can lead to a reduced understanding of the quality of education aimed at.

Monitoring of data and educational policies

Within the state management of Ceará, one of the direct ways to ensure the necessary resources for the implementation of public policies and the functioning of the government structure and, in return, to carry out such monitoring is via the State Budget. This includes, in a synthetic way, expenses related to the Transfer to Municipalities, Debt Payment, Personnel, Maintenance Costs, Final Costs and Projects.

According to information from the Secretariat of Planning and Management (CEARÁ, 2011), the projects managed within the State Government of Ceará, in general, are monitored by a tool called the Monitoring of Priority Actions and Projects (Mapp), a management system developed to control the implementation of projects by the higher levels of state decision-making, which is based on the Multi-Year Plan and underpins the decision-making during their implementation and contribute to the achievement of the commitments set out in the government plans.

Meetings are held with the Secretary of Education, Assistant Secretary, Executive Secretary, and Seduc's Coordinators to continuously evaluate the processes and deliberate on Seduc's actions. The Coordinator of Coped also points out that the actions aimed directly at the students are seen as a priority by the management and these include the federal external evaluations, denoting the importance of these in the state's educational policy.

It can be seen that, in the state of Ceará, the monitoring actions of the educational policy are based on the instruments developed by the Secretariat of Planning and Management, the large-scale evaluations and the daily data collection performed by schools. This data feeds a series of articulated actions, ranging from the financial management of the projects and programs implemented, to student attendance in schools. The Assistant Secretary underlined that

It is like this: the whole secretariat and all the schools in the state network, in the municipal network, know that there is a result. Because the municipal networks are evaluated. This evaluation reaches them and they have their own work to do in the schools. So, there is a repercussion in the municipal networks and in the state network. The principals know, they understand that they have these evaluations. That the school's indicators: dropout, approval, failure. Even, currently, the attendance. All of this is followed up. And that schools have even been called, priority schools have been defined, whether in relation to performance, or in relation to flow indicators. They are called and asked questions, challenges to overcome. There is a Superintendency that has this purpose, to visit state schools to discuss with managers. (Assistant Secretary of Education)

Coave comes into management. And it comes in, both here through the Office and through the Superintendence. It is something that everyone can access from their computer. This information is online. So the Credes have to do the monitoring.

The interviewees highlight the importance of these monitoring actions to anticipate possible obstacles to student learning in any of the instances of policy implementation, however they assert that the amount of processes and their fatigue can hinder political and pedagogical innovations, as shown in this excerpt:

[...] Because we have a monitoring and follow-up agenda, and this is an agenda that sometimes prevents us from focusing on innovations, for systematizing something that is not part of our daily routine. So, we take care of what is set in the daily routine, we are public managers in what is already set, and we find it very difficult to build new elements to improve the existing structures. [...] (Coordinator of Codea Pedagogical Management)

Bonus, accountability and funding policies

The use of results from standardized assessments, combined with financial incentive policies based on educational results, is directly related to the processes of administrative, financial and pedagogical decentralization, and with the introduction of accountability actions in the educational field, as a growing trend in recent decades (FREITAS, 2007; PASSONE, 2014; SOUSA, 2009). Accountability policies aim to reach, in aggregate, the network and its schools, or, in a more individualized way, teachers and even students, having relevant consequences depending on their impacts and ways to measure their results.

It is noteworthy that the creation of the Saeb in 1990 and formalized in 1994 by the Brazilian federal government, unveiled the first evaluation designs and, consequently, accountability policies by some states and municipalities. With the emergence of the Prova Brasil, in 2005, and the expansion of its application/design and its use - previously with objectives focused on diagnosis and planning, now it could also monitor the individual performance of all public elementary schools -, the movements for the disclosure of school performance results in the perspective of accountability for educational services have expanded.

The expansion of the movements of states and municipalities in relation to the development of accountability policies has new strength from 2007, through the implementation of the Basic Education Development Index (IDEB) by the Ministry of Education and Culture.

It can be observed that, historically, the state of Ceará has been prominent in the development and implementation of bonus and accountability policies based on student performance results. These initiatives are associated mainly with two state policies, which are also configured as financial transfer and bonus mechanisms: the *Escola Nota Dez* Award, directly related to the *Programa Aprendizagem na Idade Certa* - Right Age Learning Program (Paic); and the transfer of the ICMS (State Value Added Tax) quota, associated with the EQI. Both are based on the performance of students from Ceará in the Spacee.

For high school, the bonus strategies are conditioned by the *Aprender Pra Valer* Award, Law 14.484, of October 8, 2009, which rewards the staff of all schools that reach the annual learning evolution goals of high school students in Spaece.

The Codea Coordinator points out that, for him, the bonus policies, in order to have the results expected by the manager, need to be tangible to the professionals subjected to them. At the same time that it serves as a stimulus to certain practices, when the compensation criteria are not adjusted, the professionals, even if engaged, do not get the recognition for their efforts and, thus, the policy tends to lose strength. In his words:

[...] these bonus policies have a rigorous, strong mobilization at the beginning, and if people feel that, no matter how hard they try, they can't do it, it reverses a little. So this bonus is a controversial theme, in Brazilian and world literature in some ways, because not always having a bonus is a synonym of having the necessary mobilization, so we always have to think about what is the best strategy, because somehow, when you have a management cycle established, you start to have monitoring, you create a more intense work routine and the bonus is very much a stimulus to compensate for the effort created, established so that it is not only the work for it, it has this bias obviously of stimulus but it also has the compensation for all the effort that was worked on (Coordinator of the Codea Pedagogical Management).

However, the peculiarity in Ceará is that, by linking the bonus given to higher-performing schools to working together with schools in deficit, we see the establishment of a system of collaboration between school managers, state and municipalities, a fact still little explored by other state administrations.

Professional training policies

As for the training of education professionals, Seduc has its own initiatives, designing and coordinating activities for teachers in the state and municipal networks in the state (especially Paic). There are also federal government initiatives, such as teacher training courses aimed at preparing students for Enem.

According to Seduc's website, the professional training offer includes different modalities - such as professional education, full-time education, regular education, indigenous education, quilombola education, rural education, youth and adult education - and relies on the dialogue among peers, mediated by the school coordinator and area teacher coordinators (PCA), in the Regional Coordinators for the Development of Education (Crede), in the Superintendencies of State Schools in Fortaleza (Sefor).

Seduc, through Codea, set up trainings for principals (Codea School Management) and for school coordinators (Codea Pedagogical Management), four times a year, with the perspective that principals and coordinators would replicate the trainings inside the schools. The Superintendencies, in their routine of attendance and visits to schools, could also demand and carry out training activities according to what they consider necessary. The partnerships with institutes and foundations also carried out in-service training activities, within the scope of each project or program with which they were associated.

With regard to the training of managers and teachers in the appropriation and understanding of the data from the external evaluations, the Coordinator of Codea pointed out that both his and Coave's coordinators were responsible for the actions, each with their own specific focus, and that since 2007, when the Spaece became a census, training activities were initiated in such a way that currently a culture of data exists in the network, incorporated into the routine processes of the Superintendencies and school managers.

Relationship of Ceará state policy with the federal government

Regarding the articulations and relations established between the Federal Government and the Ceará State Government, the different interviewees affirm the impossibility for Brazilian states not to establish relations with the Federal Government, since there are advantageous policies that can be implemented. However, they note that the Brazilian federal government operates uniform policies for very different realities, generating a need to adapt these policies so that there are no undesired impacts on the policies being implemented.

The Coordinator of Codea Pedagogical Management points out that, even with the state's adherence to many of the federal propositions, whenever a program is presented to the government of Ceará, an analysis is made to verify whether that proposal is aligned with the way the area of education in the state is understood. This consideration is supported in the following excerpt:

The professional school network had a lot of support from the Federal Government, including financial support to build schools, but sometimes, let's say, we did it "despite" the Federal Government. We did what we had to do, as the Federal Government wanted, because it was the only way to receive the money. But, in fact, we wanted to do it another way. So this is a problem. The Federal Government still operates very uniform policies for very different realities. And sometimes we need the money and we do it, but sometimes it gets in the way. It is hard work (Former Secretary of Education).

Due to the uniformity of the Federal Government's program design, many federal entities are unable to take advantage of the benefits offered by the Union. The Codea Coordinator also points out the need to respect the administrative autonomy of the states, since programs with an already outlined scope and objectives, despite helping in the accountability/accountability dynamics, do not dialog with their needs.

With regard to the large-scale evaluations developed by the federal government, the interviewees state that, although this is not the case in Ceará, these evaluations and their resulting indexes are often more relevant than the state ones. However, challenges are reported to the effective use of data generated by federal evaluations to manage state schools and their practices, mainly because, most of the time, these data are sampled for high schools. A former principal restates that

The grade of the Inep evaluation has much more repercussion than the grade of the state evaluations in the state itself. What happens is that until the last [Saeb] high school evaluation a sample was also done. A sample that, let's say, you don't see your school in the sample. That is the management issue that we use the strategy of doing the evaluation almost at the saturation level, because for the manager I want to talk to, the average score of the state is an abstraction. I need his grade! [...] (Former Secretary of Education).

Another point raised by the interviewees is self-motivation and how driven the students feel to participate in the evaluations and dedicate themselves to the results. In this sense, the Coordinator of Codea points to Enem and the possibility of access to Higher Education as motivators, since,

Then I would speak mainly about the student's learning, the self-motivation that is what counts in these evaluations. Because in an instrument like this, the student may well not do it seriously, and these are the limitations, of course, we have no way to prove how much this impacts performance. That is why we even have a hard time knowing if it was the motivation that made the students learn more or if it was the award that made the student more interested, we don't know for sure how much the school improved or how much the student made more effort to demonstrate. And this phenomenon happens with Enem, while we have had four editions of the Ideb running on the same indicator, which gives us stability, the Enem every year we have more students with an average score much higher than the previous year. [...] (Codea GP Coordinator).

The interviews and other data analyzed show that the relationship established between the federal government and the government of Ceará is based on the implementation of standardized programs, the conditioning of funds related to some of these programs, the collection of data on student learning, and the establishment of indexes and goals. This makes

clear the intentionality of the federal government's conditioning of the actions of the federated entities for the achievement of an education considered to be of quality.

With regard to evaluation policies and the relationship between the state of Ceará and the federal government, a parallel movement of development of evaluation technologies and systems was observed, with the federal government at the forefront and the state of Ceará at the forefront.

Final remarks

According to the interviewed actors, Seduc's organization has a "semi-horizontal" structure, allowing greater autonomy and involvement of professionals from different areas and hierarchical layers in part of the decisions made for the formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of educational policies. For the foregoing, this structure also positively affects the technical quality of the actions developed by Seduc, since various information gathering processes are carried out, both to support the agenda formulation, as well as to implement, monitor and evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of the proposed guidelines, which rely on feedback from street-level bureaucrats, the representatives of the Regional Offices (Credes).

It is also noteworthy that the interviewees were congruent in their speeches, presenting conceptions, methods and work systems that are very similar, which shows a high degree of agreement among the different actors and, probably, among the other bureaucratic levels. Although this assumption should be further explored, we highlight that, in this state, educational policies received more attention in their implementation process. In addition to the involvement and commitment of the BME, Seduc may also have been organized in such a way as to "accommodate" the BME, even if without transforming it into a managerial staff with decision-making power, as would be the mentioned "semi-horizontal" structure.

In relation to evaluation and the possible evaluation policy, the process that took place in Ceará reinforces the historical association of educational evaluation with the dynamics of investigation and measurement of educational quality, based on the systematic collection of learning and context data. Although the evaluation of the educational process has always existed in state actions and in schools, this evaluation policy is consolidated when such data starts to be collected directly by the State, without teachers or schools as intermediaries, in order to foster decisions and reformulations of educational policy. The creation of Coave, in turn, points to another stage of consolidation of an evaluation culture in the school system.

The collection and analysis of educational data carried out by Seduc is understood by the actors interviewed as fundamental to guarantee that the widest range of professionals in the network appropriate and use such data in a pedagogical and continuous manner, including the offer of continued training on educational assessment, with national initiatives having little relevance in this regard.

In relation to the guarantee of the principle of equity among the students of the Ceará network, even with reservations, a concern of the state administration is observed, expressed by the way of elaboration of the state educational indexes and by the distribution of the ICMS share. Over time, the Ceará policies developed with a focus on equity have served as a basis for the establishment of national policies with the same concern.

About the articulations and relations established between the federal government and the state governments, it is highlighted that, in the interviewees' view, there is an impossibility for Brazilian state and municipal governments not to establish relations with the Union, since there are advantageous policies that should be implemented. In this way, it is necessary to criticize the uniform designs of the educational programs managed by the federal government because they are often out of touch with regional demands, preventing some of the federated entities from enjoying their benefits with the necessary autonomy to adapt them to their reality.

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