

HIGHER EDUCATION EVALUATION SYSTEMS IN PORTUGAL AND BRAZIL^{*}

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ABSTRACT

The article presents a study comparing Portugal and Brazil's higher education evaluation systems and their influences on initial teacher education curricula. We used a qualitative methodology to analyze how the evaluation systems provide a basis for higher education regulation and supervision processes in order to promote improvement in education quality and the valuing of institutional identities. Results indicate that external evaluation processes have influenced the curricula as they underline the positive aspects and strengths of teacher education programs, thus reinforcing current curricular practices and concepts. We conclude that as regulation and supervision processes build on evaluation results that promote institutional identities, they create political strategies that foster institutional management's accountability for improving the quality of initial teacher education.

KEYWORDS EVALUATION SYSTEMS • HIGHER EDUCATION • CURRICULUM • INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION.

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SISTEMAS DE AVALIAÇÃO DA EDUCAÇÃO SUPERIOR EM PORTUGAL E BRASIL

RESUMO

O artigo apresenta um estudo comparado entre Portugal e Brasil sobre os sistemas de avaliação da educação superior e suas influências nos currículos de formação inicial de professores. Utilizou-se a metodologia qualitativa para analisar como os sistemas de avaliação constituem referencial básico para os processos de regulação e supervisão da educação superior, a fim de promover a melhoria da qualidade e valorização das identidades institucionais. Os resultados indicam que o processo de avaliação externa tem influenciado os currículos, pois destacam os aspectos positivos e os pontos fortes dos cursos, reforçando concepções e práticas curriculares atuais. Conclui-se que os processos de regulação e supervisão, ao referenciarem os resultados da avaliação externa que valorizam as identidades institucionais, criam estratégias políticas para que a gestão institucional assuma a responsabilização e prestação de contas pela melhoria da qualidade da formação inicial de professores.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE SISTEMAS DE AVALIAÇÃO • EDUCAÇÃO SUPERIOR • CURRÍCULO • FORMAÇÃO INICIAL DE PROFESSORES.

SISTEMAS DE EVALUACIÓN DE LA EDUCACIÓN SUPERIOR EN PORTUGAL Y BRASIL

RESUMEN

El artículo presenta un estudio comparado entre Portugal y Brasil sobre los sistemas de evaluación de la educación superior y sus influencias en los currículos de formación inicial de profesores. Se utilizó la metodología cualitativa para analizar cómo los sistemas de evaluación constituyen un referente básico para los procesos de regulación y supervisión de la educación superior, a fin de promover la mejora de la calidad y la valorización de las identidades institucionales. Los resultados indican que el proceso de evaluación externa ha influido en los currículos, ya que destacan los aspectos positivos y los puntos fuertes de los cursos, reforzando conceptos y prácticas curriculares actuales. Se concluye que los procesos de regulación y supervisión, al referenciar los resultados de la evaluación externa que valoran las identidades, crean estrategias políticas para que la gestión institucional asuma la responsabilidad y la rendición de cuentas por la mejora de la calidad de la formación inicial de profesores.

PALABRAS CLAVE SISTEMAS DE EVALUACIÓN • EDUCACIÓN SUPERIOR • CURRÍCULO • FORMACIÓN INICIAL DEL PROFESOR.

INTRODUCTION

The article presents a study comparing Portugal and Brazil's higher education evaluation systems and their influences on curricula. Based on internationally constructed benchmarks, we sought to understand how the external evaluation of initial teacher education programs interacts with curricular policies and how their effects can determine the strategies for shaping the curricula.

Several authors have analyzed the contexts of higher education evaluation systems by examining transnational regulation policies guided by agencies that impose some conceptual change (PACHECO, 2011). They have identified similarities between higher education policies, including in countries in Latin America, the European Union, North America and Asia.

Regarding countries in the European Union, Lima, Azevedo e Catani (2008, p. 10) explain that, in 1999,

[...] the ministers of twenty-nine European states, including Portugal, signed the Bologna Declaration, where they undertake to establish, by 2010, a European higher

education area that is coherent, compatible, competitive and attractive for European and third-state students.

According to these authors, the text of the Bologna Declaration (1999)

[...] elected the principle of competitiveness in terms not only of emulation, efficiency and financing, but also of commercial logic, clearly assuming the idea of an European centrality in providing educational services, which are also overtly ethnocentric. (LIMA; AZEVEDO; CATANI, 2008, p. 10-11)

The Bologna Process, which intended to create a European area of higher education capable of integrating and also differentiating various national subsystems and educational institutions, “has given great prominence to the issues of ‘quality assurance’” (LIMA; AZEVEDO; CATANI, 2008, p. 15).

In his comparative study on higher education evaluation in Brazil and Portugal, Freitas (2012) found that the control of quality by the State, through the standardization of evaluation criteria, has emerged as a response to the globalization and internationalization of higher education. The author states that standardized evaluation has become an essential tool

[...] for the implementation of both countries’ educational agendas, and there is a clear predominance of homogenizing forces due to the external pressures that demonstrate to have developed a direct influence on the continuity and development in both countries’ evaluation systems. (FREITAS, 2012, p. 133-134)

Bisinoto and Almeida (2017, p. 653-660) say that “education is being increasingly recognized as a priority dimension and, therefore, teachers’ pedagogical practices end up being the target of evaluation and quality assurance systems” that rely “mainly on obtaining quantitative indicators which can hardly impact on the improvement of pedagogical practice”.

According to Pacheco (2014, p. 368), “quality is a key word that pervades knowledge sharing policies and educational

reforms, especially when evaluation is at issue”. The author stresses that the “meaning of quality is transnationally built, and its analytical argumentation relies both on the logic of personalization and the logic of social control”.

In Portugal, under the European Union (EU) principles’ framework arising from the Bologna Declaration (1999), the national higher education policy has set as goals: guaranteeing the qualification of the Portuguese in the European area, improving education quality, promoting mobility and internationalization, increasing the autonomy of institutions, developing a culture of accountability, enhancing partnerships between national and foreign institutions, and structuring an internationally recognized quality assurance system (PORTUGAL, 2007b).

The evaluation of higher education in Portugal is carried out by the Agency for Assessment and Accreditation of Higher Education (A3ES), created by Decree-Law no. 369, of November 5, 2007, which is responsible

[...] for the assessment and accreditation of higher education institutions and their study programs, and to promote the integration of Portugal in the European system of quality assurance of higher education. (PORTUGAL, 2007b)

In Brazil, under the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) principles’ framework, the evaluation culture currently in place in the country arose from the Brasilia Commitment – Goals of the Triennial Plan for Year 2000 (MERCOSUL, 1998), in which education ministers

[...] aligned operational conditions to achieve comparability and convergence between the national systems through the creation of a National Accreditation Agency in each member-state, thus allowing the convergence of national and supranational educational policies. (SILVEIRA, 2016, p. 915)

Brazilian higher education evaluation processes are the responsibility of the National Institute for Educational Studies and Research Anísio Teixeira (INEP), which is linked to the Ministry of Education (MEC). The processes are

coordinated and supervised by the National Commission for the Evaluation of Higher Education (CONAES). Evaluation results are meant to allow an overview of the quality of higher education programs and institutions, as well as provide information for higher education regulation and supervision processes, which take place through the granting of authorization, recognition – and renewal of recognition – of programs, and the accreditation and re-accreditation of higher education institutions (HEI).

Given the contexts of the Portuguese and Brazilian higher education evaluation systems, we consider in this study the assumption that curricular policies interact with evaluation policies, the effects of which can determine the strategies for shaping the curricula of initial teacher education, thus presenting new perspectives for defining higher education policies in this area.

HIGHER EDUCATION EVALUATION SYSTEMS AND REGULATION AND SUPERVISION PROCESSES

We build on Esteves' (2015, p. 145) view that supranational organizations such as the United Nations, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the United Nations Organization for Education, Science and Culture (UNESCO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the European Union, have fostered "an educational consensus supported by a global discourse around the purpose of making education systems competitive at the international level". However, "this consensus is far from materializing into an intended homogenization of concrete realities," especially regarding teacher education policy.

The nature of the empirical data collected and analyzed in this study – external program evaluation reports, as well as interviews with faculty who were particularly involved in the process – allows perceiving, most of all, convergences that rely on the global discourse above. However, the nature of our data also points to some differences that can be understood in the light of the current state of development of the Portuguese and Brazilian education systems, each

with its own traditions, priority needs and scientific knowledge bases which are mobilized in the preparation of new teachers.

In this study, we consider that comparative education can help understand educational phenomena at an international level, since the comparison of educational facts and data from different contexts can lead to an understanding of both the convergence and the diversification of education models and styles. Comparative education “consists of the study of two or more educational contexts from different geographical locations, which are founded on works by authors based therein”. Describing the contexts and educational systems is fundamental to carry out comparisons, “approximating objects to each other to search for both their similarities and differences” (REGNAULT, 2014, p. 14).

Regarding higher education evaluation policies, evaluation is understood as “a phenomenon that is complex, contradictory and multi-referential, never linear; it serves different purposes and interests” (FREITAS, 2012, p. 122). Evaluation has established itself as a

[...] field of conflicts and disputes, therefore going beyond the technical dimension to be circumscribed in a broader socioeconomic-political and cultural field, since it produces meanings, consolidates values and causes change. (FREITAS, 2012, p. 122)

Estrela and Veiga Simão (2003, p. 116) argue that “a quality evaluation that is itself a quality evaluation is built by successive approximations, drawing lessons from experience by means of critical reflection, debate and research”. Reference systems must

[...] interrelate and articulate the political, technical and ethical-axiological axes in order to fully uncover the rules of the game, taking into account institutional factors, power relations and the perspectives and feelings of the various actors involved (ESTRELA; VEIGA SIMÃO, 2003, p. 116).

Regarding the evaluation purposes, Dias Sobrinho (2003) makes a distinction between “evaluation for regulation”, which requires large-scale, measurable, comparable and standardized information, and “evaluation for educational purposes”, which has a formative role and provides specific, contextualized information for institution-level or program-level decision making. These

[...] different purposes of evaluation tend to generate different methodologies, tools and procedures, which, in turn, generate oppositions between evaluation and regulation. (VERHINE, 2015, p. 606)

It is worth noting that the development of evaluation as a discipline and as public policy has emerged from, among others, the need to respond to state requirements in central nations, in order to oversee large-scale social programs and inform political deliberations and accountability.

Authors in the field of evaluation, such as MacDonald (1974), Simons (1999), House (2000) and Guba and Lincoln (2011), emphasize the need to examine the objectives of an educational program or policy, which encompasses the issues, demands and concerns of all stakeholders.

This aspect reveals evaluation as a political activity and demands of it an engagement with the themes of democracy and social justice, postulating it as a form of power, thereby recognizing multiple interests in and by the evaluation. (SILVA, 2015, p. 55)

In the present study, evaluation paradigms are perceived to be still in conflict and disputing space in evaluation policy, which is sometimes closer to the perspective of instrumental evaluation (a paradigm characterized by control), sometimes closer to the perspective of democratic evaluation (a paradigm that proposes institution’s improvement and emancipation).

Therefore, we consider a referential framework comprising the following concepts of democratic evaluation: formative, focusing on learning, diagnosis and actions; procedural, which considers an evolutionary, systemic and

integrated practice; and emancipatory, which produces self-knowledge, construction and reconstruction for a culture of evaluation with a permanent attitude of awareness about its mission and academic and social purposes.

As for our theoretical-analytical framework, we consider Bertolin's (2009) theoretical construct, which emphasizes three tendencies characterizing higher education quality in today's context:

- an economic vision, for which higher education's main mission would be to contribute to the growth of the economy and to prepare individuals for the job market, being characterized by using terms such as employability and efficiency, with an emphasis on higher education as a necessary instrument to boost economic growth;
- a pluralistic vision, that, in addition to highlighting the key role of higher education in the process of economic development, emphasizes its role in cultural, social and democratic development, being characterized by the influence of terms such as differentiation, pertinence and relevance, with an emphasis on the participation of higher education in the emergence of local, specific features;
- an equity vision, for which higher education's mission is to contribute to social cohesion, in which the term equity stands out, both in the sense of equal opportunities of access to higher education and the sense of homogeneity in the education provided by institutions.

Regarding the relationship between evaluation and curriculum, the latter is understood here as a project that requires a democratic school space by means of the effective and active participation of teachers and students in defining institutional strategies in line with policy guidelines and in designing the educational, curricular and didactic project (PACHECO, 2001).

Figueiredo, Leite and Fernandes (2016, p. 649) emphasize that the guidelines of European Union bodies recommend

for evaluations “to produce a global view of the quality of schools and of the development of the educational and curricular projects which characterize them”.

Considering that curricular and evaluation policies are guided by transnational agendas, yet subject to recontextualization processes which produce hybrid discourses (BALL, 1994), our study proposes to analyze how the evaluation systems provide basis for higher education regulation and supervision processes in order to promote improvement in education quality and the valuing of institutional identities.

METHODOLOGY

We began by considering that the directions of a policy are decided based on a cycle formed by non-hierarchically connected contexts, according to the cycle of policies defined by Ball (1994) in five contexts: influence, text writing, practice, results/effects, and political strategy, all of which form a continuous policy-producing cycle that is always subject to recontextualization processes, which are the producers of hybrid discourses.

In the present study, we focus on the fourth policy-cycle context – i.e., that of results or effects –, which is concerned with issues of justice, equality and individual freedom; we also focus on the political strategy context, which involves identifying a set of social and political activities that would be necessary to deal with the inequalities created or reproduced by the policy (BALL, 1994).

Ball also presents the distinction between first-order effects – referring to changes in practice or structure that are clearly seen in specific places or in the system as a whole – and second-order effects, which correspond to the impact of these changes on social access, opportunity and social justice patterns.

The first- and second-order effects caused by the policy, as well as the political strategy context, are understood here in line with the methodological directions of Mainardes (2006, p. 60):

Analyzing the results/effects context may involve: analyzing statistical, student performance and other data; administering tests; conducting interviews, etc. However, the key issue in the results/effects and political strategy contexts is the deep reflection on the conjunctural issues and social inequalities created or reproduced by the policy or program, and which can only be detected by careful research on the practice context through prolonged observations, interviews or ethnographic research.

To analyze policy effects in the context of practice in a comparative study between Portugal and Brazil regarding higher education evaluation systems and their influence on teacher initial education curricula, we used a qualitative methodology and the inductive content analysis technique founded on Bardin (1979), as well as Esteves' (2006) propositions on thematic content analysis.

We began our field research by examining normative documents, which based our analysis of the External Evaluation Commissions Reports and of direct observations of activities in initial teacher education programs. Subsequently, in-depth interviews were conducted with directors and coordinators at those programs.

The documentary analysis prioritized the normative documents that regulate higher education in Portugal and Brazil, initial teacher education and institutional and program evaluation processes. Documents such as scripts, procedures, manuals, regulations and resolutions published by the institutions responsible for external evaluation processes were also analyzed (A3ES e INEP/MEC).

The normative documents examined revealed that the External Evaluation Commissions Reports were evaluation instruments similar both in form and content, thus allowing the collection of empirical data necessary to carry out the comparative study between Portugal and Brazil:

- Assessment/accreditation report of study programs in operation (ACEF). A3ES, Portugal;
- Evaluation report on undergraduate programs in the classroom – course recognition. INEP/MEC, Brazil.

For our research field, we chose the initial teacher education programs offered by the Master's degree in education at the University of Lisbon (ULisboa) and the University of Minho (UMinho) in Portugal, in addition to the undergraduate licensure programs at the Federal Institute of Education, Science and Technology of Pernambuco (IFPE), in Brazil, totaling 21 programs.

To better understand the results of the documentary analysis and the direct observation of activities at initial teacher education programs, particularly the 3rd Meeting of Master's Programs in Education at the ULisboa, we conducted in-depth interviews (MINAYO, 2014) with directors and coordinators at some of these programs, in order to validate the initial hypothesis that the positive evaluations received reinforced the curricula, and to understand whether the negative aspects pointed by the external evaluation resulted in any curricular change and, if so, the directions of that change.

The interviews were conducted face-to-face with three program coordinators at the ULisboa, four program directors at the UMinho and one institutional evaluation coordinator at the IFPE (MINAYO, 2014; LUDKE; ANDRÉ, 2013). The interviews with the seven IFPE program coordinators were conducted via e-mail (BURNS, 2010; MEHO, 2006; MCAULIFFE, 2003; SELWYN; ROBSON, 1998). The in-person interview script was designed with semi-structured questions, while the mail interview script was created in an electronic file containing structured questions requiring argumentative, justified answers. In sum, both scripts prioritized answers to the following questions:

- Overall, what is your opinion about the evaluation that higher education programs are subject to?
- What is your opinion about the results of the External Evaluation Report on your program, regarding the positive and negative aspects pointed? (Table X)
 - What do you think of what was pointed?
 - Was any change introduced after that evaluation?
- Is there any other aspect you find relevant to the research we are doing?

The tables we built to categorize the interview data followed Esteves' (2006) guidelines, based on identifying the significant units that responded to the questions in the interview script, particularly comparing the contexts in terms of their similarities and differences, which were grouped into subcategories and, later, in the following thematic categories: self-evaluation process difficulties; self-evaluation process effects; external evaluation process effects; and institutional evaluation and curriculum management.

HIGHER EDUCATION EVALUATION SYSTEMS AND THEIR CONTEXTS

The contexts of higher education evaluation systems have been related with the quality of education, whose central expression is its expansion. One result of this centrality is the focus on educational evaluation, which is adopted as a public measure for controlling education by means of accountability-based regulation mechanisms (ILLIS, 2012; AFONSO, 2011).

According to Sousa-Pereira and Leite (2016, p. 461), the logic associated with a culture of accountability seems to assume

[...] the form of an instrument for promoting an education quality that drives higher, more suitable levels of education for students; on the other hand, that logic aims to help keeping citizens' confidence in HEIs.

Thus, institutional evaluation tends to implant in HEIs an organizational logic and dynamics which are expressed by the fomenting of competition between – and within – them, with effects on the form of curriculum management in the context of initial teacher education programs in Portugal and Brazil.

THE CONTEXT OF INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN PORTUGAL

In compliance with the 1999 Bologna Declaration requirements, initial teacher education in Portugal has

been provided in higher education in Master's programs in teaching (second cycle), with 120 credits and a minimum duration of two years. To be admitted, students must complete a Licensure program (first cycle), having completed 120 credits as the minimum education requisites.

According to Decree-Law no. 79/2014, of May 14, which sets the legal rules on teacher qualification for pre-school, basic and secondary education, it is the responsibility of higher education's second cycle to ensure general teacher education, as well as training in specific teaching areas, in cultural, social and ethical areas, and initiation into practice, which eventually progresses to supervised practice (PORTUGAL, 2014).

Regarding the legal framework on higher education quality evaluation, Law no. 38 of August 16, 2007, defines that evaluations are aimed at higher education institutions' performance quality by measuring the degree of fulfillment of their mission by means of performance parameters related to their operation and results (PORTUGAL, 2007a, article 3, item I), thus revealing the law's instrumental characteristics towards an economistic vision (BERTOLIN, 2009).

The economistic vision is reinforced in article 5, which relates higher education evaluation to the goals of quality evaluation: improving the quality of higher education institutions; providing solid information to the society on the performance of higher education institutions; and developing an internal institutional culture of quality assurance (PORTUGAL, 2007a).

Quality evaluation is compulsory, and it is carried out within the framework of the European higher education quality assurance system, covering higher education institutions and their organizational units and study cycles (PORTUGAL, 2007a).

The quality evaluation is formed by self-evaluation, which is conducted by each higher education institution, and external evaluation, which provides a basis for accreditation processes, and is conducted by the A3ES. Accreditation aims to ensure compliance with the minimum requirements for the official recognition of higher education establishments

and study cycles (PORTUGAL, 2007a).

In the research developed in Portugal, we focused on the external evaluation of the second cycle of studies (Master's in teaching) as it uses the self-evaluation tool as the first step of the evaluation process.

Initially, the A3ES external evaluation reports on the ULisboa and UMinho Master's in education were analyzed, totaling 14 reports. In the thematic content analysis, we considered the positive evaluations and strengths identified for each program as they can influence the curriculum by reinforcing current conceptions and practices, and the negative evaluations and recommendations for quality improvement, which can also induce curricular change.

The results of this analysis were grouped into seven categories: A. Study Plans; B. Purposes and General Objectives; C. Learning Objectives; D. Contents; E. Strategies and Methodologies; F. Learning Assessment; and G. Faculty as Curricular Resources. For each category, we identify the subcategories that indicate the positive and negative aspects evaluated.

Chart 1 presents the subcategories with a frequency higher than seven programs ($\geq 50\%$), which show 13 positive aspects that can influence the curriculum by reinforcing current curricular concepts and practices, and six negative aspects that can induce curricular change.

CHART 1 – Categorization of the External Evaluation Reports on the ULisboa and UMinho Master's programs – Portugal

CATEGORIES	SUBCATEGORIES			
	POSITIVE ASPECTS	PROGRAMS	NEGATIVE ASPECTS	PROGRAMS
A. Study Plans			A1. It is suggested for the curricular unit (UC) of Educational Technology to become optional.	7
B. Purposes and General Objectives	B1. Consistency between general objectives and HEI's mission.	12		
	B2. Knowledge of general objectives by professors, advisors and students	12		
	B3. Clarity and suitability of study cycle objectives.	7		
C. Learning Objectives	C1. Suitable to the competencies that students should develop.	13		
D. Contents			D1. Overlapping/repeated content in various curricular units (UC).	7
E. Strategies and Methodologies	E1. Existence of structures and activities to support integration and academic success.	9	E4. Supervised practice in only one of the two study cycles.	8
	E2. Promotion of initiation to educational research.	8	E5. Overlapping activities at HEI and schools due to internship seminars.	8
	E3. Good organization of the Professional Practice Initiation (IPP) component.	7	E6. Students non-engagement in faculty's research projects.	7
F. Learning Assessment			F1. Lack of weight of various assignments on final assessment.	8
G. Faculty as Curricular Resources	G1. Study Cycle (CE) coordinator's suitable profile.	14		
	G2. Cooperative, well-qualified, experienced and motivated advisors.	12		
	G3. Supervising faculty with long experience in didactics and supervision.	11		
	G4. Coordinator with scientific output in the study cycle's (CE) area.	10		
	G5. Qualified faculty with a profile appropriate to the study cycle.	10		
	G6. Faculty with a relevant scientific output in the study cycle's area.	9		

Source: Organized by the authors (2017).

The full results of the external evaluation reports content analysis were used to design the tables by program in order to compose the interview scripts administered to program directors and coordinators.

THE CONTEXT OF INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN BRAZIL

In Brazil, initial teacher training has been provided in higher education in undergraduate licensure programs which must have at least 3,200 hours of academic work, with a minimum duration of eight semesters or four years, according to CNE/CP Resolution No. 2, of July 1, 2015, which defines the National Curriculum Guidelines for initial teacher education in higher education, as well as continuing teacher education (BRASIL, 2015).

Decree No. 5,773, of May 9, 2006, which provides for the regulation, supervision and evaluation of higher education institutions and undergraduate and sequential programs in the federal education system, establishes that

[...] the evaluation carried out by the National Higher Education Assessment System (SINAES) will set the basis for higher education regulation and supervision processes in order to promote the improvement of its quality. (BRASIL, 2006, Article 1, paragraph 3)

Law No. 10.861 of April 14, 2004, establishes the National Higher Education Evaluation System (SINAES) and emphasizes the promotion of democratic values, respect for difference and diversity and the affirmation of institutional autonomy and identity (BRASIL, 2004, Article 1, paragraph 1), thereby revealing its democratic characteristics towards a pluralistic vision (BERTOLIN, 2009).

The SINAES evaluates aspects such as teaching, research, outreach, social responsibility, student performance, institution management, faculty and facilities. This system has three main components which form an evaluation cycle: institutional evaluation; program evaluation; and student performance evaluation (BRASIL, 2004).

Institutional evaluation encompasses self-evaluation, which is coordinated by each institution's Internal Evaluation Committee (CPA) and guided by the CONAES institutional self-evaluation script and guidelines, and external evaluation, which conducted by INEP-designated commissions, based on the higher education quality

standards described in evaluation instruments and self-evaluation reports (BRASIL, 2004).

Program evaluation aims to identify the education conditions offered to students, particularly those related to faculty profile, facilities and didactic-pedagogical organization, both in the public (federal, state and municipal levels) and private sectors (BRASIL, 2004).

Student achievement is assessed by the National Assessment of Student Achievement (ENADE) test, which is administered to students finishing the programs evaluated and covers both general education and specific training (BRASIL, 2004).

It is worth noting that the External Institutional Evaluation Instrument, published in 2014, was designed “to cover the higher education system diversity and respect the identity of the institutions forming it” (BRASIL, 2014, p. 2). The instrument considers

[...] the specific features of the various academic organizations based on the focus defined by the Institutional Development Plan (PDI) and institutional evaluation processes (both internal and external). (BRASIL, 2014, p. 2)

In order to compare the empirical data for Portugal and Brazil, we analyzed seven External Evaluation Reports on IFPE Licensure Programs and defined the categories and subcategories that indicate the positive and negative aspects.

In the thematic content analysis, results were grouped into seven categories: H. Program Pedagogical Project (PPC); I. Curriculum Structure; J. Program Objectives; K. Learning Objectives; L. Curriculum Contents; M. Strategies and Methodologies; N. Learning Assessment; O. Faculty Profile.

Chart 2 presents the subcategories with a frequency higher than four programs ($\geq 50\%$), which show 13 positive aspects that can influence the curriculum by reinforcing current curricular concepts and practices, and three negative aspects that can induce curricular change.

CHART 2 – Categorization of External Evaluation Reports on IFPE Licensure Programs – Brazil

CATEGORIES	SUBCATEGORIES			
	POSITIVE ASPECTS	PROGRAMS	NEGATIVE ASPECTS	PROGRAMS
H. Program Pedagogical Project (PPC)	H1. Addresses educational, economic and social demands.	5	H2. Teaching, research and outreach policies are under implementation.	4
I. Curriculum Structure	I1. Covers flexibility, hours, interdisciplinarity and theory-practice connection aspects.	4		
J. Program Objectives	J1. Coherence with degree holder's professional profile, curricular structure and context	5		
K. Learning Objectives	K1. Professional profile expresses the degree holder's competences.	5		
L. Curriculum Contents	L1. Bibliography available in the physical collection, electronic journals and virtual libraries.	6	L3. It is not possible to verify that experimental activities were completed.	4
	L2. Develop professionals' profile regarding updating, hours and bibliography.	4		
M. Strategies and Methodologies	M1. Support provided via assistant, teaching, scientific initiation and outreach grants.	7		
	M2. Very well regulated/ institutionalized curricular internship, complementary activities and end-of-course research projects.	6		
	M3. Excellent integration with basic education schools.	5		
N. Learning Assessment	N1. Assessment procedures follow the program conception.	4		
O. Faculty Profile	O1. Experience in basic and higher education teaching.	6	O4. Professors with a low scientific, cultural, artistic or technological output.	4
	O2. Excellent Core Faculty Structuring (NDE) performance in designing, monitoring, consolidating and assessing.	5		
	O3. Excellent coordinator performance in program management, relationship with professors and students, representation at boards.	5		

Source: Organized by the authors (2017).

The full results of the content analysis of the IFPE Licensure Program External Evaluation Reports were also used to design the tables by program in order to create the interview scripts administered to program coordinators.

SELF-EVALUATION PROCESS DIFFICULTIES

Institutional evaluation has been found to be characterized by “evaluation processes occurring within the institution as

it evaluates itself, thus providing information for evaluation by external commissions” (SILVA, 2015, p. 23).

In the case of initial teacher education programs, self-evaluation has been used to

[...] check programs' conditions prior to external evaluation, by means of checklists and by establishing acceptable quality standards in parallel with those established by external commissions. (SILVA, 2015, p. 87-88)

Silva (2015, p. 251) warns that institutional committees

[...] face several difficulties to conduct internal evaluation, such as: methodological issues – strategy and procedure variation; evaluate according to the dimensions established by regulations; building awareness and publicity for evaluation results.

In the in-depth interviews conducted with program directors and coordinators, the reports reveal the “self-evaluation process difficulties”.

[...] because the Master's programs in education, many of them, not all but many of them, involve two schools at the University of Lisbon, and therefore making self-evaluation reports involving two schools makes the process more complex and laborious. (Interview #01 – CME / ULM – 03/09/2017)

Exactly, only that proposal couldn't come up like that just for the English and Spanish program, [...] integrated for all. At least for those seven courses that were under evaluation. Therefore, as I was saying, it was a complex, time-consuming, painful process. (Interview #01 – UMIE – 05/23/2017)

These accounts by Portuguese program directors and coordinators indicate the “organizational difficulties” related to the self-evaluation process, since the programs involve two institutions (the Education Institute and a faculty of the specific area), in addition to a single structure for the seven Master's programs under evaluation, thus making it a “complex, time-consuming, painful process”.

Regarding the IFPE, this Brazilian coordinator's account indicates similarities between the self-evaluation processes in the Portuguese and Brazilian contexts, particularly regarding the "organizational difficulties" faced by the Internal Evaluation Committees (CPA), which was going through "a time of transition" and "management change", in addition to "change in procedures".

Initially when it [the program] undergoes its first CPA evaluation, it is also a time of transition for the institution's CPA. We now have a new commission, and in this process of management change at the CPA, there was also a change in procedures, in how the CPA activities were conducted. (Interview #07 – CAI/IFG – 05/04/2017)

Leite (2008, p. 835) explains that it is the CPA's responsibility to coordinate and articulate the institution's internal evaluation process, systematize information and make it available, and sensitize the community to participate in the process.

Participation is autopoietic, it is the self-organization of beings-subjects in relationship. It occurs from the inside out of the HEI, and it does not accept being imposed, which gives rise to one of CPA's difficulties to operate.

The accounts of Portuguese program directors and coordinators also reveal the "bureaucratic difficulties" inherent in the self-evaluation process, related both to the A3ES instrument, Self-Evaluation Script – Cycle of Studies in Operation (ACEF Guide 2014/2015 PT) and to completing the electronic platform.

Because the documents are not easy, what they ask is not very linear, sometimes. So, the platform [...] is sometimes repetitive. So, it forces you to a decoding that's annoying at first, but then you realize it's a way of finding confirmation or inconsistencies in the information you provide. (Interview #02 – ULBG – 03/23/2017)

It was this self-evaluation script we received and had to fill out for those seven programs. We're talking about 106 pages, a 106-page script that you complete in Portuguese and English.

That's why the process is rather complex, time-consuming, and so on. (Interview #01 – UMIE – 05/23/2017)

The obligation to complete a self-evaluation script has proved a technician and bureaucratic task, with instrumental characteristics in line with an economic vision (BERTOLIN, 2009), not fostering reflection about initial teacher education program projects, nor promoting change that might improve the quality of that education. It is worth noting the difference from the Brazilian context, in which the coordinators' accounts did not mention "bureaucratic difficulties".

SELF-EVALUATION PROCESS EFFECTS

RESULTS INFERIOR TO THE EFFORTS MADE

Leite (2008, p. 835) warns that there is a consensus that failure to conduct an internal evaluation would be an indicator of "institutional myopia", as simply meeting the external evaluation requirements related to the self-evaluation does not contribute to improve the HEI.

The account below reinforces the idea that the self-evaluation report, which is the initial mandatory stage of institution and program evaluations, has not been contributing to "improve the quality" of initial teacher education where it just aims to meet external evaluation requirements, creating instead the feeling that results are inferior to the efforts made and, therefore, "the context that could be favorable to self-reflection ends up not being of much use".

The weight required to produce the self-evaluation report is so great, that what the self-evaluation could have contributed [...] to regulate and monitor the course, [...] it fails to have that effect because we are so burdened by giving the answers to all those requests to the report itself. [...] This makes the pressure very great and the context that could be favorable to self-reflection ends up not being much availed. (Interview #01 – CME/ULM – 03/09/2017)

Internal evaluation processes were perceived to have been well carried out in an autonomous way through institutional procedures that emphasize listening to the

subjects (professor, students, supervisors and advisors), who actually provide a preview of the external evaluation results.

The criteria described as weaknesses were the same as our Internal Evaluation Committee – CPA had already diagnosed. (Interview #04-A – IFG – 04/10/2017)

Because at the end of the internship, we always make an assessment, an appreciation of the students about the program, which is what they considered more problematic, so that many things that the [external] evaluation shows here, we had also felt before. Though we can't always make changes all the time, we can't change the programs each year. (Interview #04 – UMM – 05/26/2017)

Therefore, the interviewees point out the similarities between the Portuguese and Brazilian contexts as they say that external evaluation results had not brought them news, since both strength and weaknesses described in the External Evaluation Commissions Reports were already known to them, having been talked about with faculty, supervisors, advisors and students in their internal evaluation processes.

KNOWLEDGE OF PEOPLE, INSTITUTIONS AND CURRICULAR PRACTICES

The evaluation can be considered a “qualified organizer” as it arranges and situates the information.

The evaluation process with organized information is conducive to understanding situations and relationships, and to building meanings and knowledge about subjects, structures and activities occurring in an educational institution over a given period. In fact, an evaluation indicates which knowledge is valid – what one should know about what, what is valued to detriment of what (LEITE, 2008, p. 834).

The similarities between the contexts are present in the accounts of Portuguese and Brazilian program directors and coordinators as they emphasize that, despite the efforts made, the process of self-evaluation allowed “people and

institutions to know each other, to know what's done in each institution in the program," in addition to considering that "the evaluation allows this dialogue with the curriculum".

The gains may not make up for all the energy and time spent on the self-evaluation reports, but I think it's had some positive implications at various levels. To start with, because it allowed people and institutions to know each other, to know what's done in each institution in the program. (Interview #01 – CME/ULM – 03/09/2017)

In the case of licensure programs, the evaluation also allowed revisiting the practices, the activities that have been developed in the campuses and also in the curriculum. [...] We also consider that the evaluation allows this dialogue with the curriculum. (Interview #07 – CAI/IFG – 04/05/04/2017)

These accounts confirm the understanding that internal evaluation can be considered a "qualified organizer" as it provides knowledge of the people, institutions and curricular practices, therefore inducing the process of improving the quality of initial teacher education.

EXTERNAL EVALUATION PROCESS EFFECTS

AWARENESS OF WEAKNESSES

Considering that the main objective of external evaluation is to improve institutions, "then it is critical for them to analyze themselves and transparently search for their strengths and weaknesses, and in this context, self-evaluation is essential" (VERHINE, FREITAS, 2012, p. 36).

Identifying weaknesses was mentioned in the accounts of Portuguese and Brazilian respondents as a positive effect of the external evaluation, and while such aspects had already been found by self-evaluation processes, they stressed that External Evaluation Reports promoted "an awareness of the actual need to improve them", to overcome those weaknesses.

Results drew attention to existing, real weaknesses, and that drove a desire to improve, so there were things we were aware

of, though conditions were not favorable to change them, so it raised an awareness of the actual need improve them. (Interview #01 – CME/ULM – 03/09/2017)

In the case of the Master's Program in History and Geography Teaching for the 3rd Cycle of Basic Education and Secondary Education at the University of Lisbon, unlike the other programs, accreditation was granted with conditions, "with several recommendations" only to the History Teaching program, in accordance with Decree-Law no. 79, of May 14, 2014 (PORTUGAL, 2014).

Truth is that the Agency accredited the course for a while longer, but it was already wounded, not mortally, but with that intention. It's because Geography was the first to take the step to separate from History. [...] What I mean is that we had several recommendations, to hiring more teachers, international and national publications, and accelerating the curriculum. (Interview #02 – ULH – 07/11/2017)

This course went through deep changes, still during the 2015 external evaluation process, and the weaknesses identified will have to be overcome with the support of internal evaluation processes within up to three years, when a new external evaluation is due.

EXTERNAL EVALUATION AS A TIME TO REFLECT ON CURRICULAR PRACTICES

We start from the notion that the effects of external evaluation can strengthen the formative role of "evaluation for educational purposes" by providing information for decision making at the institution or program level (DIAS SOBRINHO, 2003).

Thus, when asked whether there had been a decision to question and propose alternative solutions to the current model of initial teacher education, which meets the 1999 Bologna Declaration guidelines, the Portuguese program directors and coordinators differed on the issue of increasing program duration in order to improve curricular practices:

Exactly, so, we're in this phase of thinking, and when it's us, it's Biology, Geology, Physics, Mathematics and Physical Education. [...] And so, we're revisiting the documents, of Bologna, the first documents on the proposal to create the Master's degree in teaching, which were really interesting. (Interview #02 – ULBG – 03/23/2017)

It's all wrong, we have teachers with precarious contracts for fifteen, twenty years. With precarious contracts. Well, then... that's what's wrong, it's not about teacher education in two years, it's the way the professional induction scheme is thought out, which I think is well thought out, but in practice it doesn't work. I think two years are enough. (Interview #01 – UMIE – 05/23/2017)

It is necessary to create internal participation mechanisms and forms of discussion and reflection on the external evaluation process, both in Portugal and in Brazil, with a view to promoting a pluralistic and contextualized evaluation (VERHINE; FREITAS, 2012). The following account shows a point of “internal reflection” on curricular practices by means of a dialogue with external evaluation which “forced us to think together”.

I'll be the first to say it, it forced me to think. So I guess this is great. And now I think programs have much better quality. And not only that, not just because it forced me to think, it forced us to think together, which is great. Therefore, it's not just my curricular unit that matters, maybe it's the whole, the combination. (Interview #02 – ULBG – 03/23/2017)

In our view, in order to respond to HEIs' need for autonomy and to society's demand for accountability, higher education evaluation systems in Portugal and Brazil have similarly used external evaluation as a complement to internal evaluation, thus promoting the emergence of reflective spaces in the institutions.

However, Portuguese program directors and coordinators associate reflective spaces with bureaucratic and technicist activities, which confirms a concept of evaluation oriented to performance quality (PORTUGAL, 2007a) and reinforces

its instrumental characteristics in line with the economic vision established in the Legal Framework for the Portuguese Higher Education Quality Evaluation (BERTOLIN, 2009).

I think that, basically, the evaluation was a time of internal reflection, really, that was it. The fact that we were preparing the documents and we did a team work, that is, several programs with the same profile. And so, we worked very hard together in reading the... because the programs have all the same structure. (Interview #04 – UMM – 05/26/2017)

In contrast, Brazilian program coordinators relate reflective spaces to the promotion of democratic values and the valuing of institutional identity through external evaluation.

The INEP evaluation commission was extremely sensitive to the aspects of identity of our program, and they managed to transfer these observations as they conducted the performance process in the evaluation instrument. (Interview #04-A – IFG – 04/10/2017)

This understanding confirms the concept of evaluation present in the *External Institutional Evaluation Instrument* (BRASIL, 2014), which seeks to meet the higher education system diversity and respect institutions' identity, thus reinforcing democratic characteristics in a pluralistic vision supported by the SINAES (BERTOLIN, 2009).

INSTITUTIONAL EVALUATION AND CURRICULUM MANAGEMENT

Lück (2012, p. 28) points out that institutional evaluation should serve educational management, since the latter

[...] comprehends the work of organizing, guiding and mobilizing school efforts and resources to promote educational work with the maximum effectiveness possible.

That finding is present in this coordinator's account:

I consider it an important process as it can be an instrument for improving higher education programs, in the three dimensions evaluated: faculty, pedagogical dimension and infrastructure.

However, these assessed dimensions must be worked on by the HEI management on an ongoing basis, to ensure that program enhancement actions won't become the focus of management only in the periods prior to evaluators' visits. (Interview #04-B – IFG – 04/10/2017)

Thus, in the sense of the above statements, institutional evaluation must ensure that the “dimensions evaluated be worked on by the HEI management on an ongoing basis”, both as a requirement so that students can have quality academic experiences and as a promotion of “higher education as a public good”.

[The evaluated] aspects evidenced the weaknesses and potentialities that each program had. However, the SINAES points to a new concept of evaluation regarding the improvement of education quality, seeking elements connected to higher education as a public good. (Interview #06 – IFM – 05/01/2017)

According to Dias Sobrinho (2008, p. 824), “as an instrument for strengthening education as a public and social good, evaluation must serve the consolidation of democratic values”, surpassing technical aspects with a view to socially relevant institutional policies, i.e.,

[...] institutional efforts towards the scientifically and socially relevant fulfillment of the processes of building knowledge and educating subjects with epistemic, ethical, social and political autonomy. (DIAS SOBRINHO, 2008, p. 825)

This account by the director at the Master's Program in Philosophy Teaching for Secondary Education at UMinho reveals the difficulty to overcome the technical aspects of the external evaluation, which strengthens a technicist-driven curriculum management.

At least here, the humanistic, artistic teaching part has disappeared, as well as deontological education, deontological ethics. The training was simply shortened, and I don't get it, which is another thing that puzzles me, I don't understand how the Agency can fail to oblige, or recommend, or require a Curricular Unit of professional deontology and ethics, when that

training requirement for future teachers is all over the article of the Decree-Law [nº 79/2014] that regulates this. (Interview #03 – UMF – 05/25/2017)

As for the negative aspects raised by the External Evaluation Reports, it is worth emphasizing that the interviews with the Portuguese and Brazilian directors and coordinators indicated the similarities of both contexts on the importance of the relationship between institutional evaluation and curriculum management as a way of enabling change in curricular practices (see Tables 1 and 2).

Each seminar had two modules, imagine... and each module made almost a curricular unit. And, so, this observation allowed making faculty aware of the need to introduce adjustments, and... I believe we're really following a good path and there's a positive evolution. (Interview #01 – CME / ULM – 03/09/2017)

One aspect's been changed, even more than one, for example, special educational needs. Now, there's already a curricular unit in the new curriculum, on inclusion and special educational needs in the cognitive and motor domain. (Interview #01 – UMIE – 05/23/2017)

Because there were few negative recommendations and evaluations, it gave us little information or directions we should focus on. But as for the points mentioned, we're focusing on expanding technology use, as well as following up the implementation of the actions recorded in the PDI. (Interview #05 – IFF-04/11/2017)

Some negative aspects highlighted and some recommendations made in the External Evaluation Commissions Reports have driven the enhancement of the relationship between institutional evaluation and curriculum management as a way of enabling change in curricular practices. However, we found the predominance of positive aspects to have reinforced the curricula of both Portuguese and Brazilian programs, by giving them “little information and directions” that might promote structural changes in initial teacher education curricula.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The analyzes of data collected from our interviews with the Portuguese and Brazilian directors and coordinators validated the initial hypothesis built from our documentary analysis of the External Evaluation Commissions Reports, since the predominance of positive evaluations has not created opportunities for negative evaluations to promote effective curricular changes.

In our comparative study between Portugal and Brazil, results highlight the similarities and differences identified in the contexts of both countries' higher education evaluation systems.

Regarding the similarities between both contexts, results indicated that the external evaluation process has brought about strategies that reinforce initial teacher education curricula, whether in the Master's Degree Programs in Teaching in Portugal, or in the Licensure Programs in Brazil, since External Evaluation Commissions Reports have emphasized the strengths and positive aspects of the programs, thus influencing the curricula by reinforcing current curricular conceptions and practices.

As for the differences between the contexts, it is worth mentioning that the external evaluation process for initial teacher education programs in Portugal was predominantly structured as an "evaluation for regulation purposes", with instrumental characteristics in an economistic vision, while the external evaluation process for initial teacher education programs in Brazil has generally appeared as an "evaluation for educational purposes", with democratic characteristics in a pluralistic vision.

To answer the study question, we affirm that the external evaluation process in Brazil has prioritized qualitative indicators with a formative role in its instruments in order to "draw an overview of the quality", and this has brought about effects related to the diversification of initial teacher education as it promotes the enhancement of the country's higher education regulation and supervision processes.

In Portugal, the process of external evaluation for initial teacher education has focused on technical and

bureaucratic instruments linked to the “European system of quality assurance of higher education”, therefore prioritizing quantitative indicators with a comparative role between member-states’ institutions, and this has brought about effects related to the standardization of initial teacher education by disregarding political strategies that value institutional identity, thus failing to promote the enhancement of Portuguese higher education regulation and supervision processes.

We conclude that as higher education regulation and supervision processes build on results from External Evaluation Commissions Reports that promote institutional identities, they create political strategies that foster institutional management’s accountability for improving the quality of initial teacher education.

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