



External Assessment Project

ASSESSMENT

The External Assessment Project

In the 1990s, the Government of Bahia took actions that had significant impact on the educational indices of the state. During this period, the illiteracy rate fell more than 12 percentage points and the portion of the population between 7 and 14 years of age enrolled in basic education surpassed the 95% mark. Having concluded the phase of expanding the schooling system, the Government of Bahia began to focus on improving the quality of public education. In 1999 the **Educar para Vencer** program was created – a set of high-priority, interrelated projects geared towards promoting self-management in schools in order to increase the quality of school instruction.

The **External Assessment Project** is one of the activities developed within the **Educar para Vencer** program. It is, in part, a regional reflection of an educational evaluation culture that has been established in Brazil since the creation of the National System for Evaluation

of Basic Education (SAEB) in 1990. The objective of the Project is to provide schools with diagnostic tools and information that allow for the identification of problems and consequential improvement of the education offered. Whereas the national model presents aggregated data pertaining to regions, the External Assessment Project is committed to providing each public school in the state of Bahia with the results achieved by its students in relation to what they should be learning.

The External Assessment Project is responsible for two large-scale evaluation initiatives: **Performance Evaluation** and **Learning Evaluation**. In order to develop and implement these efforts in a trustworthy, legitimate and impartial manner, the Secretariat of Education has established a partnership with the **Federal University of Bahia**. The University's Center for Interdisciplinary Studies for the Public Sector (ISP) is responsible for project supervision,



and its Foundation for the Support of Research and Extended Learning (FAPEX) provides administrative support. The Project is run by a highly specialized local team and currently op-

erates in 273 Bahian municipalities. More than **3,000 school public schools** are involved, and, in 2002 alone, more than **900,000 students** were assessed.

The Performance Evaluation

Performance Evaluation **surveys the quality of education** provided by public schools in Bahia, based on the achievement scores obtained by 4th and 8th grade students on multiple-choice tests in **Portuguese** and **Mathematics**.

The objective of this initiative is to determine, for each school, the performance of its students in relationship to the skills and abilities that they should possess at the end of the school year. The evaluation informs the schools of the percentage of its students that present levels of **Good, Average, Low** or **Inadequate** in terms of what should be taught

and learned in Portuguese and Mathematics in the 4th and 8th grades.

Furthermore, schools receive important complementary information: an indication of the skills associated with each performance level, a list of those skills in which students had the most difficulty, and a pedagogical analysis of the test questions. With this information, the school community can interpret the results in light of its local context and reality.



The Learning Assessment

The Learning Evaluation effort uses standardized testing to enable teachers to evaluate their **teaching rhythm** at three moments during the school year. The Project develops the materials and sends them to the schools, but the teachers themselves apply and correct the tests and interpret the results.

This innovative approach addresses the following objectives:

- To strengthen within the schools the habit of developing and following a teaching plan using pre-established benchmarks.
- To provide the teachers with a diagnosis of what their students have learned in relation to a minimum set of skills and abilities defined by the State.
- To help teachers reformulate their teaching plan, when necessary, in order to better meet the needs of their students.

The Learning Evaluation was implemented in 2001 and today it involves students from grades one to four. These students answer multiple-choice tests in **Portuguese** and **Mathematics**.

In 2003 the Project introduced Text Production on the 4th grade level. The Learning Evaluation initiative has successfully met the challenge of enabling teachers throughout the State of Bahia to apply the diagnostic tools with the same rigor and to interpret the student results in accordance with the same criteria.



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