Governance Assessment of Basic Education in Brazil

ABSTRACT

Objective: Bearing in mind the Sustainable Development Goals guidelines, the objective was to assess the governance process in Brazilian basic education by applying Oliveira, Nunes & Guerra's instrument (2020).

Method: This study was based on 1) a factorial analysis of the dimensionality of an instrument by Oliveira *et al*. (2020), and 2) an empirical analysis of its application to a sample of 511 basic education leaders, managers, and board members in Brazil.

Originality/Relevance: This study reports on an empirical assessment of governance in Brazilian basic education. The findings both represent the reality of state and municipal managers included in the sample and contribute to validating an instrument that taps into the governance process in Brazilian basic education.

Results: The instrument was validated with 4 constructs, namely: institutionalization, participatory engagement, institutional design, and quality of participatory processes. Such constructs are consistent with the Governance Analytical Framework (GAF) and indicate factors that promote quality education in Brazil.

Theoretical/Methodological contributions: The survey answers showed that formal social norms explain the dynamics of the governance process in Brazil.

Keywords: Education governance; Basic education system; Governance Analytical Framework; Assessment instrument.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Oliveira, Nunes & Guerra (2020) describe the design and theoretical validation of a pilot instrument to assess governance in Brazilian basic education systems. Empirical research on the subject is incipient, especially in Brazil, and this instrument can contribute to developing global indicators for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG4 ("ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all") (UN, 2017a). However, the instrument lacks empirical validation through factor analysis as the final methodological requirement proposed by Pasquali (2009). This is the focus of the present article.

In 2015 the United Nations (UN) adopted a new development agenda and established new SDGs, which include SDG No. 4 (or SDG4). The goals are yet to be reached for nearly all indicators within SDG4 (UN, 2017b), which entails that data remain to be produced or international standards remain to be defined for measuring the various constructs of quality education. This points to the relevance of the present study.

Norms of governance are still embryonic in Brazil, especially because the law has been remiss about regulating actors, social norms, and nodal points (Oliveira *et al.*, 2020), which are dimensions within Hufty's (2011) Governance Analytical Framework (GAF) used to propose the present instrument. In fact, it is difficult to assess the Brazilian scenario quantitatively, and the lack of adequate measures has hindered advances in quality education (Oliveira *et al.* 2020). Part of the challenge includes implementing governance structures in the education system (Møller & Skedsmo, 2015; Vidovich & Currie, 2011; Woelert & Millar, 2013).

Drawing on both Hufty's (2011) dimensions in GAF and Pasquali's (2009) methodology for designing and validating an assessment instrument, this study uses Oliveira *et al.*'s (2020) pilot instrument as a starting point to address the following question: Is the education governance process in Brazil adequate to ensure and promote inclusive, equitable, quality education? Bearing in mind the SDG4 guidelines, the objective was to assess the governance process in Brazilian basic education by applying the above-mentioned pilot instrument.

In other words, this study reports on an empirical assessment of governance in Brazilian basic education. The findings both represent the reality of state and municipal managers included in the sample and contribute to validating an instrument that taps into the governance process in Brazilian basic education.

2 EDUCATION GOVERNANCE

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development puts forward that governments have the primary responsibility for monitoring and reviewing the progress made in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals at the national, regional, and global levels over the next 15 years (UN, 2017b). However, research on education governance is incipient in Brazil, while several surveys have been carried out in other countries, including: Norway (Møller & Skedsmo, 2015), Sweden (Bunar, 2011), Georgia, Armenia (Dobbins & Khachatryan, 2015), Germany (Schiersmann, 2014), Switzerland (Schiersmann, 2014), England, Netherlands, Italy, Portugal (Magalhães, Veiga, Ribeiro, Sousa, & Santiago, 2013), United States (Vidovich & Currie, 2011), Hong Kong (Ng, 2013), and Australia (Woelert & Millar, 2013; Vidovich & Currie, 2011). Such studies have demonstrated the relevance of education governance for quality education. Successful cases of education governance,

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especially in Australia, Norway, and Sweden, have been widely addressed and cited in scientific research.

GAF is intended for research on governance processes but lacks application in the field of education (Hufty, 2011). A bibliographic review of the literature on GAF-based education governance – not provided in this article for space reasons – indicated that the main Brazilian and foreign studies have been published in the *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, *Higher Education*, and *Journal of Education Policy*. The major topics include accountability, democracy, engagement, decentralization, and power. The most cited authors are Jenny Ozga, Sotiria Grek, and Bob Lingard. The most cited publications are Ozga (2009), Nórvoa & Yariv-Mashal (2003) and Hartong (2018). It is apparent in this specialized literature that analyzing education governance processes could indicate factors that promote quality education in Brazil.

Hufty (2011) proposes five dimensions for GAF, namely: problems, actors, social norms, processes, and nodal points. Problems is a dimension related to the issues involved in a given situation, with actors seeking to have their perspective adopted over those of other individuals. The collective problems proposed by Hufty (2011) refer to the education demands of a specific community to be prioritized and met through the governance process (Oliveira *et al.*, 2020).

Social norms is a dimension based on values or beliefs. It includes the "rules of the game" and the norms that underlie them (meta-governance) to guide and sanction the actions of individuals or groups within a society's spaces of power. Norms involve both prescription, i.e., what should or should not be done, and sanction, which can be either 1) positive, reinforcing behavior, 2) or negative, restricting behavior (Hufty, 2011).

Actors is a dimension related to individuals or groups of individuals whose behaviors are guided by their nature, power, interests, ideas, and history (Hufty, 2011). It is related to the representativeness of interested parties impacted by the governance-derived decision-making. Cunha, Almeida, Faria & Ribeiro (2011) address a multidimensional strategy for evaluating policy councils and suggest an approach involving the analysis of legitimacy, participatory dynamics, and exogenous factors. An important aspect of this dimension is the technical and political training of board members to exercise their functions in full (Tatagiba, 2002). It requires investigating the plurality of segments represented, the criteria for choosing representatives, the composition of boards, and the equal status and qualification of members.

Nodal points are the spaces of interaction (physical or virtual) between actors in the governance process (Hufty, 2011). A board, such as the state and municipal boards of education, is one of the main spaces for different actors to participate and express their opinions (Tatagiba 2005), thus influencing the decision-making process (Faria & Ribeiro, 2011). It is also important to analyze the contribution of official citizen service channels to the decision-making of these boards (Cortes, 2011).

Processes (or workflows) is the dimension that emerges from the set of actors' activities and interactions in the nodal points over time – it starts with problem identification and delimitation and wraps up with a decision made to solve the problem. Vaz (2011) emphasizes the need to analyze the decision-making process based on the rules that govern the institutions' functioning, i.e., based on the modus operandi underlying the final decision-making. The decision-making process is a relevant variable because it defines the rules for reaching final consensus. Rules for preparing the meeting agendas, for example, are important predictors of this factor because they define which discussions will be carried out.

Focusing on education governance in Brazil and based on the GAF categories, Oliveira *et al.* (2020) used Pasquali's (2009) methodology to design and validate a pilot instrument for evaluating education governance. Oliveira *et al.* (2020) used the following

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methodological steps: 1) delimitation of the object and attributes measured by the instrument, 2) constitutive and operational definition of construct "education governance", 3) preparation of items, and 4) theoretical analysis of items. Following these steps, the authors validated the instrument theoretically, a relevant result for supporting practical studies focused on leaders, managers, board members and other actors involved in governance of education systems.

The 25 items of the pilot instrument are part of the behavioral representation of the GAF-based governance process constructs (Oliveira *et al.*, 2020). Such items are the tasks that individuals must perform to measure the intensity of the construct under scrutiny (Pasquali, 2009), in this case governance in basic education in Brazil.

3 METHODS

3.1 Pilot instrument application

The empirical validation procedures involved planning the application and the very collection and analysis of empirical data (Pasquali, 2009). Data collection targeted the population of professionals from State and Municipal Education Management Bodies and from State and Municipal Boards of Education – i.e., education department directors, managers and board members involved in basic education in Brazil. More specifically, the target population is distributed over 5,570 municipalities, all 26 federated states and the Federal District, totaling 5,597 potential respondents, according to data provided by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics.

As no previous studies were found that had validated Oliveira *et al.*'s instrument (2020, p. 182), a sample of 5 to 10 individuals per item was adopted, which is deemed as sufficient for empirical validation (see Pasquali, 2009). Thus, 150 to 250 individuals should be included to validate an instrument consisting of 25 items. Also, any factor analysis, which is the ultimate requirement for validation purposes, requires at least 200 individuals (see Pasquali, 2009). Thus, sample size was defined to include at least 200 respondents; as it was non-probabilistic, further studies are required for generalizations.

The instrument was applied individually to the target population. Contacting the target population was a difficult endeavor because it consisted of leaderships in education management bodies scattered over states and municipalities. Therefore, a request for the contacts of state and municipal departments of education was filed with the National Institute of Education Studies and Research Anísio Teixeira (Inep) to obtain the partnership of the National Council of Education Departments (Consed) and the National Association of Municipal Education Managers (Undime).

Each instrument item consisted of multiple-choice questions based on both the literature and the following normative documents on basic education in Brazil: Federal Constitution, National Education Bases and Guidelines Law, National Education Plan, and further norms and instruments provided by Brazilian education bodies (e.g., Conviva Educação's Municipal Education Management Diagnosis, and Ministry of Education's State and Municipal Joint Action Plan). The instrument included classified information and demographic and occupation questions in its initial section, such as: age group, gender, role, education level, federated state, sector, and coverage area.

Data were collected electronically from August 9th through December 16th, 2018, through Google Drive forms, as the target population is distributed throughout the country. Overall, 511 individuals provided valid responses, i.e., 9.13% response rate. Descriptive results are provided in section 4.1.

3.2 Statistical analysis

Following Pasquali's (2009) methodology, data should be statistically analyzed to assess the instrument's factor structure. This study used Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), Principal Component Analysis (PCA), and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to find the best fitting of the empirical data.

Upon validating the assumptions of multivariate analysis, the following steps were used for Exploratory Factor Analysis and Principal Component Analysis:

a) Factor Matrix Test: both Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (2262.0, p<0.001) and Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Test (0.78804), which indicated that the data matrix is factorable (Dziuban & Shirkey, 1974),

b) Correlation Matrix: Polychoric Correlation (Jöreskog, 1994),

c) Dimension Retention/Estimation: Parallel Analysis (Timmerman & Lorenzo-Seva, 2011) and Convex Hull (Lorenzo-Seva, Timmerman, & Kiers, 2011),

d) Rotation: Promax Oblique Rotation for estimating factor/dimension (Costello & Osborne, 2005),

e) Extraction: Principal Component Analysis (Jolliffe, 2011) and Factor Analysis. Unweighted Least Squares was selected for exploratory factor analysis (Jöreskog, 1994). Weighted Least Squares Mean and Variance Adjusted were used for Confirmatory Factor Analysis (Asparouhov & Muthén, 2010).

Parallel Analysis-based PCA (Timmerman & Lorenzo-Seva, 2011) aimed at a simple structure, i.e., the major loading matrix related each variable uniquely to a single major factor. At the end, the structure consisted of 4 factors and 21 items. Subsequently, CFA was performed to test the structure found through EFA and PCA (Brown, 2014). The CFA was carried out on software Mplus using common criteria in the literature, including chi-square-derived indices (chi-square test, Confirmatory Fit Index – CFI, and Tucker-Lewis Index – TLI) and residual indices (Root Mean Squared Error Adjusted – RMSEA).

The result showed high factor loadings, i.e., both the model fit was good (CFI: 0.973, TLI: 0.968, and RMSEA: 0.053 90% CI [0.047 0.060]) and the chi-square test was statistically significant (x^2 (164) = 402,021, p < 0.05). Finally, the factor structure of the validated instrument, named Governance in Basic Education Systems in Brazil (GovEduc), has 4 constructs containing 20 dimensions (see Figure 1, Section 4.2).

4 RESULTS

4.1 Descriptive analysis

The descriptive analysis results from the pilot instrument initially composed of 25 items as provided by Oliveira *et al*. (2020). In other words, the results described in this section were the means used to obtain the final instrument containing 4 constructs and 20 dimensions (see Section 4.2). The present validation findings are relevant because they summarize the respondents' perception of governance in basic education in Brazil in 2018, period when data were obtained from all regions within the federated states.

In the first construct, Education Problems, questions targeted the identification of these problems, the existence of prioritization criteria, and instruments used to identify problems. Respondents reported the following as the main problems in basic education: learning infrastructure or spaces (67.3%), funding, teaching materials, equipment, or resources (46.2%), and teacher training (42.7%).

Given limited resources, defining prioritization criteria is important. According to nearly 60% of respondents, prioritization criteria have been formally defined and/or used to

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support Education Management Body's decisions, while 27% of respondents understand that such criteria have been informally defined.

The major planning instruments used to prioritize education problems are the State/Municipal Education Plan (78.3%) and the Joint Action Plan (74.8%). Further major instruments include documents related to public budgeting: Annual Budget Law (62.6%), Budget Guidelines Law (60.9%), and Pluriannual Plan (60.5%).

Implementing the State/Municipal Education Plan is legally mandatory, i.e., states and municipalities were supposed to prepare their education plans, or adapt the plans already in place, in compliance with the guidelines, goals and strategies defined in the 2014 National Education Plan within 1 (one) year from its publication (PNE, 2014). As 73% of respondents informed that their respective State/Municipal Education Plans had been sanctioned sometime from 2014, compliance with the law has been high. However, 6.5% of respondents said their respective plans are still in the elaboration and approval stage.

Instruments used to identify the problems targeted in the respective Plans are state/municipal education conferences/forums (70.8%), state/municipal education committees (66.3%), and public hearing (52.4%). The two most used instruments are indirect mechanisms, namely through conferences/forums and committees.

In the second construct, Education Actors, Oliveira *et al.* (2020) point out the State/Municipal Board of Education as the main group of actors, which is consistent with Cunha *et al.* (2011). Identifying how board members are chosen is relevant because board composition directly influences the decision-making processes (Faria & Ribeiro, 2011). For 48.3% of respondents, board members are elected by their peers within specific population segments.

Board composition indicates the level of citizen participation in the education process (Cunha *et al.*, 2011). Data showed that the major segments in State/Municipal Boards of Education are teachers (84.1%), students' parents (77.1%), school managers (70.1%), the Municipal Education Management Body (67.9%), students (55.2%), and the Council for Child and Adolescent Rights and/or Protective Council (50.4%).

Board member training in the previous year was relatively low, as 53.2% of respondents said that no specific training had been provided. Consequently, board members are prone to manipulation by those who hold technical and informational power (Faria & Ribeiro, 2011).

Results on the number of members in the State/Municipal Boards of Education pointed to 6-10 full members (39.5% of respondents) or 11-14 full members (24.7% of respondents). The number of board members is directly proportional to their ability to act upon and cope with public issues, which, in turn, is related to institutional articulation.

Institutional articulation initiatives have been established with the states (44% of respondents) or the federal government (34.4% of respondents). This points to concentration of resources and decisions in the central power (either state or federal government).

In the third construct, Social Norms, Oliveira *et al.* (2020) seek to assess the level of board institutionalization, which is expected to ensure continuity and effectiveness in the decision-making process. According to 90% of respondents, State/Municipal Boards of Education are regulated by state or municipal law, but only 37.2% of respondents said that local law is in place to regulate the local education system.

The analysis approached the legal norm used to create the State/Municipal Boards of Education institutionally. Laws have been the major form to create such boards according to 71.4% of respondents, which is consistent with the 1988 Federal Constitution (CF, 1988).

Most of the 511 respondents (62.4%) said that the respective legal norm provides for equal member composition of civil society and government in the State/Municipal Boards of

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Education. Such norms include the following major topics on the functioning of such boards: choices of board members (67.3% of respondents), roles and responsibilities of board members (65.4%), and frequency of meetings (64.2%). They most frequently define the following major roles of the State/Municipal Boards of Education: monitor the performance of the State/Municipal Education System/Network (75.9%), participate in the elaboration of education policies (71%), and issue opinions and respond to queries from the government or society about teaching and education within the Education System/Network (70.6%).

In the fourth construct, Nodal Points, Oliveira *et al*. (2020) assess the conditions for the effective functioning of such spaces considering the existence of adequate infrastructure in line with the National Education Plan (2014). However, most respondents (70.1%) said that the State/Municipal Boards use a shared space and, therefore, do not comply with this Plan.

Besides, 61.1% of respondents said the boards have access to Internet, but only 11.4% informed that the boards have Internet pages. Twenty-seven percent of respondents said they do not have an employee providing technical and administrative support to ensure they have quality information to make decisions.

The most common service mechanisms available to individual citizens are phone or Internet services for receiving demands, suggestions, or complaints, as reported by respondents. Shared telephone is the main mechanism for individual citizen participation (57.5% of respondents), which suggests that the Boards of Education depend on the Education Management Body for their operation.

Respondents also said that board meetings had been held every two or three months (34.4%) or every month (33.3%) in 2018. The frequency of meetings is indicative of the actual activity of a board as opposed to those boards that have been formally constituted but experience limited operation.

The number of board committees is a proxy of the cognitive quality of the debate for decision-making. Only 36.3% of respondents pointed to the existence of one or more committees in their respective boards. Therefore, board members do not seem to have adequate structures supporting their decision-making processes, i.e., the debates are not cognitively qualified (see Cunha *et al*., 2011).

Finally, in construct Workflows, Oliveira *et al*. (2020) seek information on the institutionalization of the boards' organizational processes. The present results show that the boards have an informal workflow for identifying education demands (31% of respondents).

Oliveira *et al*. (2020) assume that a workflow for prioritizing education demands (i.e., the deliberative process itself) is in place if a board works and can influence government decision-making. Hence, a relationship is expected between the process of identifying demands and the deliberative process. In this study, 32.1% of respondents reported an informal workflow for prioritizing education demands. Such informality points to the low level of board institutionalization.

While 28.6% of respondents reported a formal, continuously updated workflow for monitoring education goals and strategies, 24.3% said that the workflow is informal. This is inconsistent with the education systems' legal obligation to create mechanisms for locally monitoring the achievement of the goals defined in the National Education Plan and in the state and municipal education plans (Brazil, 2014).

While 25.8% of respondents reported informal workflows aimed at institutional articulation, i.e., establishing partnerships, agreements, and cooperation for the development of education systems, only 14.3% said that such workflows are formal and updated. This finding suggests that institutional articulation workflows are often informal, which is also inconsistent with legal obligations.

Finally, ca. 35% of respondents said reported no training workflow for board members, not even informally. This may be indicative that 1) education actors participate inadequately and 2) the quality of the deliberative process is flawed, as these actors lack technical and political training (Faria & Ribeiro, 2011).

4.2 Final instrument

Principal Component Analysis, Exploratory Factor Analysis and Confirmatory Factor Analysis pointed to 4 factors that provided the best fit, namely: 1) board institutionalization, 2) participatory engagement, 3) institutional design, and 4) quality of participatory processes.

Not all constructs in the theoretical model (GAF) coincided with the empirical results (validated instruments). In other words, based on the data described in Section 4.1, problems, actors, social norms, nodal points and workflows were not fully confirmed, even though there is some consistency between empirical results and theoretical constructs. Figure 1 shows how the factors identified in the empirical model are a redefinition/translation of constructs in the theoretical model (GAF).

Validated empirical constructs	Validated dimensions
Participatory engagement	Plan response to education demands Identify education problems Regulate creation of spaces for participatory engagement Articulate stakeholders Regulate functioning of spaces for participatory engagement
Board institutionalization	Create spaces for participatory engagement Establish board member training Institutionalize board composition
Institutional design	Balance member composition in the board Provide adequate technical and administrative support Ensure effective functioning of spaces Divide the board into committees
Quality of participatory processes	Establish objective criteria for prioritizing demands Manage process for identifying demands Manage demand prioritization process Manage education monitoring and evaluation process Manage institutional articulation process Manage the processes of board member training and improvement

Figure 1. Validated instrument (GovEduc)

5 DISCUSSION

In the first construct, Education Problems, respondents seemed to indicate that problem identification stems from the demands, needs and expectations of education stakeholders (both individuals and groups) considering both the local context and the national coordination. In fact, a problem entails its identification, prioritization, planning, and disclosure. Considering that only 1% of respondents checked "I don't know how to answer", there is evidence of their clarity about the education problems to be faced through the

education governance process, even though they lack other instruments and resources to make it effective.

Given limited resources to face the problems identified, defining prioritization criteria is important. In the literature, prioritizing problems can increase the efficiency of the governance process and contribute to reducing individualism and patrimonialism, thus preserving public interest over private interest. Even though the 511 respondents said that they use criteria defined by the Municipal Department of Education, it is impossible to be sure that such criteria are widely known by all education stakeholders and that they have been brought forward by the Boards of Education, which would be indicative of higher effectiveness.

Such criteria are set out in the State/Municipal Education Plan, by which the state/municipality shall legally abide. Despite this, it is important to double check its effective use in the governance process and by the Education Management Bodies. For greater effectiveness, the State/Municipal Education Plan needs to be perceived by education actors as the main instrument for formalizing and coping with selected education problems.

Even though most State/Municipal Education Plans are in place, respondents informed that the two most used instruments for identifying education problems are indirect mechanisms, namely through conferences/forums and committees. Therefore, it seems that the governance structures in the state and municipal education systems lack direct participation channels for articulation between education actors and, above all, the Boards of Education.

In construct Education Actors, the locus of action is the State/Municipal Boards of Education themselves, which are considered the spaces for such actors to participate in the definition and evaluation of the community's education demands to the Education Management Bodies. As such boards are plural bodies, the diversity of its members may be linked to important advances in deliberative effectiveness.

Cunha *et al*. (2011) recommend alternatives to the political appointment of board members, each with advantages and disadvantages: election by peers, selection process etc. As shown in Section 4.1, 48.3% of respondents said that board members are elected by their peers within specific population segments. Even though this is the most democratic form of choice, it does not ensure quality representation or non-interference by local political powers. It is the regulation of the selection process that ensures board composition and quality of representation (Cunha *et al*, 2011), which, in turn, directly bears on the quality of board deliberations (Faria & Ribeiro, 2011).

The boards in this study are predominantly occupied by government segments, with evidence of unequal diversity in board representation. Information is asymmetrical between governmental and non-governmental board members, either because non-governmental members do not have the necessary technical knowledge or because they do not have access to the same privileged information as the public managers (Tatagiba, 2005). In addition, 53.2% of respondents said that no specific training had been provided in the previous year.

Consequently, board members are prone to manipulation by those who hold technical and informational power (Faria & Ribeiro, 2011). This can directly influence the decision-making process in the boards. It is usually the government representatives who have the greatest competence and mastery of information. In other words, government representatives are better able to express themselves and influence decisions (Faria & Ribeiro, 2011).

This finding is corroborated by results that 1) reveal that institutional articulations take place at the state and federal levels and, therefore, 2) confirm the concentration of resources and decisions in the central power. This is indicative that Brazil is swimming against the tide

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when it comes to governance strategies for education, which has been moving towards decentralization in other countries (Møller & Skedsmo, 2015).

Another highlight is the National Training Program for Municipal Education Board Members (Pró-Conselho), which encourages the creation of new municipal boards of education, the strengthening of existing ones, and the participation of civil society in the evaluation, definition, and monitoring of education policies. The fundamental objective of this program is to qualify managers and technicians from municipal departments of education and civil society representatives to work on municipal boards of education. Despite the existence of such council and the strategy provided for in the National Education Plan (Brazil, 2014), which determines the expansion of support and training programs for members of public policy monitoring boards, only 5% of the 511 respondents indicated that the federal government contributed to their training.

Most states/municipalities have Boards of Education created by state/municipal law. Yet, their board compositions seem to show that some boards may have been created to meet a legal determination, i.e., to meet a requirement for establishing an education system or for obtaining federal funding.

In construct Social Norms – i.e., the collective expectations about what is considered appropriate behavior in a society as a predictor of power, competences, accountability, legitimacy, or sanctions to actors in the governance process – the greater the regulation (i.e., norms), the more institutionalized the spaces are (Faria & Ribeiro, 2011). By the same token, the presence of a set of bureaucratic structures, such as a board of directors, executive secretariat, or technical and thematic committees, indicate how well organized the boards are. A schedule of meetings and their frequency also point to organization.

Considering that the main function of the governance process is deliberation, regulation of the boards' functioning dynamics is essential for producing effective results in solving problems (deliberative effectiveness). As only 47.2% of respondents reported some regulation on the processing of decisions, the education governance process seems to have low deliberative effectiveness and the boards seem to have a low level of democratization (Vaz, 2011).

Results showed that the two most frequent roles of boards as established in the legal instruments are related to the main functions of governance, namely: 1) to direct (i.e., establish guidelines, objectives, and goals), and 2) to monitor and evaluate (i.e., follow-up the performance of Education Systems/Networks). However, some roles of the Boards of Education represent a dysfunction of governance. For example, execution-aimed responsibilities are inherent to management, which, according to LDB (1996), is a duty of Education Management Bodies, but in practice this is normally assigned to the Municipal Boards of Education.

Governance is related to management, but these are not to be confused as one single token. By ascribing management powers to the Boards of Education – in some cases through the National Education Bases and Guidelines Law – education systems can experience excessive bureaucratization and excessive normative and legal guidelines. Governance dysfunction can lead society and Education Management Bodies to question whether the institutionalization of Boards of Education really improves the government's functioning and the implementation of education policies, and primarily whether it produces a positive impact on the quality of the citizens' lives.

Such questioning advances towards the understanding of the Boards of Education and their nodal points. In GAF, these are physical or virtual spaces where various problems, actors and workflows converge in time and space to make decisions, reach agreements, and create social norms applied throughout the education governance process. Thus, such nodal points

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are characterized by trust between actors, social participation, effective decisions, and transparent performance.

The National Education Plan (PNE, 2014) provide for the autonomous functioning of the Boards of Education so that they can promote the effective engagement of the school community, students' families, school employees, students, and managers. Drawing on GAF, Oliveira *et al*. (2020) assess this based on the adequate infrastructure in the boards' decision-making spaces. However, the present research indicates that conditions for this have not been secured, as the Boards of Education share the Education Management Bodies' infrastructure, which can be withdrawn at any time and would eventually make their operation unfeasible.

The frequency of ordinary meetings shows a board's level of institutionalization (Cunha *et al*., 2011). The same applies to the disclosure of meeting schedules, agendas, discussions, and decisions. Empirical data indicated that meetings take place every two or three months (34.4%) or every month (33.3%). In the absence of benchmarks, further studies should investigate the possible relationships between meeting frequency and quality of decision-making in the light of the number of students served in an education network.

The internal groupings in the boards also indicate the existence of organizational structures and, therefore, the adequacy of nodal points (Cunha *et al*. 2011). Only 36.3% of the 511 respondents reported one or more committees in the State/Municipal Boards of Education, which seems to show that the board members do not have structures supporting their decision-making process, i.e., debates in nodal points have not been cognitively qualified (Cunha *et al*., 2011).

Moreover, the non-existence of organizational structures such as committees within the boards points to the lack of commitment to member training and, consequently, to a questionable qualification of the deliberative process (Cunha *et al*., 2011). Informational asymmetry between representatives of the government and those of other sectors urges this set of bureaucratic structures. Government attempts to dominate such spaces are frequent (e.g., Tatagiba, 2002), and governments can also use them to endorse their own decisions (Cunha *et al*., 2011).

The last GAF construct, Workflows, conceptually includes the set of interdependent activities ordered in time and space for decision making as a response to an education problem (Oliveira *et al*., 2020). Within the State/Municipal Boards of Education, tasks and efforts must be intentionally aligned through the continuous improvement of the processes for identifying and prioritizing problems, monitoring and assessing results, managing interested parties, continuously training board members, and promoting governance-driven institutional articulation. However, the empirical results (cf. Section 5.1) suggested that the workflows in the Boards of Education have been characterized by informality, which points to their low level of institutionalization.

Thus, deliberations in the field of education depend on how preferences are formed and how consensus is obtained in the decision-making process (Vaz, 2011). Prior agreement between the education actors regarding the rite for presenting individual preferences and obtaining consensus is essential for deliberative efficiency. Otherwise, the quality of the deliberative process can be questioned at the state and municipal levels.

6 FINAL REMARKS

This study aimed to assess the governance process in basic education in Brazil. It set out to answer the following question: Is the education governance process in Brazil adequate to ensure and promote inclusive, equitable, quality education? To this end, Oliveira *et al*.'s (2020) pilot instrument was validated based on the findings obtained from a sample of 511

respondents, including department directors, managers and board members in the field of basic education.

Data showed that the typical functions of governance are to direct and control education management at its various levels, with the main legal governance instruments in force in Brazil being the National Education Plan and the State/Municipal Education Plans. The major problems pointed out by respondents refer to education quality and funding.

The main education governance actors are members of education systems and networks, learning organizations (nursery, schools, and universities), and students. Such actors make up the State/Municipal Boards of Education and they are usually elected by peers in their respective segments. However, inadequate technical and administrative support, infrastructure and board member training are strong indicators of low representativeness and deliberative quality in such boards.

Training for education governance actors is paramount for effective democratic management. It is also necessary to monitor and assess the boards' decisions to identify and disseminate good education governance and management practices. The most detrimental aspects of education governance are asymmetry of information between education actors and absence of a national education assessment system, both of which are essential for exercising governance and consequently accomplishing the agreed-upon guidelines.

When it comes to social norms, most states/municipalities have Boards of Education created by state/municipal law. However, board composition seems to indicate that some boards may have been created to meet a legal determination, i.e., to meet a requirement for establishing an education system or for obtaining federal funding.

Results for nodal points provided evidence that federal, state and municipal governments have not ensured the conditions for autonomous functioning of the State/Municipal Boards of Education. In most cases, these are dependent on the resources of the Education Management Body, which is indicative of a certain lack of interest in the full functioning of such boards.

Findings for Workflow revealed that the governance process in basic education in Brazil generally have not adopted individual or collective participation mechanisms to identify education demands. The decision-making process, which is the essence of governance, is mostly informal, compromising the deliberative efficiency of the State/Municipal Boards of Education. Besides, most states and municipalities have not implemented workflows for continuous monitoring of the achievement of education goals and strategies, contrary to the legal determination provided for in the National Education Plan.

These aspects are summarized in the following constructs of the instrument validated in this study, named as GovEduc: institutionalization, participatory engagement, institutional design, and quality of participatory processes. These constructs are consistent with GAF and indicate the factors that promote education quality in Brazil. Further studies should also address the dimensions of governance that ensure the right to quality education, as well as informal social norms.

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Avaliação da Governança da Educação Básica no Brasil

RESUMO

Objetivo: Tendo em vista as diretrizes dos Objetivos de Desenvolvimento Sustentável, o objetivo foi avaliar o processo de governança na educação básica brasileira por meio da aplicação do instrumento de Oliveira, Nunes & Guerra (2020).

Método: *Este estudo baseou-se 1) na análise fatorial da dimensionalidade do instrumento de Oliveira et al. (2020), e 2) uma análise empírica de sua aplicação a uma amostra de 511 líderes, gestores e conselheiros da educação básica no Brasil.*

Originalidade/Relevância: *Este estudo relata uma avaliação empírica da governança na educação básica brasileira. Os achados representam a realidade dos gestores estaduais e municipais incluídos na amostra e contribuem para a validação de um instrumento que se insere no processo de governança da educação básica brasileira.*

Resultados: *O instrumento foi validado com 4 construtos, a saber: institucionalização, engajamento participativo, desenho institucional e qualidade dos processos participativos. Tais construtos são consistentes com o Governance Analytical Framework (GAF) e indicam fatores que promovem a educação de qualidade no Brasil.*

Contribuições teóricas/metodológicas: *As respostas da pesquisa mostraram que as normas sociais formais explicam a dinâmica do processo de governança no Brasil.*

Palavras-chave: Governança da educação; Sistema de educação básica; Estrutura analítica de governança; Instrumento de avaliação.

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