



THE NATIONAL ASSESSMENT SYSTEM OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

O SISTEMA DE AVALIAÇÃO NACIONAL SUPERIOR E A AVALIAÇÃO FORMATIVA

EL SISTEMA NACIONAL DE EVALUACIÓN DE LA EDUCACIÓN SUPERIOR Y LA EVALUACIÓN FORMATIVA

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ABSTRACT: This study is about the understanding of how the Higher Education Assessment System influences formative assessment in teacher training. For this purpose, a bibliographic study and document analysis of reports on the Degree in Pedagogy with concept 5 in the National Student Performance Examination (2017) was carried out. Four pedagogy courses were selected, based on the following criteria: score 5, state of São Paulo, number of students, administrative category, teaching modalities, and academic organization. It was verified, by the students' perception, that the test is important in the evaluation of the performance of the course and can help in the improvement of the quality of the institutions. From a formative evaluation perspective, it was possible to understand that the Evaluation System acts as an incentive for formative evaluation, since it establishes evaluation criteria that must be followed and that are based on the quality of the training offered.

KEYWORDS: Formative Assessment. College education. Teacher education. National Rating System.

RESUMO: Este estudo trata de compreender até que ponto o Sistema de Avaliação da Educação Superior influencia a avaliação formativa na formação docente. Para tal finalidade, realizou-se um estudo bibliográfico e de análise documental de relatórios sobre cursos de Licenciatura em Pedagogia com conceito 5 no Exame Nacional de Desempenho do Estudante (2017). Foram selecionados quatro cursos de pedagogia, com base nos seguintes critérios: conceito 5, estado de São Paulo, número de alunos matriculados, categoria administrativa, modalidades de ensino e organização acadêmica. Verificou-se, pela percepção dos estudantes, que a prova é importante na avaliação do desempenho do curso, e pode auxiliar na melhoria da qualidade das instituições. Numa perspectiva de avaliação formativa, foi possível compreender que o Sistema de Avaliação atua como um incentivo à avaliação formativa na formação docente, visto que estabelece critérios de avaliação que devem ser seguidos e que são baseados na qualidade da formação ofertada.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Avaliação Formativa. Educação Superior. Formação Docente. SINAES.

RESUMEN: Este estudio tiene como objetivo comprender en qué medida el Sistema de Evaluación de la Educación Superior influye en la evaluación formativa en la formación docente. Para ello, se realizó un estudio bibliográfico y análisis documental de informes de cursos de Licenciatura en Pedagogía con calificación 5 en el Examen Nacional de Desempeño Estudiantil (2017). Se seleccionaron cuatro cursos de pedagogía con base en los siguientes criterios: grado 5, estado de São Paulo, número de alumnos matriculados, categoría administrativa, modalidades de enseñanza y organización académica. Se comprobó, por la percepción de los estudiantes, que la prueba es importante en la evaluación del desempeño del curso, y puede ayudar en la mejora de la calidad de las instituciones. Desde la perspectiva de la evaluación formativa, se pudo entender que el Sistema de Evaluación actúa como incentivo a la evaluación formativa en la formación docente, ya que establece criterios de evaluación que deben seguirse y que se basan en la calidad de la formación ofrecida.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Evaluación formativa. Educación universitaria. Formación de Profesores. Sistema Nacional de Calificación.

Introduction

In Brazil, institutional and course evaluation are carried out by the Brazilian government, based on the Higher Education Evaluation System (SINAES), which evaluates Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and in-person and distance undergraduate courses. Undergraduate courses undergo the National Student Performance Examination (ENADE), which assesses students' knowledge, skills and content, with the results used to assess the quality of courses and assist decisions.

In this sense, in order to analyze the contribution of SINAES to excellence in the quality of higher education, it was proposed, for this study, to verify whether this government system constitutes an incentive to the practice of formative assessment in teacher training.

It is important to highlight that different types of assessments occur in the academic environment, such as diagnostic, summative and formative, each of which has its own objectives. The focus of this research is on formative assessment, which has been an increasingly discussed topic among educators in recent years, as it is considered an important part of the training process.

Formative assessment proposes a continuous process, which aims to monitor students' development and provide feedback so that they can improve their skills and knowledge. According to SINAES, "formative assessment is a continuous process that aims to improve the quality of teaching and learning, while contributing to the development of students' skills and abilities" (BRASIL, 2004, p. 2, our translation).

Therefore, this research's main objective is to understand the extent to which SINAES influences formative assessment in teacher training through the perception of students completing the Degree in Pedagogy course from institutions evaluated with a grade of 5. As specific objectives, the present work sought: characterize the type of evaluation applied by SINAES and its implications; identify the characteristics of formative assessment; identify students' perception regarding the ENADE test. To this end, in this study an analysis was carried out of Pedagogy course reports from institutions located in the state of São Paulo that obtained grade 5 in ENADE.

The reflections presented here are relevant to the Brazilian educational context, as they contribute to the improvement of teacher training by providing information about what students consider important for the development of their teaching skills and competencies.

Next, the theoretical aspects of the National Higher Education Assessment System (SINAES), Formative Assessment, research methodology, results and discussion will be discussed.

THE SINAES

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The National Higher Education Assessment System (SINAES) consists of a quality assessment system for Higher Education in Brazil, created by Law no. 10,861, of April 14, 2004, which "seeks to ensure, among other things, the integration of internal and external, particular and global, summative and formative, quantitative and qualitative dimensions and the various objects and objectives of the assessment" (BRASIL, 2004, p. 61, our translation).

SINAES was created through a combination of regulation and educational evaluation and establishes an integrated evaluation of institutions, courses and student performance. Institutional assessment began to be understood not as an end in itself, but as part of a set of public policies in the field of higher education, which aim to expand the system, democratizing access so that qualifications are part of the process of a more comprehensive rethinking broad scope of higher education in the development project of the Brazilian nation.

In this direction, SINAES's main objective is to improve the quality of Higher Education in Brazil. To achieve this, the System uses several evaluation tools, such as questionnaires, interviews, document and data analysis. These tools are used to evaluate the quality of courses, the infrastructure of institutions, the quality of teachers and the quality of education offered. Furthermore, SINAES is also responsible for establishing quality criteria for Higher Education, as well as monitoring the performance of educational institutions and the courses offered. This System includes the Student Performance Exam - ENADE, an assessment carried out to measure the performance of students about to complete an undergraduate course in terms of the program contents planned for each training area.

ENADE is administered annually by the Ministry of Education and is mandatory for students who are studying their final year of undergraduate, technologist and bachelor's degrees. The grade obtained in the exam is used by the Ministry of Education to evaluate the quality of the courses offered by Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The exam consists of multiple-choice questions and essay questions. In addition, the exam also includes an assessment of students' performance in relation to the skills and competencies required to exercise the profession.

The results obtained through ENADE are taken into account in the composition of quality indices relating to courses and institutions, such as the Preliminary Course Concept (CPC) and the General Course Index (IGC). In the case of unsatisfactory student performance, there needs to be a supervision process in which HEIs need to adopt measures to remedy the deficiencies identified during the evaluation (BRASIL, 2014).

Students performance in ENADE is relevant so that teachers and HEIs can assess students' level of knowledge and, thus, improve the teaching-learning process. On this premise, formative assessment and ENADE are complementary, as formative assessment aims to monitor students' performance during the course, while ENADE is used to assess student performance at the end of the course.

ENADE is an important tool for students to evaluate their performance and identify areas for improvement. For Dias Sobrinho (2010, p. 213, our translation), "ENADE proposes itself as a dynamic assessment, incorporating the notion of change and development of the student in their educational path". Furthermore, assessment also allows HEIs and teachers to assess students' level of knowledge and thus improve teaching and learning.

Dynamic assessment fits into the design of formative assessment, as it constitutes a teaching-learning relationship beyond monitoring and controlling the content taught. It goes beyond *status* verification and establishes itself as a questioning of learning and teaching with the aim of understanding the student's development, overcoming difficulties and giving meaning to the teaching process (DIAS SOBRINHO, 2010).

The next section will address aspects of formative assessment in order to clarify more about the purpose of this study: to verify whether SINAES constitutes an incentive to practice formative assessment in teacher training.

Formative Assessment in higher education

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The term evaluation tends to appear in different contexts, full of meanings. A meaning generally associated with the term refers to a traditional format of assessment in educational institutions. In general, the role of school assessment, in this context, was to test students' performance in activities that had the sole objective of complying with school protocol. Scores or concepts were assigned to this performance according to the students' responses (SANTOS; KROEFF, 2018).

In opposition to this concept, Perrenoud (1999b) praises formative assessment in the educational context and defines it as a continuous process of collecting data on student

performance, with the aim of providing feedback to help them improve their qualifications. Thus, formative assessment can be carried out informally, through conversations and observations, or more formally, through tests or other assessment instruments.

Santos and Kroeff (2018) state that these evaluation perspectives include monitoring carried out by the teacher, so that the needs of students are met. This proposal is considered by scholars in the field (PERRENOUD, 1999a; HADJI, 2001; FERNANDES, 2021) as a viable alternative, as opposed to the more traditional form of assessment, since traditional tests are focused on reproducing the learned content, not allowing its results to provide feedback to teachers' classes, nor to the learning achieved by students.

The purposes established by teachers and students are taken into account to guarantee the regulation of learning. Generally, formative assessment is conducted during the course of a class or program of study.

Perrenoud (1999b, p.20) states that formative assessment enables the monitoring of learning by both the student and the teacher and, also, the adjustment of strategies for pedagogical work so that students have the opportunity to develop responsibility for their learning. Thus, the information arising from the training stage allows the teacher to review strategies and planning to boost the class's learning process.

According to Libâneo (1994) and Ferreira (2010), formative assessment is a crucial pedagogical tool, as it places students as protagonists in the learning process, encouraging active participation and cooperation. This approach requires teachers to adopt the role of mediators and to use different strategies to achieve goals for effective learning.

Therefore, formative assessment requires an environment of trust and dialogue to encourage student development. For Fernandes (2021), it must be integrated into teaching and has the advantage of using results to adjust learning, as grades do not fully indicate the level of knowledge. The results must inform the educational action and the test, as an instrument, assumes an informative role, from the moment it highlights learning difficulties. In this way, the result is linked to the assessment instruments and the test can be one of these instruments, as long as it is informative and not exclusive. What will actually define it as formative is the reflection that the information provided by the instrument encourages, bringing new actions that solidify the development of teaching and learning.

Formative assessment is considered, by Hadji (2001), both informative and normative, as it allows adjustments in the actions of the teacher and student to obtain better results. Feedback plays a crucial role in this process, providing ongoing information to guide students

toward their goals and improvements. Borges *et al.* (2014) highlight that feedback is a process in which both the teacher and the student adapt and create an environment for discussion and improvement.

For Fernandes (2021), the main purpose of formative assessment is to promote deeper and more meaningful learning. He also emphasizes that formative assessment is not about classifying students, but about collecting information about everyday learning. Formative assessment encompasses self-assessment and, according to Hadji (2001), is a process of analyzing and evaluating one's own performance, which can be influenced by several factors. To self-assess, students need to access multiple sources of feedback, analyze them to identify strengths and weaknesses, and use this information to improve their performance.

Self-assessment allows the student to express their effort in carrying out the activities and understand what their difficulties were, and this information is only possible through a formative evaluation process (FERREIRA, 2018). Therefore, dialogue between students and teachers about progression is fundamental to improving academic performance, allowing us to understand what works, identify areas of difficulty and adapt teaching (FERNANDES, 2021).

Formative assessment aims to improve the teaching-learning process, focusing on the development of skills and competencies, in addition to detecting learning problems early (FERNANDES, 2021). Changes in the profile of students and the influence of technologies demand innovative assessment approaches and practices (VILLAS BOAS, 2006) and, on the other hand, the classificatory approach can result in an increase in failures, in addition to creating an environment of competition and pressure (SILVA; MENDES, 2017).

Endorsing this same position, Chueiri (2008, p. 52) states that "in the category of evaluator, the teacher interprets and attributes definitions to the evaluation, producing knowledge about the evaluation and about his role as an evaluator, based on his own conceptions, experiences and knowledge".

The objective of formative assessment, as Hadji (1994, p. 63, our translation) highlights, is: "to contribute to improving ongoing learning, informing the teacher about the conditions under which this learning is taking place, and instructing the learner about their own journey, its successes and its difficulties".

In this sense, the author also argues that assessment can be used as a teaching tool to help students understand and improve their knowledge (HADJI, 1994). Formative assessment, therefore, is a strategy to help teachers improve the teaching-learning process, providing information about student performance and allowing teachers to adjust teaching according to

students' needs. The teacher needs to have a careful and comprehensive look to evaluate each student's progress, always encouraging them to move forward.

Perrenoud (1999a) defines continuous assessment in higher education as a systematic process of monitoring student development throughout their academic trajectory, and points out that methodological procedures involve the ability to select, organize and interpret information to reach conclusions. They are essential for students to learn how to use research methods and solve problems. Methodological procedures also help with the fairness and impartiality of assessment, and teachers must seek new techniques to promote learning. Hadji (2001) highlights that assessment can guide students in identifying and overcoming difficulties, contributing to their learning progress.

Assessment, for improved learning, must be planned and executed collaboratively in the educational system (SOUZA *et al.*, 2016). Pimentel, Ribeiro and Silva (2012) emphasize that assessment challenges students to overcome difficulties, values their achievements and prepares them for greater flights.

In Higher Education, the teacher acts as a learning mediator, using various assessment techniques. The choice of assessment instruments must be guided by learning objectives (MASETTO, 2003). Formative assessment must accompany the learning process, offering feedback for analysis, understanding and improvement (CAMARGO; MENDES, 2013). In short, assessment and teaching methodology are intrinsically linked and must be cohesive to promote effective learning. Fernandes (2021, p. 6, our translation), adds that "it is important to understand that formative assessment, whose purpose is to help students and teachers learn and teach better, respectively, is an eminently pedagogical process."

Methodology

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The methodology used in this research was documentary and bibliographical with a narrative nature, with a qualitative approach. According to Cervo, Bervian and Silva (2007), this approach aims to explain a problem based on theoretical references published in various sources. Qualitative research focuses on people's beliefs, perceptions and values. Tuzzo and Braga (2016) emphasize that qualitative research offers several investigative possibilities to understand the everyday and problematic lives of individuals.

The qualitative method used in the research is inductive, differing from the approach of testing hypotheses. Several documents, such as: Student Questionnaire, Synthesis Reports and

ENADE Test were analyzed to understand the practice of formative assessment in teacher training, bearing in mind that the comprehensive and interpretative tradition involves detailed descriptions, literal quotations and excerpts from documents and analysis data, which proposes solutions to investigative questions, without interventions, highlighting aspects relevant to this study. The analysis carried out was based on official documents and questions from the ENADE 2017 questionnaire for the Pedagogy course, and the choice of pedagogy courses took into account the following criteria: concept 5, state of São Paulo, number of students enrolled, administrative category, teaching modalities and academic organization

The documentary research focused on the files of INEP (Ministry of Education), based on the results of ENADE 2017. The analysis focused on the questions of the Student Questionnaire from institutions with grade 5 in the Pedagogy course in 2017, exploring how SINAES can encourage formative assessment for teacher training.

Questions 29, 33, 34, 36, 40 and 55 were selected from the student questionnaire, which cover training aspects, reflective and critical skills, analysis skills, as well as didactics and teaching, as transcribed below from the INEP website ³:

Question 29 - The teaching methodologies used in the course challenged you to deepen your knowledge and develop reflective and critical skills.

Question 33 - The course made it possible to increase your ability to reflect and argue.

Question 34 - The course promoted the development of your ability to think critically, analyze and reflect on solutions to society's problems.

Question 36 - The course contributed to the development of your ability to learn and update yourself permanently.

Question 40 - Opportunities were offered for students to overcome difficulties related to the training process.

Question 55 - The learning assessments carried out during the course were compatible with the content or themes worked on by the teachers.

The analysis of each question highlights assessment elements, such as: efficient communication, teaching methodology, learning design and didactics.

Results and discussion

Considering questions 29, 33, 34, 36, 40 and 55 chosen for this study, the figure below shows the perceptions of the graduates regarding the totality of answers, agreeing with the specific component that the student considers to be formative in relation to the that they studied.

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³Student questionnaire available at: https://www.gov.br/inep/pt-br/areas-de-atuacao/avaliacao-e-exames-educacionais/enade/questionario-do-estudante. Accessed on: 16 Nov. 2023.

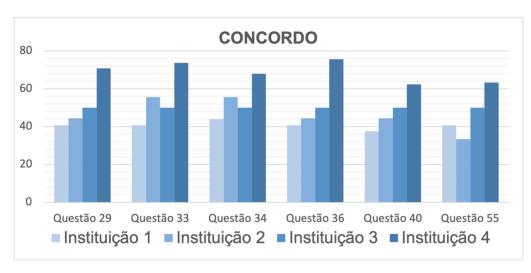


Figure 1 – Total responses agreeing with the specific component⁴

Source: Prepared by the authors

In the analysis of Figure 1, it appears that the active methodology, which involves a formative assessment, challenges and stimulates students, promoting logical reasoning and problem solving. Regarding question 29, the majority of students were neutral. The institution is responsible for creating a space for debate and reflection on assessment, enabling students and teachers to improve their concepts. The formative assessment resulting from the application of active methodology encourages reflective, critical thinking and knowledge acquisition.

According to Berbel (2011), the active methodology arouses curiosity, inserting students into theorization. The active methodology provides essential feedback for formative assessment and learning development. Tavares (2008) emphasizes that formative assessment improves reflection and argumentation skills. Perrenoud (1999a) adds that formative assessment develops students' ability to reflect and argue. Lopes (2020) also highlights that formative assessment and the ability to reflect and argue are crucial for academic success.

In the context of the answers, formative assessment aims at the personal development of students: it provides means to improve their achievements (PERRENOUD, 1999b). Therefore, formative assessment should be used to guide the student in their learning process and contribute to their personal development.

In this question 29, 11.1% of students disagreed with the contribution of the course to the development of the mentioned capabilities. In question 36, 50% of students from Institution 3 agreed that the course helped in developing the ability to learn and update themselves.

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⁴ Institution 1; Institution 2; Institution 3; Institution 4.

Fernandes (2021) highlights the importance of this development, fundamental to maintaining itself in today's world.

Regarding question 40, the percentages of HEIs varied, as they agreed that the institutions offered opportunities to overcome difficulties, and this variation allows us to infer the use of formative assessment, because, according to Perrenoud (1999b), formative assessment identifies and overcomes difficulties, making -learning opportunities.

In question 55, different percentages agreed that the assessments were compatible with content. According to Fernandes (2021, p. 126, our translation), "coherence is fundamental for evaluation, as it is essential to ensure that the evaluation criteria are applied in a consistent and objective manner". When we use a consistent approach, we can guarantee that the assessment results are fair and accurate, which is a reality in the application of formative assessment which, according to Perrenoud (1999b), organizes continuous learning, identifying and solving problems.

Still on question 55, 50% of students from Institution 3 agreed that the learning assessments carried out during the course were appropriate in relation to the content or themes worked on by the teachers. On the other hand, 50% of students pointed out that the learning assessments carried out during the course were inconsistent with the content taught by the teachers. Therefore, regarding Institution 4, approximately 63.2 % of students agreed that the learning assessments carried out during the course were compatible with the content or themes worked on by the teachers. On the other hand, 6.6 % of students indicated that the learning assessments carried out during the course were incompatible with the content taught by teachers.

Formative assessment, in a continuous process, is important to evaluate the development of skills and competencies, knowledge acquired during the course and, through constant feedback, help identify and solve possible problems and guide decision-making about what the students need to learn (FERNANDES, 2021).

This assessment model aims to help students develop their ability to learn and understand what they are learning. This is done by continually monitoring student performance throughout the learning period, providing *feedback* and opportunities for improvement.

Formative assessment, in higher education, aims to "create the opportunity for the student to reflect on their own performance and learn to identify their strengths and improve their weaknesses" (TAVARES, 2008, p. 1, our translation). This assessment model aims to

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promote the improvement and development of student learning, in addition to stimulating their ability to reflect and argue and provide the student with an environment of continuous *feedback*.

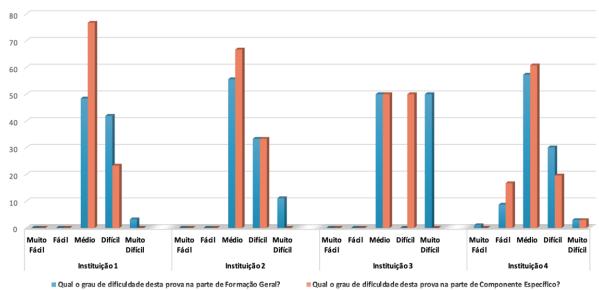
Students on the Pedagogy course at institutions that obtained a grade of 5 in ENADE 2017 demonstrated that the result obtained was a reflection of the commitment and investment they made during the course in terms of understanding the content. Some students also demonstrated that they believed that the result was influenced by the support and guidance of teachers and by study activities.

In this context, formative assessment has been seen as an important tool to promote the development of personal capacity, as it is a continuous process of monitoring and adjusting an individual's learning objectives, which help to identify and eliminate factors that impede growth and development. The process also involves the use of instruments that allow teachers and educators to assess student performance more accurately. This assessment can help them improve their understanding of the topics as well as develop their motivation and self-awareness skills.

Students' perception of the degree of difficulty of the test in the general education part exceeds 50%. Students point out that the test is challenging, but they also consider that the exam is reasonably balanced and that the required content is within the expected level of knowledge, as can be seen in figure 2 below:

Figure 2 – Level of difficulty of the test⁵

Percepção dos estudantes sobre a prova



Source: Prepared by the authors

Figure 2 shows that the majority of students demonstrated that the test is not very difficult and, in addition, it is observed, regarding the students' perception when answering the test, that it allows the student an opportunity to demonstrate what they learned during the test. In other words, even though students do not have knowledge about the questions in the general training part, they exceed 10% in terms of this component being very difficult at Institution 2. In general, the majority of students on the Pedagogy course give a score of 5 for the degree of difficulty of the test in the General Training part. Students' perception may vary according to each one's level of preparation. However, as the graph shows, the majority of students report that the test is difficult and requires a high level of knowledge of the subject.

On the day of the exam, students responded to a questionnaire entitled "Perception of the Test", as can be seen in table 1, presented below:

What is the degree of difficulty of this test in the General Training part?

What is the degree of difficulty of this test in the Specific Component part?

Muito fácil: Very easy; Fácil: Easy; Médio: Medium; Difícil: Difficult; Muito difícil: Very difficult.

⁵ Questions:

Table 1 – Students' perception of the difficulty in answering the test

Alternatives	Institution 1	Institution 2	Institution 3	Institution 4
Ignorance of the Content.	12.9%	33.3%	0.0%	19.4%
Different way of approaching content.	48.4%	44.4%	50.0%	32.0%
Insufficient space to answer questions.	3.2%	0.0%	0.0%	10.7%
Lack of motivation to take the test.	6.5%	11.1%	50.0%	21.4%
I didn't have any difficulty answering the test.	29.0%	11.1%	0.0%	16.5%

Source: Prepared by the authors

When analyzing the information, it appears that the students' perception differs, as the answers indicated that the students strongly agreed with the chosen questions, regarding not having difficulties in both the general and specific components. However, analyzing the answers to the question: "possibly having encountered some difficulty", it is noted that the majority of students found difficulty in the different way of approaching the content taught by the teachers.

An important issue to be noted is that the responding students realized that the way the institution works on content is different from what is being asked.

Regarding the heterogeneity of student responses to the questionnaire, it is important to note the coherence between the content taught in the institutions being presented differently in the test, in a way that differs in relation to what is being asked and what actually was taught during the students' training process. Therefore, it is noticeable that ENADE verifies, through the graduating student, whether the institution acts in a formative manner.

Final remarks

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Having reached the final phase of this study, after carrying out bibliographical research and documentary analysis on the theme defined regarding ENADE, in 2017, it was possible to understand how SINAES influences formative assessment in teacher training through the students' perception, questionnaire respondents and Pedagogy course graduates, in the institutions selected for the study.

SINAES involves the evaluation of the academic, administrative and financial aspects of institutions, and the results obtained are used to establish quality standards to be met by all higher education institutions, encouraging improvements in the quality of teaching. The

implication of SINAES in education is significant, as the external evaluation carried out by the system makes it possible to monitor and correct existing problems in the quality of higher education. Furthermore, SINAES encourages the improvement of teaching programs, while contributing to improving the quality of life of higher education professionals.

It is considered that formative assessment can, therefore, be widely encouraged and stimulated by SINAES, since, by presenting reports on the test and students' perceptions to HEIs, it provides the opportunity for HEIs and teachers to improve teaching processes-assessment learning.

Formative assessment, in addition to being an instrument for teacher development, also allows the verification of training results, as well as continuous monitoring of students. In this way, SINAES can be a great incentive for formative assessment, as it offers *feedback* to the school, to the student, which signals to the course which skills and abilities students need to improve, which contents they have not yet learned, which could result in improved educational quality.

Even though ENADE is useful for measuring student performance in an undergraduate course, it should not replace formative assessment. Formative assessment is an important mechanism for monitoring a student's progress over time and providing guidance to improve performance. Given this, many institutions are beginning to implement formative assessment programs to help students prepare for ENADE, as it provides a more comprehensive view of a student's academic performance, whereas ENADE is limited to a diagnostic assessment.

Given the nature and lack of current research on the topic, it is believed that the following topics should continue to be studied: in -depth studies on methods that help teachers learn about different ways of approaching content in higher education and, furthermore, research on the importance of the evaluation questions that SINAES has proposed for ENADE, among other topics.

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