

I. INTRODUCTION¹

This paper aims to present a roadmap for the design, implementation and evaluation of a literacy policy at the right age. To this end, it draws on a detailed study of the Literacy Program at the Right Age, developed since 2007 by the Government of the State of Ceará.

The choice of PAIC as an object of study was born from the methodological decision that it would be important to study in depth a successful experience of reversing a situation of difficulties through the implementation of public educational policies. In fact, several studies have highlighted the uniqueness of the Ceará experience in terms of literacy, including a survey carried out by IPEA, which highlights that, despite the illiteracy rate in that state being much higher than the national average, “its children [since PAIC] are learning, on average, more than Brazilian children” (IPEA, 2018). Observers have also drawn attention to PAIC's ability to improve equity in elementary schools in Ceará, especially those where the majority of students live in poverty contexts (KASMIIRSKI et al., 2017). As research by Ana Holanda (2013) reveals, the impact of PAIC is greater precisely in the group of students whose mothers know how to read the lowest percentage and who are deprived of educational support in the homes in which they live. In other words, the author concludes, PAIC has contributed to “reducing the intergenerational transmission of poverty, compensating for the lack of school support at home and generating greater possibilities for social advancement through education”.

The research on PAIC was carried out between May 2017 and December 2018, with the aim of decoding the main work processes of the program. The inspiration provided by the experience of this program led to the delimitation of the focus of this work around the continuous training of teachers and the valorization of the commitment of teachers to the incessant search for good school results. Based on this research, it became possible to formulate a set of good practice protocols, with the aim of making them accessible to other state and municipal networks. It is worth mentioning, however, that despite being inspired by the study of the experience of PAIC, it was not intended in any way to make the protocols a faithful description of the work processes of that program. In this sense, the recurring references made

¹ Rough translation of the Introduction chapter of the [original document](#): “*Para alfabetizar na idade certa: Protocolos para a organização de uma política de formação continuada e de incentivo ao compromisso com os resultados para professores alfabetizadores.*”

throughout the presentation of the protocols to empirical evidence extracted from the Cear  program intend, solely, to empirically support the proposal and the intention of making this set of protocols a good practices guide. The appendix to this study presents in detail the theoretical and methodological assumptions of the research on PAIC.

Before presenting the protocols, it is important to better characterize the fundamental axes that structure their internal organization, namely: the emphasis on the teacher's competence and motivation; and the articulation between evaluation, monitoring and ongoing teacher training.

I.I. Focus on the quality of teaching activities

The study of the PAIC experience makes it very clear how important it is to focus on classroom routine and to understand that “classes need to happen”. To achieve this, in addition to being in a situation of co-presence, teachers and students need to be prepared to carry out the school activity. In short, for classes to happen, the fundamental points are:

- student attendance and teacher attendance.
- existence of teaching material and support;
- trained and motivated teachers to organize the pedagogical routine;
- institutional support to deal with the challenges of producing equity;
- internal school mechanisms for assessing difficulties and progress in learning;
- internal monitoring mechanisms within the school;
- external evaluation and monitoring mechanisms.

The organization of a school routine capable of generating a learning environment accessible to all children is the result of the articulation of norms and operations that can be decomposed into a set of protocols. Although without the intention of exhausting the repertoire of possibilities, it can be assumed that the school routine is the result of a set of procedures that can be standardized. For example, dimensions of school management related to the care of the school building, the relationship with the family and the community; and the good use of teaching meetings. One could also think about a series of administrative aspects, related to the allocation of teachers, management of support staff, etc. Or even, issues such as membership criteria, school discipline management, among others. For the purposes of this work, however, the focus will be much more limited, privileging the teacher's activity. And for this, it is based on the following premise: **in order for there to be a teacher capable of making the school routine happen, in addition to basic administrative issues, this teacher**

must be motivated, qualified and have an ever-renewed commitment to the pursuit of good academic results.

Teacher motivation is in itself a broad issue that, from a more general perspective, must be considered in the light of the science of management that deals with human resources.² For the purposes of this study, it is important to emphasize that teaching activity contains specificities that concern the relationship between the teacher and the student, which defines a very peculiar work activity. Different studies on the subject seem to converge around the premise that good training and a good system of financial incentives are not enough for teachers; symbolic recognition is also necessary, as well as mechanisms that, through monitoring their activity and the results measured by school performance, can keep alive the commitment to permanent school improvement (FULLAN, 2010). In this sense, reward mechanisms with a good symbolic effect can indeed play an important role, but investment in ongoing training and in a good system of monitoring and evaluating school performance are equally indispensable.

On the other hand, considering that the status of public servant provides broad stability to most teachers in public education networks, and considering that school directors do not have great power to form their teaching teams, it must be taken into account that these monitoring mechanisms would need to involve more horizontal forms through which colleagues themselves would exercise some control over the quality and performance of professionals (DARLING-HAMMOND, 2009; TALBERT, 2010). Thus, the issue of teacher motivation is necessarily connected with the dimension of training. And here lies the strategic importance of ongoing training. This type of training can function not only as an element of motivation and awareness of the importance of commitment to learning, but also as a system for supervising school work.

To become a competent teacher, it is also necessary to take into account that part of the nature of their work is a routine that is organized into two phases: one cycle, which is the academic year, and the classroom routine cycle, which is subdivided into days, weeks and two months. These two temporalities presuppose that the act of teaching, to remember Roldão's (2014) lessons, is capable of articulating planning - which includes technical-scientific and pedagogical mastery of the curriculum - with knowledge about the student and their contextual aspects. Therefore, teaching competence is never completely given, needing to be permanently renewed, daily, weekly, monthly and annually. Hence the importance of ongoing training that takes

² As Gat (2016) observes, in the case of teachers, professional development presupposes "confronting ideas, beliefs, practices, routines, objectives and roles, in the context of everyday action, with their students, colleagues, managers..." (p.169).

place routinely.

And as teaching competence is also permanently challenged, as your class changes each year and new challenges are imposed, your ongoing training needs to be in fine tune with the concrete reality of the classroom. To achieve this, instruments are needed to monitor the learning process, which inform the need for immediate adjustments, thus preventing some students from missing the academic year due to not learning. From this follows the need to combine the ongoing training process with means of formative assessment and monitoring of the teaching and learning process. In this sense, one of the ways, in some cases irreplaceable, of producing concrete elements for training, is observation *in loco* of the teacher's work. In many cases, only this type of empirical approach is capable of contributing to overcoming situations of teaching and learning difficulties encountered³.

And since the teacher's competence cannot be measured by him/her alone, and since, on the other hand, the result of his/her work is always the fruit of a collective process, the existence of a summative evaluation system is fundamental as part of an institutional environment capable of creating a culture of accountability for school results among all professionals in the school network, in addition to its relevance as a form of accountability to society in general.

Considering that the teacher trainer is a central character in ensuring the quality of the school routine, a whole set of aspects related to the training of the trainer, as well as the monitoring of their work, come into play. If the local trainer's trainer fails, the teacher's ongoing competence is compromised. To ensure the quality of the trainer's work, somewhat similar factors.

Those related to teacher training are necessary, starting with the motivation of the trainer and his/her competence to perform such a role. Here too, financial incentive and recognition are important, and here too, technical capacity must be adjusted to the demands expected of him/her. Therefore, the program will need to carefully surround the training and monitoring of the training of the trainer. Trainers must see themselves as part of the success or failure of the school, so it is essential that they also feel responsible for the results of a given school (or group of schools), or even of a given class or grade. Responsibility for school performance is undoubtedly a powerful means of committing them to teaching work. It follows that the quality of the trainer's work must be conditioned both by the evaluation made by the trained

³ The presence of pedagogical supervision has been highlighted by authors such as Alarcão (2014), as an increasingly necessary practice, and which must be conceived as a multidimensional process, which includes "regulation, evaluation, coordination, management and leadership". And it must be carried out in a formative environment, focused on development, quality and transformation (p.31).

teachers themselves, and by its indirect effect on school results.

The teacher trainer needs to be well trained by the trainer trainer, which presupposes the existence of a mechanism capable of ensuring the proper functioning of this entire training chain. And, as has already been said, to properly train the trainer of the trainer and the trainer of the teacher, it is essential to be in close tune with what is happening in the classroom. Therefore, this mechanism depends on an information management system (monitoring and evaluation) capable of supporting the preparation of training planning. Regarding this aspect, we can also think that while the teacher trainer needs data almost in real time so that his work can affect school performance, the teacher trainer trainer deals with another temporality, more related to the academic year, and therefore, his compass must be a training plan that will need to be redone each year.

To ensure the proper functioning of all this machinery, an administrative organization with a clear command structure and definition of goals is necessary, which presupposes that the institutional environment is well-founded in the political, legal and financial plans. Here, basic issues of political science and administration science are important, such as division of competences, hierarchies, and internal mechanisms of *accountability* and governance. The need for good articulation between drawings also comes into play. *top-down* and *bottom-up*. And this is especially important in situations that involve different administrative spheres, requiring coordination between bodies such as state government education departments, regional bodies, municipal governments and their respective coordinators.

I.II. Articulation between monitoring, evaluation and continuing training

Despite its rapid spread in different parts of the world, it does not follow that the use of external assessment is easily assimilated by educational systems. On the contrary, in general, there is resistance, which is due both to the fact that assessment is perceived as an external and technocratic control system of the school; and to the current criticism that it points out problems without actually offering solutions. In fact, historically, such criticisms have often called into question the validity of assessment, and its importance is even greater when one considers the side effects of the misuse of assessment, often used as an artifact to foster competition between schools and networks, as if they could be conceived under the logic of competition dear to the market.

The biggest challenge is, without a doubt, the difficulty of converting large-scale assessment into a useful tool for developing educational policies aimed at improving

schools. In other words, of making it more than a means of holding the educational network and schools accountable for school results. Of particular importance in this regard are assessments with “strong consequences” or “*high stakes*”, which use their results as parameters for award policies for students and schools, as well as for salary bonuses for professionals. Without intending to go into the merits of the validity of these initiatives, it is a fact that even where they have achieved results considered positive, alone they tend to have little sustainability, requiring other types of initiatives to complement them.

In fact, this type of use of assessment soon proves to be very limited, serving only as part of a system of incentives that, in general, fails to change the capacity of the school and its professionals to teach, especially students from less educated families who need school the most to break the cycle of poverty. It can be said that it is in response to this perception of the fragility of the isolated use of assessment on a large scale that more sophisticated policies for the use of this tool have been designed, and that have as their cornerstone its articulation with systems of supervision and monitoring of the school routine.

This articulation between evaluation and monitoring is particularly relevant for policies to improve literacy capacity to be implemented in countries like Brazil, where the main innovation that needs to be made is less about advancing in new languages, information technologies or even changing the school format,

but rather the achievement of structuring a school routine, where the class actually “happens”, that is, where the school really makes a difference, in order to interrupt the reproduction of the deprivation of access to school education. The greatest innovation among us would, therefore, be to structure a routine capable of making the school deliver what it promises, according to a certain curriculum, ceasing to function as a machine for excluding a portion of students who, deprived of basic learning, are systematically failed until they become latecomers and, finally, dropouts.

Due to its strategic power for educational contexts such as Brazil's, a movement has been observed in the country, to a certain extent more vigorous than that seen in more advanced countries, of articulation between evaluation and monitoring systems. Beforehand, it can be observed that the relationship between evaluation and monitoring encourages the development of new forms of formative evaluation, capable of providing faster and more timely feedback to school professionals; at the same time as it encourages the development of internal assessment tools that provide important data for monitoring the teaching and learning process.

It is always good to highlight the difference between summative assessment and

formative assessment, which is so important that, in English and other languages, they are characterized by different words. Summative assessment, "*evaluaton*" in English, is the one that is generally done at the end of annual or biannual cycles, and which basically serves as a form of accountability and responsibility for results; while the formative evaluation, or "*assessment*", is carried out throughout the teaching cycle, providing data and information with the potential to allow the improvement of ongoing teaching and learning processes.

A more frequent system of formative assessment is confused with the logic of monitoring; or one could say that in this case assessment is monitoring. In any case, there is undoubtedly an improvement in assessment technology, making it a fundamental pedagogical device. But it is clear that for this articulation between assessment and monitoring to occur, it is necessary to create a culture of valuing the data and information provided by these instruments in the education systems and among their professionals. And for this culture to spread, it is necessary to delimit institutional spaces where this can occur.

In international literature, a good part of the energy surrounding better articulation between evaluation systems and monitoring systems has been channeled towards the theme of valuing professional culture. The basic idea would be that, in addition to the union way of voicing teachers' interests, teachers should be encouraged to participate in spaces for professional exchange, through learning communities, provided by the schools themselves, or even by professional associations or forums. In this way, the feeling of professional responsibility for the results of their work would be strengthened, with evaluation and monitoring technologies being seen as a valued subsidy by professionals concerned about the quality of their work.

It must be admitted, however, that despite being very desirable, this type of agenda, oriented towards the creation of spaces capable of valuing professional responsibility, is still not very applicable to contexts such as Brazil, in which elementary school teachers still suffer from incipient basic working conditions and, above all, insufficient training to face the challenges of schools that often serve very heterogeneous audiences and frequently come from families with very little or no education.

Therefore, it is much more promising for us at this time to think of a path that has already been successfully implemented in some school networks in the country, and that involves the articulation between assessment, monitoring and ongoing teacher training. Although it depends on a well-oiled formative assessment system, it is interesting to note how this dynamic also allows for the definition of a new and powerful meaning for summative assessment, which is no longer used only as a

source of accountability and responsibility, but is now seen as a fundamental dimension of a system of communicating vessels for producing inferences about educational work. In fact, it is becoming clear that, in isolation, a summative assessment can do very little when it comes to school improvement. However, as a form of aggregated inference of school work, articulated with ongoing training work, it can fulfill the primary function of serving as a reference for all other management activities aimed at improving student performance, including the concern with achieving greater equity in the educational system.

Although supported by the Salary Floor Law (Law No. 11,738/2008), which reserves 1/3 of the teacher's working day for training and lesson planning, ongoing training has been implemented in very different ways by municipal entities and states. However, it can be said that it is most successful precisely in those contexts in which training is understood as a moment of articulation of evaluation and monitoring systems, starting with the fact that the definition of training work planning must, each year, be fed back by somatic and formative evaluation results. However, for this to occur, it is necessary to create a management structure made up of professionals capable of appropriating the results of the assessment and translating them into material that structures the training. In other words, it is necessary to build this fine harmony between the school results measured by the evaluation systems and the teacher's ongoing training.

As long as it is ongoing, training only really happens if it is capable of empirically dealing with the concrete problems of the classroom. And also if the trainer feels co-responsible for the results of the schools whose teachers he trains. It should be noted that, for this to happen, the trainer must become a supervisor of the school routine, working together and in partnership with the teacher. And to do this, he will need to use data and monitoring information to guide his training work. Among these data, two of the most important sources of information are those produced by formative assessment and by instruments for monitoring school work.

This creates an articulation between assessment, monitoring of the school routine and ongoing training, which gives rise to a mechanism that connects somatic assessment, formative assessment, other inferences of the teaching and learning process, training plan, training, and supervision of the school routine. Obviously, for this articulation to really function as a mechanism, it is necessary to go beyond the premise – necessary, but not sufficient – that the best way to train teachers would be, in addition to a good salary and financial incentives, a good system of control and accountability for school results. Therefore, what the mechanism that articulates evaluation, monitoring and training allows us to understand is that, as a knowledge mediator, the teacher needs to be permanently equipped with a supervision system

that, more than control and accountability, provides support for their work. Therefore, it cannot afford to do without external, somatic and formative evaluation data, nor data from monitoring its work process. And it is in the preparation of training planning and at the very moment of ongoing training that empirical inferences about their work can be consummated in better practices capable of structuring the classroom routine.

Of course, for this wheel to turn, many premises need to be fulfilled, of a political and administrative nature, as well as a pedagogical one, but keeping in mind that the need to conceive this articulation between evaluation, monitoring and ongoing training can undoubtedly be an important asset in the sense of facing obstacles that, frequently, appear as external to the school and that, to a large extent, are indeed so, but that, in order to be overcome, cannot do without the active participation of the school and a structured educational system.

In short, actions aimed at strengthening the school routine need to be based on three basic pillars:

1 – Institutional environment capable of creating a culture of responsibility for the effectiveness of school work;

2 – Continuous teacher training, understood as a means of permanent learning for teachers, not only through the training itself that it offers, but also through the creation of an environment for exchange among professionals, which tends to become a learning community. And also as a form of incentive, insofar as sharing difficulties and exchanging successful experiences tend to serve as a stimulus to the search for improvements in the quality and effectiveness of teaching activity;

3 – Assessment and monitoring of school activities, capable of ensuring the ongoing commitment of professionals involved at different levels of the school network to learning, and more specifically to literacy. In such a way that if the established goals are not achieved, all those involved in this chain, each in their sphere of competence (and not just the school and the teacher!), must be held accountable for the failure in some way.

In the following section, these three pillars are reduced to protocols, with their respective steps.