Bridges to Knowledge: The Strength of Unity in Building Educational Outcomes

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Abstract

The article investigates how collaboration between different social actors can enhance the quality of basic education. Based on the assumption that learning does not occur in isolation, the study analyzes initiatives that integrate collective efforts to overcome educational challenges, based on a literature review by authors such as Epstein (2011), Henderson & Mapp (2002) and Brasil (2014). Thus, it aims to identify effective strategies for articulation between institutions and communities that contribute to the improvement of educational indicators, such as proficiency, reduction of dropout and equity. A qualitative bibliographic research was carried out, with analysis of scientific publications, government documents and reports from non-governmental organizations. The data show that the construction of "bridges" between social actors is decisive for sustainable educational results. Initiatives that combine institutional accountability and democratic participation tend to generate deeper impacts, especially in contexts of inequality.

Keywords: Educational collaboration; Public policies; Equity; Collective learning.

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INTRODUCTION

The search for improving the quality of basic education requires investments in public policies that contemplate the continuing education of teachers and the monitoring of learning indicators. In the municipality of Pontes e Lacerda, Mato Grosso, the Regional Directorate of Education (DRE), through the trainers of Unidocência and the Mathematics area of COFOR, developed during the year 2023 a training work with the coordinators and teachers of the 5th year of Elementary School in the municipal network. This work focused on the analysis and overcoming of the descriptors in lag, with a view to raising the students' learning indexes, especially those evaluated by the Basic Education Evaluation System (SAEB), reflecting on the IDEB.

With ten meetings held on the premises of the UAB of Pontes e Lacerda, always on the last Thursday of the month, during the night, the training was divided equally between the components of Portuguese Language and Mathematics. The meetings were planned to meet the pedagogical needs diagnosed from the results of the external evaluations, having as reference the descriptors that presented the highest error rates.

This article aims to present the development and results of these trainings, highlighting the importance of pedagogical practice based on data analysis, the use of active methodologies and the appreciation of collaborative work between trainers, coordinators and teachers.

Continuing Education

Continuing teacher training has been one of the main pillars for improving the quality of teaching and learning in Brazilian public schools. As Gatti (2008) argues, the professional development of teachers requires systematic, contextualized training actions that dialogue with the concrete challenges experienced in the classroom. In this sense, training needs to be articulated with the real needs of teachers, respecting their trajectory and promoting the collective construction of pedagogical knowledge.

According to Imbernón (2010), successful training is those that encourage critical reflection on practice and provide spaces for dialogue, exchange of experiences and collaborative learning. Still, Tardif (2002) emphasizes that

teaching knowledge is built in practice and, therefore, needs to be valued in continuing education proposals. The actions developed in Pontes e Lacerda are aligned with these conceptions, by proposing meetings that consider the students' learning data, the challenges identified in external evaluations and the empirical knowledge of teachers.

In addition, the National Common Curriculum Base (BNCC) advises that teaching and learning processes should be based on the development of competencies and skills, and it is essential to understand how evaluative descriptors relate to learning objectives. The analysis of the descriptors in lag and the use of didactic strategies consistent with these objectives allowed a more precise approach to the difficulties faced by students, contributing to the effective improvement of educational indicators in the municipality.

Basic Education Evaluation System (SAEB)

The systematization of large-scale assessments in primary and secondary education in Brazil dates back to the 1990s, when the Ministry of Education (2023) laid the groundwork for a national model of educational diagnosis. In 1994, Ordinance No. 1,795 formalized the creation of the National System for the Evaluation of Basic Education (SAEB), consolidating itself as the main mechanism for measuring the quality of education. Held biennially, the SAEB covers students enrolled in the final years of elementary and high school, using standardized methodologies to ensure temporal and regional comparability. At the same time, Prova Brasil, implemented in 2005 by the National Institute of Educational Studies and Research Anísio Teixeira (INEP/MEC), emerged as a complementary instrument, focusing on detailed diagnoses through cognitive tests and contextual questionnaires.

According to Bonamino and Souza (2012), the SAEB was conceived as a strategic tool to monitor the quality of basic education in all federative units. Its methodological evolution, from 1995 onwards, incorporated significant advances: the inclusion of the private network in the sampling, the adoption of the Item Response Theory (IRT) — which allows measuring students' abilities regardless of the set of questions applied — and the prioritization of concluding series of cycles (4th and 8th grades of elementary school and 3rd grade of high school).

In addition, the system began to concentrate on the areas of Portuguese language, with an emphasis on reading, and mathematics, focused on problem solving, in addition to collecting sociocultural data through questionnaires applied to students, teachers and managers (Bonamino & Souza, 2012, p. 376).

The institutionalization of external evaluations gained legal support with the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (LDB), Law No. 9,394/1996, which assigned to the Union the responsibility for ensuring national processes for evaluating school performance. Article 9 of the LDB establishes, among other guidelines, the need for collaboration between education systems to define priorities and improve educational quality (Brasil, 1996). This regulatory framework reinforced the role of the State in promoting evidence-based policies, in line with international trends in educational accountability.

The Prova Brasil, aimed at students in the 5th and 9th grades of elementary school, represents a specific cut within the SAEB. Its evaluative design combines cognitive tests in Portuguese and mathematics with socioeconomic questionnaires, seeking to correlate school performance with contextual variables. Teachers and principals also participate in the process, providing information on their professional profile, working conditions and school infrastructure. The results allow not only to measure individual income, but also to map regional and socioeconomic inequalities, subsidizing public interventions.

In 2007, the policy of external evaluations was expanded with the creation of the Basic Education Development Index (IDEB), which integrates the results of the SAEB with the approval rates obtained in the School Census. The indicator, calculated by school and school system, has become a reference for educational goals, articulating quality and school flow. In 2018, the Ministry of Education unified the evaluations under the name SAEB, standardizing calendars and reference matrices. The reformulation included the revision of instruments and the modernization of digital platforms, aiming at greater efficiency in data collection and analysis.

The data generated by SAEB and Prova Brasil have been used to guide public policies at multiple levels. State and municipal departments of education use the results to identify deficiencies, correct distortions and allocate technical and financial resources in a targeted manner. Although criticism persists

regarding the excessive standardization or punitive use of indicators, it cannot be denied that these instruments have contributed to making historical disparities visible and fostering debates on equity. In the long term, the consolidation of an evaluative culture in Brazil depends on the ability to articulate quantitative diagnoses with qualified pedagogical strategies, avoiding reductionism that disregards the complexity of the educational phenomenon.

Institutionalization of the IDEB

The emergence of the Todos pela Educação movement in 2006 represented a milestone in the history of Brazilian educational policies, by bringing together sectors of civil society, private initiative and public power around a common project: to raise the quality of basic education on a national scale. According to its creators, the central proposal consisted of ensuring equitable access to education, regardless of variables such as social class, ethnicity or creed, through coordinated actions with the Ministry of Education (MEC). The organization assumed a double commitment: to monitor educational indicators and to propose strategies to improve them, acting as an interlocutor between society and the State (Brasil, 2007).

In the same year of its foundation, the movement prepared the Letter of Commitment All for Education, establishing goals to be achieved by 2022, alluding to the bicentennial of Brazil's Independence. This document served as the foundation for the Education Development Plan (PDE), launched by the MEC in 2007, which incorporated the Basic Education Development Index (IDEB) as a central evaluation tool. The formalization of this index occurred through Decree No. 6,094/2007, which instituted the Plan of Goals Commitment All for Education, articulating municipalities, states, the Federal District, families and communities in favor of common objectives (Brasil, 2007).

The legal framework of the IDEB, as provided for in Chapter I of the decree, reveals an attempt to promote educational equity through collaboration between federated entities. Article 2 emphasizes the need for social mobilization and intersectoral articulation to enable efficient public policies, while Chapter II defines the IDEB as an objective parameter to measure quality, combining data on school performance (pass rates) and performance in standardized

assessments such as the SAEB and the Prova Brasil (Brasil, 2007). Adherence to the plan, initially voluntary, was gradually universalized through technical and financial support from the Federal Government to entities with less operational capacity, ensuring the inclusion of all in the evaluation system.

Constitutional Amendment No. 108/2020 expanded the Union's financial support to 23% of the resources allocated to basic education, linking it to criteria such as performance in the IDEB, potential for improvement and managerial capacity of the federated entities. These resources were directed to four priority axes: educational management, teacher training, pedagogical materials and school infrastructure, operationalized through the Articulated Action Plan (PAR). This policy reinforced the technical-managerial character of the evaluation, aligning it with international models of accountability (Brasil, 2007).

The adoption of the IDEB was not limited to domestic objectives; it also reflected Brazil's geopolitical aspirations, particularly its interest in joining the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). To match advanced economies such as the United States and Germany, the country sought to align its educational indicators with the parameters of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), coordinated by the OECD. According to Boneti (2011), this approach exposed contradictions inherent to the model, by prioritizing efficiency metrics to the detriment of discussions about structural inequality. It is questioned, for example, to what extent joining the OECD would benefit historically marginalized populations, or if it would only serve to consolidate a mercantilist agenda in education.

Although IDEB and PISA share common assumptions — such as the standardization of tests and the emphasis on cognitive skills — they differ in scope and methodology. While PISA evaluates 15-year-olds in science, mathematics and reading, IDEB focuses on students in the 5th and 9th grades of elementary school and the 3rd grade of high school, with an exclusive focus on Portuguese language and mathematics. In addition, the Brazilian index incorporates school flow rates, absent in PISA. This difference reveals tensions between globalization and local contexts, as the IDEB had to adapt to heterogeneous realities, such as rural schools or indigenous communities, which deviate from international standards (Boneti, 2011).

The IDEB calculation is based on the combination of students' average proficiency in standardized exams and pass rates, generating a scale from 0 to 10. Its biennial cycle allows it to monitor progress or setbacks by school, municipality, and state, creating rankings that influence everything from resource allocation to institutional reputation. However, critics point out distortions in this methodology: schools may prioritize the automatic approval of students to raise their index, or focus on "training" for tests to the detriment of broader learning (Freitas, 2012).

Another limitation lies in the absence of qualitative dimensions. The IDEB does not measure, for example, teaching working conditions, school violence or access to extracurricular activities — decisive factors for educational quality. In addition, its link to punitive policies, such as the closure of schools with low performance, generates resistance among educators, who see it as an instrument of bureaucratic control (Freitas, 2012).

The trajectory of the IDEB illustrates the paradoxes of Brazilian educational policies: although it has democratized access to data and fostered discussions about quality, its technicist bias tends to simplify complex challenges. Its legacy remains open, demanding adjustments that balance quantitative evaluation and pedagogical transformation, without subordinating education to economic or geopolitical interests.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology adopted in the training project involved the planning and execution of ten face-to-face meetings, which took place once a month during the year 2023, always on the last Thursday, at night, on the premises of the Open University of Brazil (UAB), in Pontes e Lacerda. There were five meetings focused on the Portuguese Language and five on Mathematics, each lasting four hours.

The structure of the training included the presentation of skills and descriptors in lag identified in the SAEB evaluations, followed by a theoretical explanation about the importance of the descriptor and its relationship with the learning process. Then, examples of real or adapted statements from the SAEB

tests were presented, which the teachers solved in groups, discussing pedagogical strategies to approach these contents with the students.

The training used concrete materials, didactic games, technological resources and teaching strategies that moved from the concrete to the abstract, respecting the progression of the descriptors. One of the guiding principles was to identify the previous descriptors necessary to understand each content in focus, promoting a planned and effective pedagogical resumption. The analysis of students' errors was constantly used as a diagnostic tool and for replanning actions in the classroom.

A WhatsApp group was also created with all participants, where materials, suggestions for activities and strategies were shared, promoting a support network and continuous collaboration. At the end of each training, an evaluation was carried out to identify positive points and challenges faced by the teachers. The data collected subsidized the restructuring of the following meetings, making the training process continuous, dynamic and responsive to the needs of the teachers.

Results and Discussions

The effects of the training work with 5th grade teachers in the municipal network of Pontes e Lacerda became evident in the results of the 2023 IDEB. The municipality, which had an IDEB of 5.7 in 2021 for the initial years of elementary school, reached an average of 6.1 in 2023, representing a progression of +0.4. This result was surpassed individually by several schools, demonstrating the effectiveness of the actions undertaken.

The data from the schools involved in the training project show the relevance of the work carried out:

Table 1 – Evolution of the IDEB in the Municipal Schools of Pontes e Lacerda School	**IDEB 2021**	**IDEB 2023**	**Growth**
EE Antônio Carlos de Brito	5,0	5,6	+0,6
EE Sanaria Silveira de Souza	5,8	6,2	+0,4

Table 1 – Evolution of the IDEB in the Municipal Schools of Pontes e Lacerda School	IDEB 2021	IDEB 2023	Growth
EE Alcides Franco da Rocha	5,7	6,5	+0,8
EE Vale do Guaporé	4,5	5,5	+1,0
EE Cirila Francisca da Rocha	5,4	6,4	+1,0
EE Professor Rosilei Pereira dos Santos	5,5	7,0	+1,5
EE Arlindo Antônio Nogueira	4,8	5,8	+1,0

In addition to the quantitative data, the reports of the participating teachers reinforced the quality and relevance of the training. Many claimed that the encounters were so engaging that time seemed to pass quickly. Some, initially resistant to participation, reported that they not only changed their opinion but also began to look forward to the following meetings, valuing the dynamic, practical and welcoming nature of the training. The use of active methodologies, the focus on problem solving and the contextualization with the pedagogical practice were pointed out as fundamental differentials for the success of the project.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The positive results achieved by the municipality of Pontes e Lacerda, especially the growth of the Basic Education Development Index (IDEB) in the early years of elementary school, are a reflection of a collective, articulated and committed work to improve the quality of education. The continuing education developed by the trainers of Unidocência and Mathematics of COFOR of the DRE, in partnership with the coordinators and teachers of the 5th year of the municipal network, demonstrated that it is possible to transform educational indicators through planned, collaborative actions centered on the real needs of the classroom.

Undoubtedly, the great protagonists of this process were the regent teachers. They were the ones who, with dedication, commitment and sensitivity, welcomed the training proposals, applied the activities with their students, faced

the challenges of dealing with learning difficulties and sought alternatives to ensure that students advanced. Without the active and responsible performance of these professionals, the results obtained would not have been possible. To them, all recognition and gratitude, as they are the basis of the educational process and the bridge between training proposals and effective pedagogical practice.

Another fundamental aspect for the success of the initiative was the performance of COFOR's trainers, who conducted the training with dynamism, empathy and deep knowledge of the difficulties faced in schools. The strategies used, based on the analysis of the descriptors in lag, the use of active methodologies, concrete resources, games and technologies, ensured meaningful, interactive training applicable to the school context. The practical approach, associated with the sensitive listening of the trainers, contributed to the meetings becoming moments expected by the participants, as revealed by the teachers themselves in their statements.

The creation of a virtual support group was also an initiative that enhanced the process, enabling continuous monitoring, the exchange of experiences and pedagogical support in the day-to-day life of the classroom. This network of collaboration and dialogue between trainers, coordinators and teachers strengthened the link between theory and practice and reaffirmed the importance of an education that is built with the subjects and not for them.

Finally, it should be noted that the advances recorded in the IDEB, with an increase of up to +1.5 points in some schools, do not represent just a number, but rather the reflection of a joint effort that involved the Municipal Department of Education, the pedagogical coordinators, the DRE trainers and, above all, the regent teachers. It is a successful experience that highlights the power of contextualized continuing education, built by many hands, and that places the student at the center of the educational process. This trajectory reinforces the conviction that, with planning, partnership and appreciation of the education professional, it is possible to transform realities and guarantee the right to learning for all students.

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