

THE PROPOSAL FOR A GRADUATE PROGRAM IN EDUCATION AND CAPES' EVALUATIONS: A CASE STUDY FROM THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF WEST PARANÁ

A PROPOSTA DE UM PROGRAMA DE PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO EM EDUCAÇÃO E AS AVALIAÇÕES DA CAPES: UM ESTUDO DE CASO A PARTIR DA UNIVERSIDADE ESTADUAL DO OESTE DO PARANÁ

LA PROPUESTA DE UN PROGRAMA DE POSGRADO EN EDUCACIÓN Y LAS EVALUACIONES DE LA CAPES: UN ESTUDIO DE CASO A PARTIR DE LA UNIVERSIDAD ESTATAL DEL OESTE DE PARANÁ



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ABSTRACT: This article aims to analyze the way in which CAPES (Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel) has evaluated the proposal for a Graduate Program in Education. The main objectives of this text are: to problematize the performance of PPGE / UNIOESTE described in the Final Opinions of the Area Commission; to analyze, through the recommendations of the evaluators, what are the improvements that the consultants have indicated; to present, from examples in a comparative perspective, suggestions, guidelines and strategies that are being adopted by consolidated Programs and that, respecting the idiosyncrasies, may eventually be adopted both by PPGE / UNIOESTE and by other Graduate Programs in a similar situation. The research results problematize the positive and negative comments and suggestions made by the evaluators as well as part of the trends and challenges imposed on the Graduate Programs in Education in Brazil.

KEYWORDS: Evaluation. Graduate programs. CAPES.

RESUMO: Este artigo propõe analisar como a Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior (CAPES) avalia um Programa de Pós-Graduação em Educação. Os objetivos são: problematizar o desempenho do Programa de Pós-Graduação em Educação da Universidade Estadual do Oeste do Paraná (PPGE/UNIOESTE) descritos nos Pareceres finais da Comissão de Área; analisar, através das recomendações dos avaliadores, quais são as melhorias indicadas pelos consultores; apresentar, em perspectiva comparada, sugestões, diretrizes e estratégias que são adotadas por Programas consolidados e, que, eventualmente, possam ser adotados tanto pelo PPGE/UNIOESTE, quanto por outros Programas de Pós-Graduação em situação similar. Os resultados da pesquisa problematizam os comentários positivos, negativos e as sugestões exaradas pelos avaliadores, bem como parte das tendências e dos desafios impostos aos Programas de Pós-Graduação em Educação no Brasil.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Avaliação. Programas de pós-graduação. CAPES.

RESUMEN: Este artículo propone analizar la forma en que la CAPES (Coordinación de Perfeccionamiento de Personal de Nivel Superior) ha evaluado la propuesta de un programa de posgrado en educación. Los principales objetivos de este texto son: problematizar el desempeño del PPGE/UNIOESTE descritos en los Dictámenes finales de la Comisión de Área; analizar, por medio de las recomendaciones de los evaluadores, cuáles son las mejoras que los consultores han indicado; presentar, a partir de ejemplos en perspectiva comparada sugerencias, directrices y estrategias que están siendo adoptadas por Programas consolidados y que eventualmente puedan ser adoptados tanto por el PPGE/UNIOESTE, como por otros Programas de posgrado en situación similar. Los resultados de la investigación problematizan los comentarios positivos, negativos y las sugerencias expresadas por los evaluadores, así como parte de las tendencias y desafíos impuestos a los Programas de Posgrado en Educación en Brasil.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Evaluación. Programas de posgrado. CAPES.

Introduction

This article proposes, based on the concept of Scientific Field (BOURDIEU, 2004; SCARTEZINI, 2011), to analyze the way in which CAPES (Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel) has evaluated, over the years, the proposal from the Postgraduate Program in Education at the State University of West Paraná, Campus Cascavel (PPGE/UNIOESTE). The evaluation form/Final Opinion of the Area Commission (until 2017) was composed of five items, namely: 1- Program Proposal; 2- Teaching staff; 3- Student body, Theses and Dissertations; 4- Intellectual Production; and 5- Social Insertion. However, given the spatial limitations that a text like this imposes on us, our focus falls exclusively on the opinion of the Area Commission regarding the Program Proposal, which constitutes the first item of the Opinion.

Although this item, Program Proposal, has not been assigned quantitative weight in the calculation of the final concept received by the Program, it becomes an important indicator, as it constitutes the only qualitative evaluation item and, in turn, becomes one of the fundamental pillars of any Postgraduate program, as it becomes a benchmark for the way in which *ad hoc* consultants see the proposal for the respective Postgraduate Program.

Therefore, this text has the following objectives: to problematize the performance of PPGE/UNIOESTE described in the Final Opinions of the Area Commission; analyze, through the evaluators' recommendations, what improvements the consultants have indicated; present, based on examples in a comparative perspective (CATANI; AZEVEDO, 2013), suggestions, guidelines, and strategies that are being adopted by consolidated Programs and by Programs concepts 6 and 7, that is, considered by CAPES as a standard of international excellence and which, respecting the idiosyncrasies, they can eventually be adopted both by PPGE/UNIOESTE and by other Postgraduate Programs in a similar situation, aiming to overcome some weaknesses presented by the evaluators in the Evaluation Form. The text is structured as follows: firstly, the theoretical framework and justification that underlie the present discussion are presented. Secondly, it contextualizes the methodology adopted. Subsequently, the history of PPGE/UNIOESTE is problematized, as well as data analysis is carried out (CAPES, 2010; 2013; 2017; HORTA, 2002; HORTA; MORAES, 2005; CASTANHA; GRÁCIO, 2012; RIBEIRO, 2012).

Theoretical Reference

When carrying out a comparative study between the evaluation indicators used by CAPES for Postgraduate Programs in Mathematics, referring to the triennium 2007-2009, Castanha and Grácio (2012), pointed to the lack of similar studies, in other areas of knowledge, who were concerned with making a detailed assessment of the complex methodology adopted in such assessments. In the final remarks of the text, the authors indicated the need for similar studies to be developed in other areas of Brazilian Postgraduate Studies, thus providing new perspectives on the evaluation system, more recent data and updated reflections on this topic little explored in Brazil (CASTANHA; GRÁCIO, 2012, p. 95).

Even with this caveat, such a task – seen as necessary to understand where and how the performance assessments of Postgraduate Programs in Brazil (CASTANHA; GRÁCIO, 2012) are progressing –, in the area of Education, still needs to be implemented. This is, therefore, the reason for the proposal of this text: to contribute to an area of research that has been little explored.

In this sense, a key interpretation for studies such as the one proposed here is the notion of Scientific Field:

The notion of field is there to designate this relatively autonomous space, this microcosm endowed with its own laws. If, like the macrocosm, it is subject to social laws, these are not the same. If it never escapes the impositions of the macrocosm, it has, in relation to it, a more or less accentuated partial autonomy. [...] In other words, it is necessary to escape the alternative of 'pure science', totally free from any social need, and 'slave science', subject to all political-economic demands. The scientific field is a social world and, as such, makes impositions, requests, etc., which are, however, relatively independent of the pressures of the global social world that surrounds it. In fact, external pressures, whatever their nature, are only exerted through the field, they are mediated by the logic of the field (BOURDIEU, 2004, p. 21, our translation).

What Pierre Bourdieu shows us is how much the scientific field has become a space of conflict and dispute, for authority and scientific capital. Hence Bourdieu's defense that science is not neutral. Within the scope of universities and also Postgraduate Programs, it is the holders of scientific capital who will define what is important for researchers, as well as what they should focus their efforts on (BOURDIEU, 2004). “In other words, agents make scientific facts and even the scientific field itself based on their position in this field, a position that determines their possibilities and impossibilities” (SCARTEZINI, 2011, p. 34, our translation). Therefore,

to think about evaluation, it is also necessary to understand how social actors move within this scientific field, as well as the rules of this game.

João Silvério Baia Horta – then representative of the Education Area at CAPES (1999-2001) –, when reporting the processes that mark the Postgraduate evaluation, based on CAPES data analysis, highlights, among others, three aspects to reveal that, in this process/game, there is another side of the coin, namely: a) the programs that achieved higher concepts in the CAPES evaluation are those that, in general, have had a result below average in the indicators linked to guidance. That is, they graduate fewer students; b) these same programs have a higher average time to degree than programs with lower concepts, in addition to a below-average number of graduates, taking longer to graduate; c) contrary to what is believed, a high average time to degree and a low number of students per teacher have very little impact on the concept of programs with lower grades. However, they are fatal when distributing CAPES grants (HORTA, 2002; HORTA; MORAES, 2005).

Now, the revelations above confirm that, in this game (BOURDIEU, 2004), the rules – although they are the same for everyone – lead to final results with a clear disproportion of criteria between Programs with high concepts and Programs with lower concepts. Like this,

[...] professors from high-concept programs dedicate more time to scientific production, thus ensuring the maintenance of these concepts and funding from bodies that consider the concept fundamental when distributing funds. However, they graduate fewer students, take longer to graduate them and lose more students through abandonment or dismissal. However, professors of low- concept programs desperately seek for all their students to graduate as quickly as possible, so that their programs do not lose CAPES scholarships; they achieve this, but they publish less, their programs maintain low ratings and, consequently, they become less competitive when competing for funding from other agencies (HORTA; MORAES, 2005, p. 101, our translation).

Corroborating this idea – which is expressed through competitiveness or the metaphor of the Olympics –, Renato Janine Ribeiro, former director of evaluation at CAPES and former Minister of Education, clarifies that:

Postgraduate studies and their evaluation by CAPES have always been understood from a more competitive rather than cooperative perspective. There is a metaphor that some use, that of the Olympics, in which each edition demands more from the competitors: the bar, in the jumping event, is always rising. As the same applies to scientific production, it is natural that demands constantly increase – and that a course that would be well placed in its grade, be it 3 or 7, if it is not careful to update itself, to increase its quality, to produce Furthermore, it runs the risk of losing the concept in one or two three years. Furthermore, as the evaluation is necessarily comparative, the timing of the Triennale causes a certain nervousness, whereby the areas – and within them

the programs – compare and confront each other. Therefore, the competitive element exists and is part of the system, which seeks to generate a hierarchical classification that has several positive effects: 1) it stimulates better performance, through external evaluation; 2) attributes greater autonomy in management and obtaining resources to programs that are performing better; 3) guides candidates to look for the best courses (RIBEIRO, 2012, p. 88, our translation).

Hence the need, due to the scientific field (BOURDIEU, 2004) also being a space for dispute, problematizing assessment forms in a comparative perspective (CATANI; AZEVEDO, 2013), becomes an imperative task. In the meantime, a caveat is important: this is not about publicizing internal problems of a Postgraduate Program (PPG), but, rather, encouraging Programs that are in a similar situation to the Program analyzed here to look at the files evaluation of Programs that are in higher strata and, if they wish, take them, respecting their specific specificities, as a compass for their daily practices. Otherwise, the very movement of internal disputes in this scientific field (BOURDIEU, 2004) will leave those who are not aware of how those who hold scientific capital (Programs grades 6 and 7) and the rules of the game are moving to the margins and which direction they are heading. Furthermore, it would make no sense to criticize us for publicizing the internal problems of a PPG because,

For several years now, evaluation forms – which summarize CAPES' assessment of a program and conclude by assigning it a concept (or grade) – have been available on the Internet, each one at the entrance of the respective course. We introduced some innovations. The first is the strong recommendation that they be very clear and didactic. A course, especially when it can improve (and it always can), has everything to gain from receiving clear advice and comments. Courses will trust the assessment results more if they see that the forms were very objective and straightforward. And students, who are the main beneficiaries of the evaluation, will be able to better choose the course in which they wish to enroll – or demand the necessary improvements from the course they are in. The second important change was the inclusion, on the page of each new course, of the respective recommendation form. The “evaluation form” is completed in the Triennial Assessment and examines a course in operation. The “recommendation form” expresses the approval, or not, of a new course proposal (RIBEIRO, 2012, p. 09, emphasis added, our translation).

It was verified, therefore, that the reality illustrated above, leads to the understanding that the current evaluation model has led Postgraduate Programs to a true field of dispute and conflicts for spaces and scientific capital that is increasingly necessary to investigate.

Research, such as the one proposed here, justifies its execution in view of the lack of studies of this nature both within the scope of the PPGE and other Programs in the area of Education. It is, therefore, a path that still needs to be explored, given its reflective potential on

the challenges posed by the area, the potential of PPGE/UNIOESTE, as well as the aspects that require special attention with a view to adopting improvement policies (CASTANHA; GRÁCIO, 2012). The data presented here will allow both PPGE/UNIOESTE and other Postgraduate Programs, based on their idiosyncrasies, to evaluate their respective daily practices, in addition to reflecting on future actions. Added to this is the fact that this research has the potential to allow those interested in the topic an opportunity to learn about the intricacies of assessment beyond their own PPGE. In summary, offering a better understanding of the methodologies adopted by CAPES evaluations (RIBEIRO, 2012) and, consequently, the positive impact that this can generate on the Programs justifies the execution of this research.

Therefore, it is on this scenario that the research is built, as we consider that the systematization of these data, followed by a reflective analysis, brings contributions to those interested in understanding how the process of evaluating programs in the area of education by CAPES takes place.

Methodology

To understand the indicators used by CAPES in the evaluation of PPGE/UNIOESTE, this research triangulates Content Analysis and descriptive case study (YIN, 2001; GOODE; HATT, 1979). It is, therefore, research that combines the use of different methodologies. In this regard, according to Mirian Goldenberg (2002, p. 63, our translation), “the combination of different methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon, known as triangulation, aims to cover the maximum breadth in the description, explanation and understanding of the object of study”.

Martin Bauer (2002, p. 192, our translation), when discussing the potential of the Content Analysis methodology, states that:

[...] through the reconstruction of representations, content analysts infer the expressions of contexts, and the appeal through these contexts. If we focus on the source, the text is a means of expression. Source and audience are the context and focus of inference. A text corpus is the representation and expression of a writing community. [...] CA allows us to reconstruct indicators and worldviews, values, attitudes, opinions, prejudices and stereotypes and compare them between communities. In other words, CA is public opinion research with other means.

The case study, as defined by Goode and Hatt (1979, p. 421-422, our translation), is not a specific research technique. But rather, “a means of organizing social data while preserving

the unitary character of the social object studied”. Therefore, the case study in this article is configured as a research strategy that aims to bring to the fore elements of the evaluation process of a specific Postgraduate Program, but which, we can safely say, also apply to others.

According to Yin (2001, p. 39), “the case study is an empirical investigation that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and in its real-life context”.

Thus, through the case study, we gathered data about a PPG to, from there, reflect on broader issues.

In this sense, the case study, like the experiment, does not represent a sampling, and the researcher's objective is to expand and generalize theories (analytical generalization) and not to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalization). Or, as three notable social scientists describe in their single case study, the objective is to make a generalizing and not a particularizing analysis (YIN, 2001, p. 29, our translation).

In this sense, the case study perspective becomes useful as it allows us to broaden the “microscope lens” to observe PPGE's performance in the face of CAPES evaluations, while it also allows us to relate to similar situations experienced by other Programs of Postgraduate Studies in Brazil.

In summary, the research was developed in two stages: firstly, the PPGE evaluation forms were collected, prepared by consultants appointed by the education area. The 2010 evaluation forms, which cover the three-year period from 2007 to 2009; the 2013 evaluation form, which covers the three-year period from 2010 to 2012 and; the 2017 evaluation form, which covers the four-year period from 2013 to 2016. This document records “the weight of each item in addition to the description of how the evaluation was carried out, presenting in detail what was analyzed (CAPES, 2017, p. 03).

Secondly, a Content Analysis (BAUER, 2002) of such sheets was carried out, together with the Area Document and related literature.

[...] knowing the area document (each area has its own document and guidelines) is the first and fundamental task for those who intend to propose a new master's and/or doctorate course, and essential for teachers who intend to work and become remain accredited in order to qualify their PPG. Knowing the demands, requirements, differences and expectations of evaluators becomes vital (RÔÇAS; ANJOS; PEREIRA, 2017, p. 48, our translation).

With this information, the data was crossed to, in a comparative perspective, analyze the different variants presented in such documents, in order to present the trends in the area, the challenges and the aspects to be overcome by the PPGE.

It is worth mentioning that the Program Proposal item is the first item of the Evaluation Form and is divided into four topics, as we will see below. In the first topic, entitled “Coherence, consistency, scope, and updating of areas of concentration, lines of research, ongoing projects and curricular proposal” qualitatively, among other elements, the evaluators assess whether there is coherence between the lines of research, the area concentration of the program and the projects developed; whether the course syllabuses and bibliographies are up to date; whether the program encourages its faculty to improve through postdoctoral studies, research internships, etc.; if there is encouragement from the program so that its students can participate in events, seminars, among others. It is worth noting that this item corresponds to 50% (fifty percent) of the weight of the evaluation of this item (CAPES, 2017e).

Representing 30% (thirty percent) of the weight of the evaluation, there is the item “Program Planning with a view to its future development, considering the international challenges of the Area in the production of knowledge, its purposes of improving training, goals regarding the social and academic insertion of its graduates”. In this item, it is verified to what extent the Program demonstrates its commitment to local, national and international needs; what are the strategies listed to face future challenges; if the course bibliography contains foreign literature, participation of foreign teachers, as well as subject offerings in another language; whether there is a policy for accreditation and re-accreditation of teachers; whether teachers are encouraged to continue training, be it in the form of participation in events, undertaking a post-doctorate, research internship abroad and whether there is a policy for monitoring graduates (CAPES, 2017e).

In the item “Infrastructure for teaching, research and university administration”, which, in turn, occupies 10% (ten percent) of the evaluation, where two items are analyzed:

a) whether there is adequate infrastructure (classrooms, library, laboratories, etc.) for teaching and research;

b) infrastructure for administering the Program (CAPES, 2017e).

Finally, also corresponding to 10% of the weight of the evaluation, the item “Clear definition of the Program's proposal as Academic, aimed at the development of research and training of researchers and teachers for higher education”. This topic serves to check three aspects: a) whether the Program suits what is expected from an Academic Program; b) if there are research groups that support the Program and; c) if there are agreements and partnerships with other institutions (national and international), aiming to carry out research and exchanges (CAPES, 2017e).

Considering that these four questions are evaluated with instruments of a qualitative nature, they receive the following possible concepts: Very Good; Good; Regular, Weak or Insufficient.

PPGE/UNIOESTE proposal and CAPES evaluations

The Postgraduate Program in Education at Unioeste was created in 2006. However, activities effectively began in 2007. Its focus area was Society, State, and Education until the beginning of 2019, when was changed to Education.

Initially, the Program had just one line of research: Education, Social Policies and the State. Then, after the first three-year evaluation, (2010) 02 (two) more lines were created: History of Education; Teacher Training and Teaching and Learning Processes. Finally, in 2013, the line of research in Science and Mathematics Teaching was created.

In this way, it now has 04 (four) lines of research, namely: a) Education, Social Policies and State; b) History of Education; c) Teacher Training and Teaching and Learning Processes; and d) Teaching Science and Mathematics. Subsequently, it was reduced to 3 (three) lines due to the extinction of the Science and Mathematics Teaching line.

The members of the extinct line, for some time now, had been working hard on consolidating a new Postgraduate Program in Education, but with an identity focused on teaching Science and Mathematics. The result of this effort was the simultaneous approval, in 2017, of the master's and doctorate in Science Education and Mathematics Education. It is worth noting that this was something rare for the first submission of a new course, as the arduous process is obtaining approval for the master's degree to operate and, after its due consolidation, applying for authorization for a doctorate.

With the approval of the Master's and Doctorate in Science Education and Mathematics Education, the majority of teachers who were part of the research line in Science and Mathematics Teaching at PPGE/UNIOESTE, as permanent teachers, due to being permanent teachers in the other course, they chose to remain as collaborating professors at PPGE/UNIOESTE, until the ongoing guidance was completed, which evidently led to the extinction of the Science and Mathematics Teaching line of research.

As we said above, the Program Proposal is the only item in the CAPES evaluation form that is not given weight, although it is subject to evaluation. According to the evaluation form (CAPES, 2010), this item is made up of three evaluation aspects, which stand out: a) the

coherence and updating of the areas of concentration, lines of research, research projects and the curricular proposal; b) future planning, internationalization actions and monitoring of graduates; c) infrastructure for the development of teaching, research and extension.

In the case of PPGE/UNIOESTE, in its first evaluation (CAPES, 2010), some items were seen as positive by the evaluators, including: the curricular structure; the themes of the dissertations; updating bibliographies and keeping in line with the teaching staff; the existence of projects to face future challenges; the existence of a teacher accreditation and re-accreditation policy; support from the institution for teaching qualifications (post-doctorate and participation in events); and adequate infrastructure.

However, at the time it was noted (CAPES, 2010) that the following aspects deserved attention from the Program, in order to make efforts to improve: inconsistency of some research projects; lack of organicity in research lines; subjects that were offered that involved all teachers and the need for investment aimed at expanding the bibliographic collection.

In short, this was the opinion of the first evaluation (CAPES, 2010) regarding the PPGE Proposal. Let's now see how the performance in the second assessment was performed, as well as how it differs from the first.

To a large extent, in the second evaluation (CAPES, 2013), most of the positive aspects identified in the first evaluation (2010) were maintained, therefore, there were no substantial changes. Although the evaluators recognized that, at that time (2010 to 2012), it was already possible to observe an organicity between the lines of research and the research projects. Something that, in the evaluation of the first three years (2007 to 2009), was the subject of recommended attention. The themes of the dissertations and the program's approach to basic education were also praised by the evaluators.

However, the fact that, in the Program Proposal, projects linked to the newly created line of research “Science and Mathematics Teaching” were not highlighted was something that weighed unfavorably. In this context, the lack of information about a policy for monitoring graduates was added as an item that deserved attention from the Program.

In the 2017 evaluation, the consultants highlighted that the lines of research and ongoing projects were comprehensive. On the other hand, they highlighted: “however, not very consistent and articulated, given the diversity of objectives, approaches and themes of the projects. Therefore, the relationship between projects and the lines of research in which they are inserted is not very consistent” (CAPES, 2017a, p. 4, our translation).

It was in this evaluation that a new element appeared, which until then had not been the subject of attention from the Program, quite the contrary, in 2010, it had even been the subject of praise, namely: bibliographies of the disciplines. If in 2010, in this regard, it was noted that the bibliography, at the time, was current and in line with the teaching staff, in 2017 it was highlighted that both the bibliographies of mandatory subjects and optional subjects, “although they contain classics and are in line with the theoretical-methodological perspectives of teachers, do not contribute to new debates in the area, that is, they are not up to date” (CAPES, 2017, p. 4, our translation).

Regarding the adherence of research projects to the lines of research, the evaluators warned about the lack of consistency and articulation between them. In this sense, it is assumed that the criticism is of the professors' projects, considering that, while this criticism is carried out, the opinion emphasizes that the themes of the dissertations, in turn, were appropriate to the lines of research. In this context, according to the evaluators, it is the diversity of objectives, approaches and themes of the projects that make them less consistent and articulated (CAPES, 2017a).

Strategies for facing the challenges highlighted by CAPES

In an attempt to bring some alternatives to face the challenges imposed by the CAPES assessment, this research verified how some already consolidated Programs are articulated in those points that for the PPGE still constitute a challenge.

Regarding the articulation between lines of research, research projects and research groups, it is clear that the PPGE is going against the grain of programs of international excellence. While at Unioeste there is a considerable number of research groups, in the Postgraduate Program in Education at the University of Vale do Rio dos Sinos (UNISINOS), for example (concept 7), there are lines of research that are structured, only based on of (02) two research groups. It is clear, therefore, that CAPES has not seen the mere increase in research groups as something positive. But, before that, it has valued research groups that have: a) research networks with other institutions, preferably foreign ones; b) that both students and alumni participate in group activities; c) that is interinstitutionally structured (CAPES, 2017b).

It was in this context that the evaluators (CAPES, 2017b) praised the UNISINOS PPGE proposal, which has interinstitutionality as the main characteristic of the Interinstitutional Research Group on Teaching, Pedagogy and Differences, for example. This group, formed in

2015, has as partner institutions: Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, University of Santa Cruz do Sul, Federal University of Pampa, Federal University of Pelotas, National University of La Patagonia Austral and University of Porto.

At the Federal University of Paraná, the cooperation network was also recognized in the evaluation.

The Project “Studies on Interculturality at the University” approved and financed by Notice 01/2014 CAPES and SECADI/MEC is worth highlighting, which involves cooperation in research and academic mobility of doctoral students from universities: UFPR (postgraduate programs in Education, in Sociology and Psychology); UEM (Master’s in Sociology); Tiradentes University; Texas University _ at Austin (USA); Universitat Autònoma Metropolitana (Mexico); Université de Yaoundé I (Cameroon). It is also worth highlighting the CAPES/FORTALECIMENTO MERCOSUR PROGRAM – UFPR/UTALCA (Chile), which establishes a collaborative relationship that has lasted 6 years with postgraduate programs in countries in the Southern Cone in the development of research and exchange of experiences between teachers and students (CAPES, 2017c, p. 7, our translation).

At the Federal University of Santa Catarina, a similar experience was recognized in the evaluation.

The Program Proposal is presented in a manner appropriate to the purposes of an academic program, highlighting the existence of research groups and partnership initiatives to carry out agreements, research and integration of teachers and researchers from different institutions, such as, the “Interinstitutional project with the Federal University of Minas Gerais, in the project: Modern, Modernity and Modernization: education in Brazil’s projects – 19th and 10th centuries”, the project “Human development and learning in the first years of schooling in Latin American countries – Brazil, Cuba and Mexico” and the project “History Teaching: The study of teaching practices using judicial documents, printed periodicals and oral narratives”, with the participation of several Brazilian and foreign universities (CAPES, 2017d, p. 2, our translation).

Therefore, the idea of research groups “closed in on themselves”, and with actions limited to the scope of the home institution itself, is something that, currently, needs to be overcome. It is not enough to just include undergraduate and graduate students in group activities. We need to go further. At the moment, the challenge that arises is to work with network research, articulating it through interinstitutional actions.

In this sense, given the praise from the CAPES evaluators, it is worth reading the PPGE evaluation forms from UNISINOS (CAPES, 2017b) and the Federal University of Paraná

(UFPR) (CAPES, 2017c), taking into account the way in which lines of research, research projects, etc. are organized.

In the case of PPGE/UNIOESTE, regarding the challenge of bibliographies that were considered outdated, as they did not contribute to new debates in the area, an alternative would be to think about collegial actions in order to suggest that each teacher could propose a syllabus that contained a bibliography that met certain criteria, such as: classics in the field, authors with updated productions in recent years, dossiers from specialized magazines and that this literature was transmitted in both Portuguese and foreign languages. In this way, the update indicated by CAPES would be present.

Although the systematic accreditation and re-accreditation of teachers has not been a problem for PPGE/UNIOESTE, knowing the experience of the CPA (Permanent Evaluation Committee) of the PPGE at UFPR is beneficial, considering that, according to the reviewers, with regard to the PPGE /UFPR:

The Proposal presented a policy for accreditation and re-accreditation of teachers, with a permanent evaluation committee (CPA) that monitors teaching and student production annually, with well-defined criteria for new accreditations, possible de-accreditations and offering vacancies in selection processes. The regular work of the CPA has ensured the smooth and mature functioning of the teaching accreditation and de-accreditation processes. Based on the work of the CPA, the removal of professors for internships and post-doctoral studies at other institutions is also encouraged. During the four-year period, PPGE expanded its international insertion – in 2016, around 30% of permanent faculty members participated in activities in collaboration with institutions from other countries – advancing in terms of contact with groups and research centers from other countries, which has contributed to the quality of the subjects offered and the research carried out (CAPES, 2017c, p. 2, our translation).

Monitoring graduates is a challenge that affects most programs in the country. However, an initial action could be to monitor, systematize and encourage the bibliographic production not only of students, but also of graduates, as well as monitoring their professional insertion, in order to verify the impact of *stricto sensu training* on their professional career, in addition to promote periodic alumni events with enrolled students, with the aim of allowing an effective exchange of experiences.

The Programs are constantly asked for the strategies adopted to face future challenges. In this sense, two important actions come from the Federal University of Santa Catarina (CAPES, 2017d) that can be replicated, namely: hiring a visiting professor to work in the

Program; financing the translation and review of articles with a view to publication in journals in a foreign language.

Final remarks

Our focus was on the positive and negative comments, as well as the respective suggestions made by the evaluators. With this information, it was possible to cross-reference the data to, in a comparative perspective, analyze the different variants presented in such documents, in order to present the trends, challenges and aspects to be overcome by PPGE/UNIOESTE.

This work, in addition to the analyzes carried out on a specific and specific basis with the PPGE at UNIOESTE, made it possible to affirm that postgraduate studies in Brazil, although it does have reputable programs that are at the forefront of cutting-edge research in different areas of knowledge, still presents difficulties and lack of programs that seek to adapt to the regulatory standards established by CAPES.

Evidence of this is the volatility of its normative/evaluative precepts for programs and their adaptation capabilities. An example of this is: if until recently the incentive was for programs to expand, as much as possible, their interrelations with other programs at their own institutions, involving undergraduate and postgraduate students in group activities, today, this practice is evaluated as if these programs were “closed in on themselves”, therefore, they will need to expand their communication network with other institutions and, to achieve greater appreciation, internationalization is the desired goal.

Evidently, this is something positive to be thought about, articulated and worked on by programs aiming at their improvement, however, geographically peripheral institutions, that is, those that are further away from large centers, and with few resources – it is worth highlighting that it is understood, that the scarce resources mentioned here are not just difficulties faced by peripheral institutions – they tend to encounter greater difficulties in effectively adapting to this demand.

What is positive about this work is that this research approach, comparative research, provided the opportunity to learn about programs that already have expertise in relation to the evaluative markers that CAPES has valued and used, which can, and is expected with this article, is that it can be considered not only by the coordination, but by the entire PPGE/UNIOESTE board, as a reason for reflection that involves the successful experiences of

other institutions, some highlighted here, to the adjustments of their activities, aiming at much more than their score by CAPES, and yes, a qualitative improvement in the work they offer in the postgraduate scenario. Evidently, it is hoped that these reflections can also provide other interested parties with a better understanding of how the process of evaluating programs in the area of education by CAPES takes place.

What is also expected at the end of this work is that, in fact, the metaphor of the Olympics, cited in the text and commented by one of the former CAPES evaluation directors, will no longer be the keynote of postgraduate programs in our country, and, mainly, its evaluation mechanism. May we move forward, each with our own potential and limitations, but may we do so in a cooperative way, both in our institutional programs and in the important and necessary interrelationship with other institutions that produce systematized knowledge.

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