

EVALUATION MECHANISMS OF STUDENT ASSISTANCE POLICIES USED BY
FEDERAL UNIVERSITIES BASED ON PNAES

*MECANISMOS DE AVALIAÇÃO DAS POLÍTICAS DE ASSISTÊNCIA ESTUDANTIL
UTILIZADOS PELAS UNIVERSIDADES FEDERAIS A PARTIR DO PNAES*

*MECANISMOS DE EVALUACIÓN DE LAS POLÍTICAS DE ASISTENCIA
ESTUDIANTIL UTILIZADOS POR LAS UNIVERSIDADES FEDERALES CON BASE
EN PNAES*



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ABSTRACT: Federal universities develop public policies aiming student assistance. Decree no. 7.234, of July 19th, 2010, institutes the Programa Nacional de Assistência Estudantil (PNAES) and, among the requirements demanded by the Decree, it is stated that universities must set evaluation mechanisms of the program. The aim of this research is to answer the following question: what are the evaluation mechanisms of the student assistance policies used by the federal universities based on PNAES? To answer this question, the evaluation mechanisms used by 10 federal universities of Brazil are described. The methodology involves a case study, with the application of a questionnaire and a descriptive analysis of the answers, using a qualitative approach. The research results point to the use of PNAES own evaluation mechanisms, with the similarity of indicators as academic performance analysis, retention, evasion and questionnaire application.

KEYWORDS: Student assistance. Evaluation. PNAES.

RESUMO: *As universidades federais desenvolvem políticas públicas voltadas para a assistência estudantil. O Decreto n.º 7.234, de 19 de julho de 2010, institui o Programa Nacional de Assistência Estudantil (PNAES) e, entre os requisitos exigidos no Decreto, consta que as universidades devem fixar mecanismos de avaliação do programa. O objetivo desta pesquisa é responder a seguinte questão: quais são os mecanismos de avaliação das políticas de assistência estudantil utilizados pelas universidades federais a partir do PNAES? Para atender essa pergunta, descrevem-se os mecanismos de avaliação utilizados por 10 universidades federais do Brasil. A metodologia envolve um estudo de caso, com aplicação de questionário e uma análise descritiva das respostas, de abordagem qualitativa. Os resultados da pesquisa apontam para a utilização de mecanismos próprios de avaliação do PNAES, com a similaridade de indicadores como análise do desempenho acadêmico, retenção, evasão e aplicação de questionário.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Assistência estudantil. Avaliação. PNAES.*

RESUMEN: *Las universidades federales es desarrollan políticas públicas direccionadas para la asistencia estudiantil. El Decreto N.º 7.234, de 19 de Julio de 2010, instituye el Programa Nacional de Asistencia Estudiantil (PNAES) y, entre los requisitos exigidos en el Decreto, se establece que las universidades deben establecer mecanismos de evaluación del programa. El objetivo de esta investigación es responder la siguiente cuestión: ¿Cuáles son los mecanismos de evaluación de las políticas de asistencia estudiantil utilizados por las universidades federales con base en PNAES? Para responder esta pregunta, se describen los mecanismos de evaluación utilizados por 10 universidades federales de Brasil. La metodología consiste en un estudio de caso, con aplicación de un cuestionario y un análisis descriptivo de las respuestas, utilizando un enfoque cualitativo. Los resultados de la investigación apuntan para la utilización de mecanismos de evaluación propios del PNAES, con similitud de indicadores como el análisis del rendimiento académico, retención, evasión y aplicación de cuestionario.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Asistencia estudiantil. Evaluación. PNAES.*

Introduction

Concern about the area of student assistance at universities has been highlighted nationally. The democratization of higher education becomes necessary, given the incorporation of students from low-income families, providing them with opportunities to access and remain at university. As a result of these discussions, the National Student Assistance Program (PNAES) emerges as a proposal to reduce the effects of social inequalities (FONAPRACE, 2012).

The challenge for managers becomes evident, especially when it comes to evaluating student assistance policies. For Lima and Ferreira (2016, p. 117, our translation), “the evaluation of social policies and programs becomes relevant for government planning and management”. Therefore, there is a need to evaluate the program.

The relevance of this research lies in the information it provides about what, in fact, universities evaluate in their student assistance actions. To support the theme, the development covers the history of student assistance, its concepts and the evaluation of student assistance policies, based on the PNAES.

The literature shows that the regulation on student assistance in higher education is based on Decree nº. 7234, of July 19, 2010, which establishes the PNAES. The purpose of the program is to expand the conditions for young people to remain in federal public higher education. Article 5, item II, states that federal institutions must establish program evaluation mechanisms (BRASIL, 2010).

The interest in the topic arises due to the fact that there is a gap in the Decree, as it determines that universities evaluate the program, however, it does not inform what to evaluate, how frequently or how the evaluation process should be carried out. In other words, there is no proposal, suggestion of methodology or mechanisms for evaluating student assistance actions.

The objective of this work is to answer the following research question: what are the mechanisms for evaluating student assistance policies used by federal universities, based on the PNAES? To answer this question, a case study is adopted. A descriptive analysis of the responses sent by the student assistance sectors of the 10 federal universities in Brazil is carried out, describing their evaluation processes.

The study considerations present information about the tools that institutions use to evaluate their student assistance policies. Finally, the study could help other universities that do not have a systematized evaluation process or serve as a parameter for those that already do.

Brief history of student assistance

According to Imperatori (2017, p. 285, our translation), “[...] student assistance actions go back to the 1930s, with university food and housing programs”. During this period, the Getúlio Vargas government was a milestone in social policies and began to recognize education as a public right regulated by the State (VASCONCELOS, 2010). At the same time as Vargas, the Organic Law of Higher Education appeared through Decree 19,851/1931, which establishes in its article 100, § 4, that:

The welfare and charitable measures will be extended to the student bodies of university institutes, and they will include scholarships, designed to support students who are known to be poor, who recommend themselves, due to their application and intelligence, to the instituted aid (BRASIL, 1931, our translation).

This law was incorporated into the 1934 Constitution, which ensured assistance to students. Article 157 states that the Union, the States and the Federal District will reserve a part of their territorial assets for the formation of their respective education funds. § 2, in turn, says that “part of the same funds will be used to help students in need, through the provision of free school materials, scholarships, food, dental and holiday assistance” (BRASIL, 1934, our translation). In the 1940s, assistance to students was extended to all levels of education, remaining present in the 1946 Constitution. Article 172 of that Constitution states that “[...] each education system will obligatorily have educational assistance services that ensure students in need, conditions for school efficiency” (BRASIL, 1946, our translation).

Later, the decentralization of higher education was the aspect embraced by the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (LDB), in force from 1961 (Law no. 4,024). This law presents a specific title to address school assistance, treating it as a student right. In its article 90, it is observed that “In cooperation with other bodies or not, it is the responsibility of the educational systems, technically and administratively, to provide, as well as guide, monitor and stimulate social assistance, medical-dental and nursing services to students” (BRAZIL, 1961, our translation).

However, in 1996, the updated version of the LDB highlighted the importance of student retention. In its section I, article 3, it is highlighted that “education must be provided based on the following principles: equal conditions for access and permanence at school” (BRASIL, 1996, our translation). Student assistance in higher education has become, over the years, a

relevant topic on the government's agenda, driven by increased commitments in the name of democratizing education and guaranteeing rights (MACHADO; PAN, 2016).

From 1984 onwards, the Pro-Rectors of Community and Student Affairs at IFES began to meet concerned with promotion and support policies for students, aiming for their permanence at universities within the minimum conditions necessary for good quality teaching. In 1987, in Manaus/AM, the National Forum for Student and Community Affairs was established, later renamed the National Forum of Pro-Rectors for Community and Student Affairs (FONAPRACE, 2012).

When listing their aspirations, it is presented that the general objective of FONAPRACE (2012, p. 68, our translation) is “[...] to guarantee access, permanence and course completion for IFES students, from the perspective of social inclusion, expanded training, production of knowledge, improvement of academic performance and quality of life”. Among the specific objectives of the forum is “[...] promoting access, retention and course completion for IFES students, from the perspective of social inclusion and democratization of education” (FONAPRACE, 2012, p. 68, our translation).

Between 1996 and 2007, events in the area of student assistance at federal universities were marked by the approval, at the Paris Conference, of the “World Declaration on Higher Education in the 21st Century”, which provides for the social relevance of assistance programs offered at IFES and the approval of the National Education Plan (PNE), which provides for the policy of diversifying the sources of financing and management of HEIs (LIMA; FERREIRA, 2016). For Machado and Pan (2016), in Brazilian public higher education these discussions produced a sequence of actions aimed at achieving these objectives. Among them, the creation in 2007 of the Support Program for Restructuring and Expansion Plans of Federal Universities (REUNI).

In its 1st article, REUNI aims to create conditions for expanding access and permanence in Higher Education. In article 2, item V, the program will have the following guidelines, among others: expansion of inclusion and student retention policies (BRASIL, 2007). It is observed that the topic had already been addressed in the current Brazilian Federal Constitution (CF), where the determining basis for student assistance is consolidated in its article 206. It defines that teaching will be taught according to three principles, the first of which is: “I – equal conditions for access and permanence at school” (BRASIL, 1988, our translation).

In July 2007, FONAPRACE and the National Association of Directors of Federal Higher Education Institutions (ANDIFES) prepared and approved, respectively, the PNAES.

Concepts, legal bases, principles, objectives, guidelines, strategic areas and monitoring for Student Assistance at IFES were defined (FONAPRACE, 2012). For Cunha (2016), since then, FONAPRACE has established itself as an advisory body for ANDIFES, not as a class body, but as an advisory group, with these two bodies being responsible for acting in defense of student assistance.

On December 12, 2007, Normative Ordinance no. 39 of the Ministry of Education (MEC), which establishes the National Student Assistance Program (PNAES), whose student assistance actions must consider equal opportunities, contribute to improving academic performance and act preventively in situations of repetition and evasion resulting from insufficient financial conditions (BRASIL, 2007).

Three years later, the Presidency of the Republic, through Decree nº. 7,234, of July 19, 2010, provided for the PNAES. The purpose of the program, carried out within the scope of the MEC, is to expand the conditions for young people to remain in federal public higher education. Article 2 of the Decree presents the objectives of the PNAES: to democratize the conditions for young people to remain in federal public higher education, minimize the effects of social and regional inequalities in the retention and completion of higher education, reduce retention and dropout rates and contribute to the promotion of social inclusion through education (BRASIL, 2010).

In turn, item 2 of article 3 states that “[...] it will be up to the federal higher education institution to define the criteria and methodology for selecting undergraduate students to benefit” (BRASIL, 2010, our translation). The art. 5th states that students from the public Basic Education network or with a *per capita family income* of up to one and a half minimum wages will be served, without prejudice to other requirements set by federal higher education institutions (BRASIL, 2010). For Imperatori, with the legal framework of PNAES,

[...] student assistance is recognized as a strategy for combating social inequalities, expanding and democratizing the conditions of access and permanence in federal public higher education, with a greatly expanded definition (IMPERATORI, 2017, p. 298, our translation).

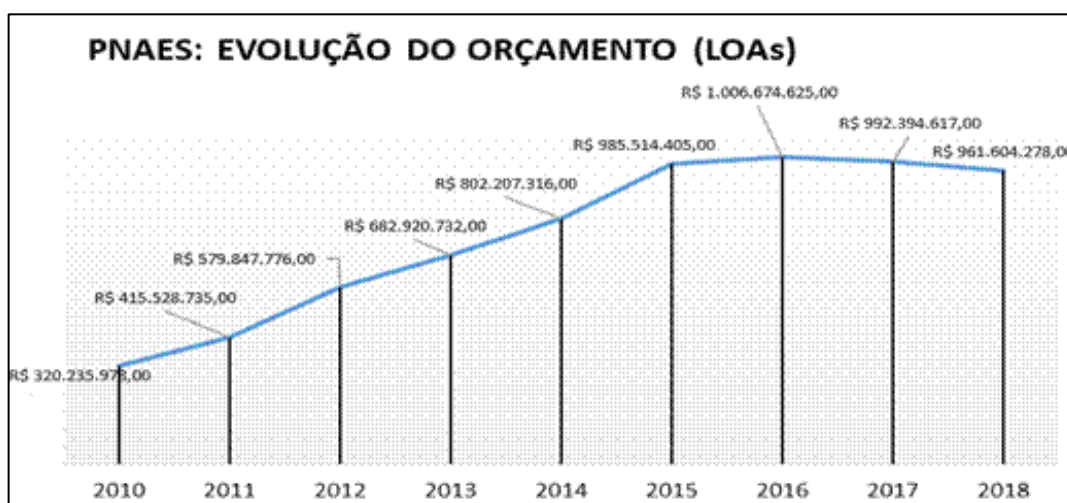
Therefore, the evolution of the scientific field on student assistance focuses its attention on socioeconomically vulnerable students who need support to stay and complete the course.

Student Assistance

Student assistance involves a variety of lines of action, and the PNAES proposal is to cover different areas with different social policies, aiming to guarantee a broad social support model (IMPERATORI, 2017). Within the approach of this research, the main focus of the basis for student assistance is the Decree that regulates the PNAES. For Cavaignac and Costa (2017, p. 421), “[...] in fact, the organization of PNAES represents an advance in actions that provide support to students in their educational path, especially with regard to financial support”.

The General Comptroller of the Union (CGU) (2017, p. 7, our translation) points out that “[...] the PNAES is a budgetary action allocated in Program 2080 - Higher Education from the PPA 2016-2019, under code 4002”. For Martins, Araújo Júnior and Rodrigues (2019, p. 14), the federal budget evolution allocated to the PNAES, foreseen and committed to in each Annual Budget Law (LOA), is defined by Graph 1.

Graph 1 - PNAES: Evolution of the budget (LOA, Brasília - DF, Brazil, 2019)



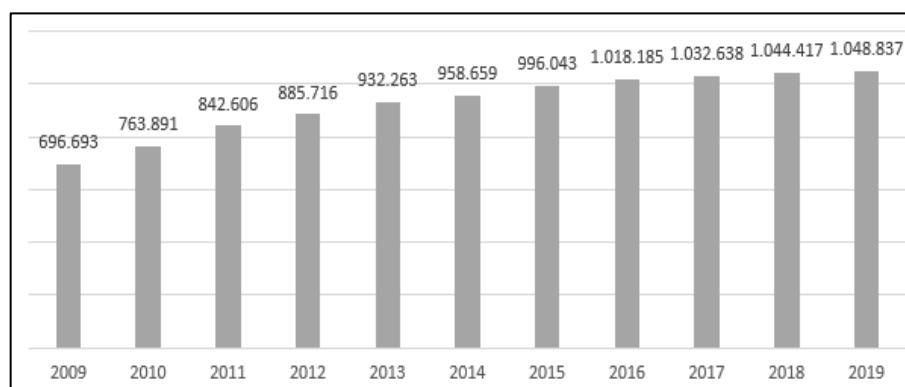
Source: Martins, Araújo Júnior and Rodrigues (2019, p. 14)

Based on the trajectory of the general budget, allocations increased in the period from 2010 to 2016. The largest budget (LOA) approved occurred in 2016, reaching amounts close to 1 billion reais and, from that year onwards, the allocation of budgetary resources began to suffer retractions (MARTINS; ARAÚJO JÚNIOR; RODRIGUES, 2019, p. 14). “Considering the actions that are linked to thematic programs, action 4002 has the 3rd largest budget, behind only the Functioning of Institutions and REUNI actions” (CGU, 2017, p. 7, our translation).

It should be noted that article 8 of the PNAES Decree informs that expenses will be incurred on account of the budget allocations annually allocated to the Ministry of Education

or IFES, and the Executive Branch must make the number of beneficiaries compatible with the existing budget allocations, observing the stipulated limits in accordance with current budgetary and financial legislation (BRASIL, 2010). Graph 2 demonstrates the evolution of the number of enrollments in in-person undergraduate courses at federal universities, released by the National Institute of Educational Studies and Research Anísio Teixeira (INEP) in 2019.

Graph 2 – Evolution of the number of enrollments between 2009 and 2019



Source: Adapted from INEP (2019)

In view of this, the CGU report finds that the increase in the general number of enrollments leads to an increase in the number of low-income students, which generates greater demand for social benefits – as is the case with benefits offered with PNAES resources. Consequently, this increase in demand requires an expansion in the work structure to serve new students and greater efficiency in management, given limited resources. On the other hand, this expansion requires expansion and improvement in internal control mechanisms (CGU, 2017).

Data presented in studies by Estrada and Radaelli (2017) show that some factors influence withdrawal or withdrawal from the course. It was identified that 65% of students would do so for financial reasons, 10% because they were unable to combine work and study, 10% due to the time it took to complete the course, 5% because it was not the course they wanted to pursue as a career, 5% because not getting help from student assistance, 3% for the period/shift of the course and 2% for the economic visibility that the course provides.

FONAPRACE (2007, p. 5, our translation) defines that the student assistance policy encompasses a set of principles that guide the implementation of actions to “[...] guarantee access, permanence and course completion for IFES students, from the perspective of social inclusion, expanded training, knowledge production, academic performance and quality of life”.

Paragraph 1 of article 3 of the PNAES provides that student assistance actions must be developed in the following areas: student housing, food, transport, health care, digital inclusion, culture, sport, daycare, pedagogical support and access, participation and learning of students with disabilities, pervasive developmental disorders and high abilities and giftedness (BRASIL, 2010).

For Imperatori (2017), it is interesting to note that the actions are defined and not the ways of executing the actions, which results in the diversity of projects and services implemented in each IFES. Thus, through specific programs, there is a prospect for expanded training, democratization of permanence, social inclusion and improvement of academic performance and quality of life.

Assessment of student assistance policies based on PNAES

Evaluation research or studies are designed with two basic objectives. The first is to evaluate the processes to find out whether the program is being implemented in accordance with its objectives, guidelines and priorities and whether its products are achieving the expected goals. The second is to evaluate the impacts and verify whether the primary and/or secondary transformations are actually attributable to the actions of the programs, establishing the appropriate causal relationships (CARDOSO JÚNIOR; CUNHA, 2015).

Secchi defines that:

Evaluation is the phase of the public policy cycle in which the implementation process and performance of public policy are examined, with the aim of better understanding the state of the policy and the level of reduction of the problem that generated it (SECCHI, 2014, p. 63, our translation).

In higher education, evaluation is the responsibility of the National Higher Education Evaluation System (SINAES), whose objective is to ensure the evaluation process of institutions, undergraduate courses and the academic performance of their students (BRASIL, 2004).

However, the direction of the evaluation focused on student assistance policies is regulated by article 5 of the PNAES Decree, which defines that federal higher education institutions must establish requirements for the perception of student assistance and monitoring and PNAES evaluation (BRAZIL, 2010).

It is observed that there is a gap in the Decree, as it is determined that the IFES establish PNAES evaluation mechanisms, but there is no information on what to actually evaluate, which criteria to use, nor a systematized evaluation methodology for student assistance actions.

Among the FONAPRACE guidelines, the following stands out:

[...] define a system for evaluating student assistance programs and projects through the adoption of quantitative and qualitative indicators to analyze the relationships between assistance and dropout, assistance and academic performance (FONAPRACE, 2012, p. 69, our translation).

It appears that, although the PNAES establishes that the evaluation is carried out, FONAPRACE is the one who indicates what to evaluate in student assistance actions. On the other hand, even if the Forum provides a horizon on what IFES should evaluate, it is still necessary to understand the methodology and evaluation instruments.

Above all, FONAPRACE (2012, p. 70, our translation) states that “[...] the evaluation of institutional programs and projects aimed at students must be carried out by the institution, with the participation of students and other Deans”. Furthermore, institutional evaluations must consider the relationship between supply and demand, the student's academic performance and the mechanisms for continuous evaluation of student assistance.

Otherwise, Souza and Silva (2014, p. 6, our translation) emphasize that evaluation in universities recommends “[...] no longer being treated as a reward or punishment, but as voluntary adherence”. To confront the punitive culture, the evaluation seeks not only to comply with the protocol, but to integrate with different instruments, based on the global conception, respect for institutional identity and diversity (SILVA; SOUZA, 2014).

Between 2010 and 2012, new demands emerged at FONAPRACE, including: i) discussing and forwarding the operating methodology of the national observatory for evaluating and monitoring assistance actions at IFES; ii) discuss and forward the creation of the PNAES Assessment Instrument, aiming for its constant improvement; and iii) join forces to transform the PNAES into Federal Law, thus consolidating it as State policy (FONAPRACE, 2012).

In 2017, the General Comptroller of the Union (CGU) promoted, in its latest consolidated report – the scope of which involved 58 federal universities –, the results of audits carried out between the years 2015 and 2016. The materialization of the information made it possible to draw up an overview of management of PNAES and, among the factors analyzed, are the areas of application of resources and the evaluation of program results (CGU, 2017).

The results presented reported that, “in general, the choices of IFES areas of activity are in accordance with the modalities provided for in Decree 7,234/2010” (CGU, 2017, p. 16, our translation). However, surprisingly, from the consolidation of the sample of individual evaluations, it was concluded that 89.7% of IFES do not evaluate the PNAES results and only 10.3% evaluate them (CGU, 2017).

Among the IFES that evaluate the program, the mechanisms used include: synthesis of data regarding approval, failure and withdrawal of subjects by students covered by the program, analysis of the academic performance of students who receive aid paid with the resource of the PNAES, assessments carried out through meetings held at the end of each academic period; and satisfaction and correlation surveys of retention and dropout rates with assistance activities (CGU, 2017).

The audit process concludes that:

Thus, despite being provided for in Decree 7,234/2010, no consistent evaluations of the program were found in any of the IFES audited, this being a relevant weakness that highlights a gap in internal governance in the units evaluated with an impact on the diagnosis processes and application of resources, thus as a risk directly linked to national management, given the lack of relevant information for decision-making, such as the allocation of resources in the Annual Budget Law (CGU, 2017, p. 23, our translation).

Notably, it is important that IFES comply with the PNAES and FONAPRACE assessment guidelines. In this way, with the use of indicators that show the effectiveness of student assistance actions, institutions will be able to reap the benefits of evaluation, such as adjustments, corrections, identification of improvements, planning and even the negotiation of more resources with the government federal.

Methodology

This work presents the responses of 10 federal universities on the mechanisms for evaluating student assistance policies, based on the PNAES. Regarding the approach to the problem, this study uses a qualitative approach, since the need to interpret the data found provides analysis within the research, in addition to seeking to understand the characteristics and models that are behind the fragments of messages taken into consideration (GODOY, 1995).

In order to achieve the proposed objective, the case study was chosen as a research strategy. The case study has great depth and small breadth, as it seeks to understand the reality of an individual, a group of people or one or more organizations in depth (ZANELLA, 2013).

Regarding the objective, this research is classified as descriptive, as research of this type has as its primary objective the description of the characteristics of a given population or phenomenon, or the establishment of relationships between variables (GIL, 2017).

Finally, it is bibliographical research, as books and scientific articles were used, in addition to a historical review of student assistance. Due to the dissemination of new information formats, bibliographic research began to include other types of sources, such as material available on the Internet (GIL, 2017).

Data collection was carried out through an open questionnaire addressed via email to the student assistance sectors of the 69 federal universities in Brazil. The questions asked were: Is there a PNAES assessment practice at your University? If so, what are the program evaluation mechanisms? The questionnaire has a series of advantages, including allowing people to respond at the time they deem most appropriate “[...] and, in open questions, there is ample possibility of freedom of response” (GIL, 2008, our translation).

After sending the question to the institutions, 28 responses were obtained within the deadline for receipt. There was no response from the others. Of the 28 institutions that responded, 10 stated they had PNAES evaluation mechanisms, seven said they did not evaluate the program and for 1 (one) it was in the preparation phase. 10 responses were considered invalid, which covered the following reasons: service only through a form, with two occurrences (form sent and not responded to); email redirected to a specific server, with seven occurrences (sent and not responded to); and service via ombudsman (a form sent and not responded to).

The response collection period was between December 2020 and January 2021. Those who responded to the questionnaire were those responsible for the student assistance sectors at IFES, such as pro-rectors, directors or coordinators. The ten universities that have evaluation mechanisms were called University A, University B and so on, until reaching University J.

Data analysis occurred through a qualitative approach, with a descriptive study of the responses. They were ordered and crossed to compare which ones were repeated between the IFES.

Results

The results presented answer the following research question: what are the mechanisms for evaluating student assistance policies used by federal universities, based on the PNAES? Ten federal universities in Brazil stated that they have the PNAES assessment practice and the responses are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 – Assessment mechanisms used by IFES, based on PNAES. Brazil, 2021

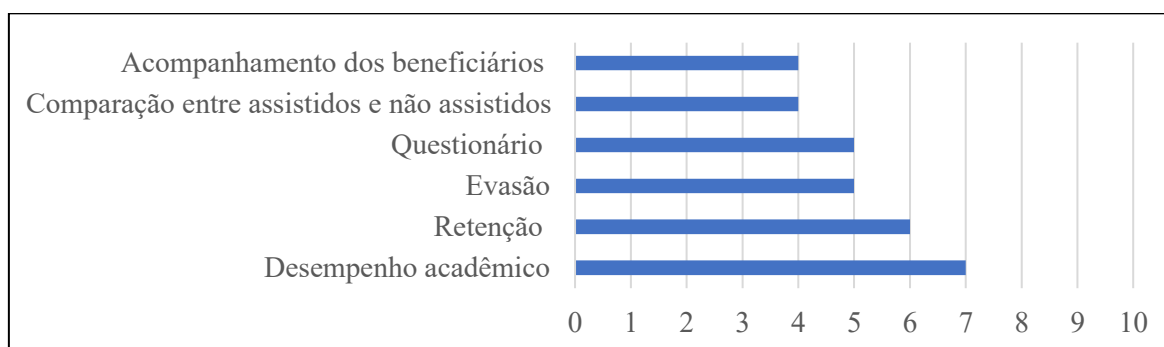
University A
PNAES assessment takes place through an annual questionnaire. A committee carries out all stages: preparation, application, analysis and report construction. In addition, beneficiaries are monitored every six months.
University B
The PNAES evaluation report is published annually, analyzing students' academic performance: academic performance coefficient, graduation, retention and dropout. This analysis is carried out between assisted and unassisted students. Participation of students assisted in academic merit programs.
University C
Assessment is semi-annual. In addition to academic performance, the number of hours enrolled, failure percentage and success rate comparing scholarship holders and non-scholarship holders are checked.
University D
The PNAES evaluation is carried out by monitoring the resources allocated to the program, students served and scholarships and grants granted. Another way is the student's pedagogical support and monitoring, carried out through a specific program. Among the program's actions, the following stand out: monitoring of academic performance (with data collection and analysis regarding attendance and academic performance coefficient), development of preventive actions, which focus on the conditions that generate retention and dropout, guidelines individual and group, aiming to identify problems that produce difficulties in academic performance, coordination between the Dean of Undergraduate Studies, the Coordination of Courses and Projects/Research and Extension Programs for joint action, aiming at the development of pedagogical actions that contribute to the success of academic performance.
University E
The monitoring, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are: semester academic performance, the student assistance success rate, the student assistance retention and dropout rate and the satisfaction survey of students assisted by the programs.
University F
The first form of evaluation involves the student assistance program standard approved by resolution, which annually provides for the preparation of the plan that will include the modalities, quantities and values of the aid to be approved. The second form of evaluation is guided by the analysis of academic performance, dropout and retention of students benefiting from the program in comparison with other students at the institution.
University G
A monitoring plan is carried out annually containing the activities carried out with students, such as psychological and pedagogical support and mentoring participation. The assessment is carried out by sending a form to the beneficiary to register intervention on retention. Information is collected such as: motivation for retention and analysis of academic performance.
University H
A monitoring and evaluation survey is carried out annually via electronic questionnaire, sent to all students covered by at least one type of aid, with comprehensive and specific questions. The research makes it possible to receive feedback from students on the work carried out and planning future actions.
University I
In relation to evaluation practice, a comparison is used related to dropout, retention and course completion between students with scholarships and non-scholarship students, aiming to evaluate the impact of the programs on retention and completion of the course. However, the institution wishes to carry out other forms of monitoring for the year 2021.
University J

The assessment takes place by checking the student's academic performance. The student is required to pass at least 75% in the subjects. Once this is not achieved, we seek to act on the cause that led to this low performance.

Source: Prepared by the authors (2021)

From the collection of responses, it is understood that each institution has its own evaluation methodology, with some using more and others fewer indicators. The main evaluation mechanisms identified are presented in Graph 3.

Graph 3 – Main evaluation mechanisms used by federal universities⁴



Source: Prepared by the authors (2021)

It is observed that “academic performance” is an evaluation indicator that is present in seven of the 10 universities, “retention” in six, and “evasion” and application of “questionnaire” in five of them. Comparison between assisted and non-assisted students is present in four institutions, as well as monitoring of beneficiaries.

The literature shows that FONAPRACE and the PNAES Decree define the scope of the student assistance policy as a set of guiding principles for its actions, including the improvement of academic performance and the prevention of retention and dropout situations. Given this, Graph 3 shows the compliance of the universities' current evaluation policy with the intentions and objectives of PNAES and FONAPRACE.

Even though the PNAES Decree does not present mechanisms for evaluating student assistance policies, there are principles that guide universities in implementing the evaluation and each one carries it out in the way that best suits its context.

⁴ Follow-up of beneficiaries; Comparison between assisted and unassisted people; Questionnaire; Evasion; Retention; Academic performance.

Final remarks

The present study has limitations, such as receiving only 28 responses to the questionnaire sent to IFES. To minimize this effect, the questionnaire was resent within the collection period, but without obtaining a response. The study did not cover the Federal Institutes of Education, Science and Technology, as the delimitation was only federal universities.

The main contribution of the article involves advancing knowledge about what IFES currently evaluate in their student assistance policies. It is concluded that the evaluation mechanisms currently used by universities are close to what the literature defines as guiding principles for student assistance actions.

The sole paragraph of the PNAES Decree states that student assistance actions must contribute to improving academic performance and act preventively in situations of retention and dropout. Therefore, in general, the compliance of federal universities with the objectives of the PNAES Decree is verified.

The results indicate that each institution has a different evaluation methodology, with its own mechanisms, which reflects the heterogeneity characteristic of universities. However, there is a similarity between the indicators present in their processes, such as academic performance, retention, dropout and questionnaire application, these being the most representative.

Although the program has been in existence for more than a decade, it appears that institutions are improving their evaluation instruments, adapting to FONAPRACE recommendations and paying attention to the audits carried out by the CGU. On the other hand, there is a lack of a single methodology that can guide the evaluation process and optimize the working time of IFES, and that can guide universities that do not yet have evaluation mechanisms.

For future research, it is suggested that a single proposal be drawn up based on the indicators found in this work and its validation with the leaders of the student assistance area, control bodies or FONAPRACE.

Finally, this work contributes to a better understanding of the panorama of PNAES evaluation in federal institutions in Brazil. Above all, the research can benefit other universities interested in establishing evaluation in their units and, in the case of IFES that already evaluate, so that they can compare the implemented evaluation mechanisms with each other.

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