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External Control Secretariat
Government Programs Control and Evaluation Secretariat

Executive Summaries

Evaluation of the National Program of School Libraries - PNBE

Rapporteur
Minister Guilherme Palmeira

Brasília
2003

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FOREWORD TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

This series of publications contains the main information on the result of audits of social programs carried out by the TCU for the purpose of evaluating the performance of the Federal Government in areas that are strategic for Brazilian society. The activities were developed within the scope of the Brazil/UK Technical Cooperation Agreement, in force since 1998.

The aim of this document is to disseminate information about the action of the TCU, reporting the development of the audited programs and their main characteristics to the Supreme Audit Institutions and other pertinent international organizations.

This issue presents information on the TCU audit aimed at evaluating the "Distribution of Bibliographical Collections to the Public Elementary Schools" (National Program of School Libraries - PNBE). This program is one of the actions of the Program Every Child in School, of the Ministry of Education.

Valmir Campelo
Minister-President

Evaluation of the National Program of School Libraries - PNBE

The Brazilian Court of Audit - TCU carried out an audit in order to evaluate the “Distribution of Bibliographical Collections to Public Elementary Schools” (National Program of School Libraries – PNBE), one of the actions of the Program Every Child in School, included in the 2000-2003 Multiannual Plan. The PNBE is managed by the Elementary Education Secretariat - SEF and by the National Fund for Development of Education – FNDE, subordinated to the Ministry of Education.

The goal of the PNBE is to enable the diversification of the sources of information used in Brazilian public schools, contributing to the improvement of the critical awareness of the students and teachers, as well as of the community in general. It seeks to achieve its purpose by distributing literary works for children and youths to the Public Elementary Schools that are registered in the School Census. The literature addresses topics related to the historical, economic, and cultural development of the Country in addition to reference works such as encyclopedias and dictionaries.

In the implementation of the PNBE, the Public Elementary Secretariat - SEF is in charge of setting the guidelines and selecting the titles that will be a part of the book collections each year and the FNDE is in charge of purchasing and distributing the books to the schools.

Why was it evaluated?

We noted that there is no information available on the use of the books distributed by the PNBE. This is due to a lack of systematic evaluation of the use of the book collections by the students and teachers, which prevents knowledge about the results of the Program. Such evaluation is essential to ensure the proper use of the books received, especially when it is known that the material distributed is the only source of pedagogical support available to many schools.

What was evaluated?

The audit attempted to investigate how the books distributed by the PNBE might be used more effectively. The difficulties faced by the beneficiaries and opportunities to use the book collections were evaluated, verifying, among other aspects, if the schools' operational conditions allowed them to include the books in the school activities. The qualification of the teachers and the dissemination of the Program were also checked.

Moreover, a comparative analysis of the systems adopted by the PNBE was conducted, considering that the approach of providing book collections to the school libraries benefited by the Program was replaced in 2001 by direct delivery of the books to the students. Another concern was to find ways to reinforce monitoring and implement activities to oversee and evaluate the Program. Other concerns were interaction both with other programs within the Ministry of Education – MEC and with initiatives in other levels of government (states and municipalities) as well as more equitable treatment for the beneficiaries of the Program.

How was the work developed?

The field work consisted of visits to 60 schools in the states of Tocantins, Rio Grande do Norte, Rio de Janeiro, Santa Catarina, Goiás, and the Federal District, covering the 5 geographic regions of Brazil. Moreover, a survey was conducted by means of questionnaires sent to 879 schools in all Brazilian states. The schools were selected by means of statistical samples and the reply rate was of 57.2%. The work also relied on interviews with managers of the Program in MEC as a means to investigate various aspects related to evaluation.

What the TCU found

The work revealed that the FNDE has demonstrated great operational effectiveness in the distribution of the book collections of the Program to the benefited schools. In 1998, 20 thousand schools were covered; in 1999, 36 thousand were covered. For 2002 it is estimated that 139 thousand schools will be covered by the Program.

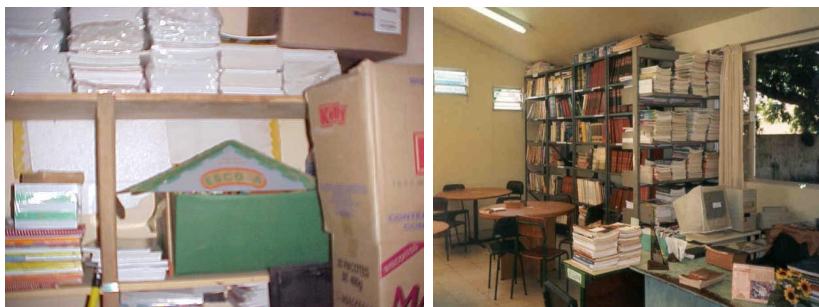
However, it was also found that the PNBE lacks well-structured monitoring and evaluation activities. The MEC does not have information that allows us to know how the book collections are being used or what problems might be affecting the effectiveness of the use of the books in the development of the students in the benefited schools. This fact is more worrying at this precise moment because the coverage of the Program is being increased.

Another point raised is that the dissemination of the PNBE needs to improve. The case studies in the benefited schools revealed that very few directors and teachers know about the Program. At the same time, data from the 2000 School Census indicate that only 27,6% of the schools that had received book collections from the PNBE in 1998 and/or 1999 stated that they took part in the Program.

The work showed that there is little integration between the three levels of government in the education policies for paradidactic books. There are several initiatives - even within the federal government (TV School, Parameters in Action) - that could be linked to the PNBE to increase its effectiveness.

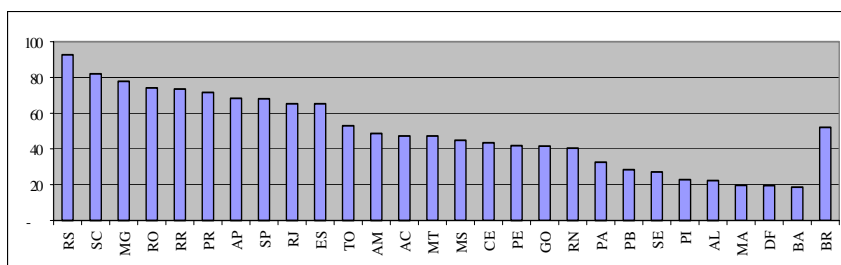
Finally, it was also found that there are no support actions planned for the poorest schools. These schools have deficiencies that can severely undermine the use of the book collections if they do not receive special attention from the management of the PNBE. The photo below, on the left, helps illustrate the situation. The lack of appropriate space for storage and use of the book collections tends to undermine the quality of the pedagogical work that these schools can carry out. Thus, it is necessary

to offer special support to the poor schools in order to minimize difficulties and to improve their situation, as illustrated in the picture on the right.



The graph below shows the distribution of benefited schools that have a library, an important resource for the use of the books received. The predominance of schools benefited by the Program that have no libraries is in the states of the Northeastern Region, in contrast with what occurs in the Southern Region. This disparity results in conditions that limit the use of the book collections where they are most needed.

Graph 1 – Percentile distribution of schools benefited by the PNBE in 1998 and 1999 that have a library, per state



Source: FNDE list of schools benefited by the PNBE in 1998 and 1999 and data from the 2000 School Census.

What can be done to improve performance of the PNBE

Considering the importance and the quality of the book collections distributed, it is essential to promote their effective use, in compliance with the statement made by Minister Paulo Renato in the radio program Voice of Brazil - Program # 136/2001 of 10/09/2001: *“the Program ‘School Libraries’, of the Ministry of Education, has been equipping public schools with a complete collection of literature for children and youths. Fifty six thousand schools have already formed their libraries. **But it’s no use for a school to have a library if it is not used frequently.**”* To this end, the TCU recommended to MEC the following measures, among others:

- overseeing and systematic evaluation of the actions and results achieved by the PNBE;
- actions to disseminate information about the PNBE and training of teachers and librarians, with more participation of the education secretariats;
- creation of a coordination group in charge of interaction with other MEC programs;
- include in the PNBE the concern with the principle of equity.

It is expected that these actions will increase the effectiveness of the Program. Thus, improvement in the monitoring process of the PNBE, after the book collections have been delivered to the schools, and the creation of a system to evaluate and oversee the results of the Program can help obtain more precise information regarding the target public and the effective fulfillment of their needs. Thus, knowledge of the possible impacts of the PNBE in terms of increased learning levels of the students is made available.

Moreover, interaction with other programs and initiatives in the three levels of government can improve dissemination of the PNBE and the use of the book collections distributed. The spreading of good practices for training teachers and librarians in the use of the book collections is an

example of a benefit that may result from more interaction with states and municipalities.

At the same time, support to the poor schools can provide better conditions for them to use the book collections, through guidance on how to overcome operational difficulties such as lack of physical space for the school library and lack of a librarian. In this manner, it is expected that there will be more learning opportunities for the students of the schools that face difficulties in incorporating the book collections into their pedagogical practice.

The Brazilian Court of Audit is overseeing the implementation of the recommendations in order to ensure that the problems raised by the audit will be addressed effectively.