

BRAZIL: NATIONAL EVALUATION CAPACITY— GREAT ACHIEVEMENTS BUT STILL A LONG WAY TO GO

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INTRODUCTION

Undertaking such a complex job as the evaluation of public programmes and policies is an inglorious task for a nation. Measuring such an effort would require an inventory of past evaluations or the definition of proxy indicators that could grasp its extent. In this paper I attempt the second endeavour, with much simplicity. Additionally this paper describes and critically assesses one of the pillars of Brazil's evaluation capacity: the evaluation system linked to the Quadrennial Development Plan (PPA) of the Government of Brazil. Two analytic challenges remain.

First and foremost is the challenge of impact. Evaluations are only worth the trouble if they serve as effective inputs to change. If evaluations themselves do not become a cause for programme overhaul, proxy measures can be misinterpreted as indicators of a strong 'planning-implementation-evaluation-planning' rationale when there isn't one. On the other hand, undertaking few but effective evaluations will be interpreted as insufficient. To partially tackle this flaw I draw some conclusions on the effectiveness of the PPA evaluation system.

Second is the challenge of defining evaluation. Fortunately that can be reasonably solved by assuming that:

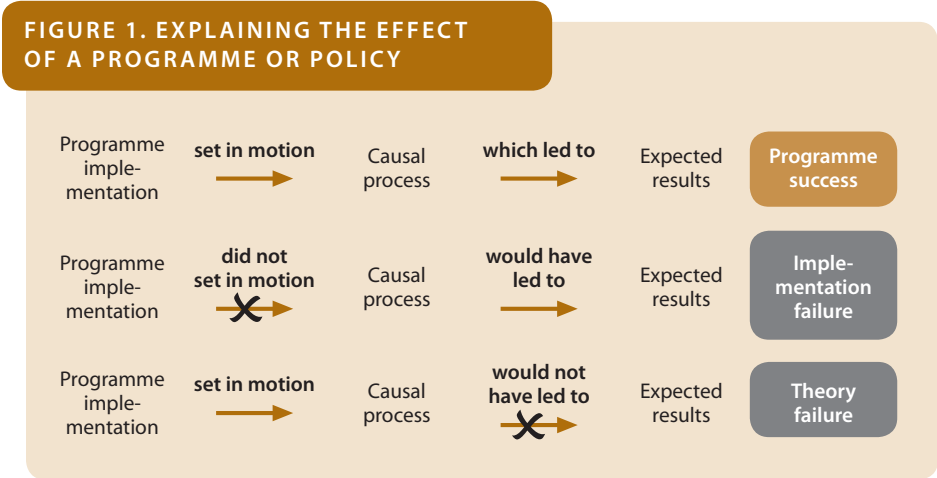
Evaluation is the systematic assessment of the operation and/or the outcomes of a programme or policy, compared to a set of explicit or implicit standards, as a means of contributing to the improvement of the programme or policy.⁶

This assumption is not random; it is in tune with the current dialogue in the Brazilian evaluation field. Adoption of this definition of evaluation is linked to the pragmatic necessity of investigating not only final impacts but programme operation and the causal processes

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 6. Weiss, Carol, *Evaluation: Methods for studying programs and policies*, second edition, New Jersey, Prentice Hall, 1998, p.4.

put in motion by government interventions. In fact, most of the government's effort regarding evaluation refers to the questions in figure 1.

In essence, programme impact has to be traced back to a reliable description of programme components and to the validity of the transmission mechanisms or causal processes put in motion by the programme. If not, programme success or failure cannot be explained, and thus cannot be maintained, improved or corrected. Therefore, it is equally important for government to evaluate final impacts and interim results, as well as process adherence to programme theory.



Source: Weiss, Carol, *Evaluation: Methods for studying programs and policies*, 1998.

BRAZIL'S EVALUATION SCENE: ACTORS, INSTITUTIONS AND RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

The Brazilian evaluation field has grown dramatically in recent years, from virtually no activity to vibrant dialogue and practice. It is difficult to trace the first supporters of this renaissance, but there is little doubt that an important push came from multilateral and foreign government development agencies.

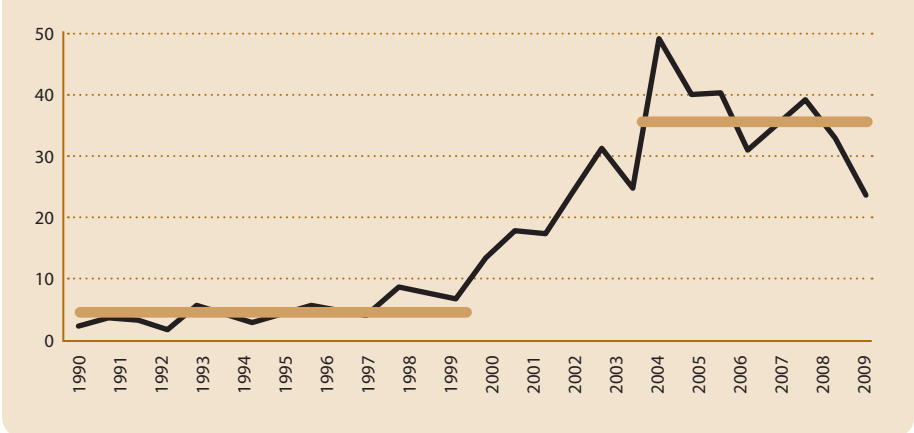
Most evaluation effort is either implemented directly by government ministries and associated research institutes or contracted out by government to Brazilian public universities. Thus, as in many other countries, it is essentially government that evaluates (or commands the resources for evaluation of) its own programmes and policies. Figure 2 summarizes these institutions and products (for a contact list see annex 1).

The academic production on evaluation is quite straightforward to assess. A simple Google Scholar search reveals surprising figures that confirm the novelty of the evaluation effort in Brazil. The frequency of papers whose title includes the words 'programme' or 'policy' and 'evaluation' has grown from an annual average of 10 between 1981 and 1995 to over 70

FIGURE 2. BRAZIL: THE EVALUATION SCENE (2009)

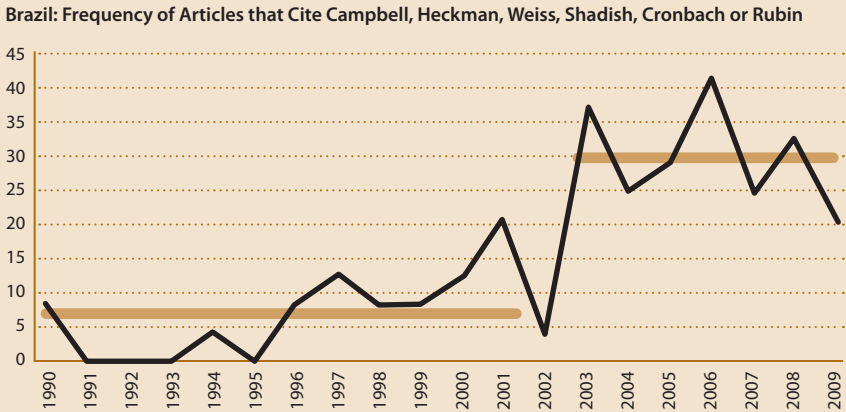
PARADIGM	PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION	TRANSMISSION MECHANISMS	RESULTS
Evaluation focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laws, norms, regulations • Production and expenditure monitoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implicit theory of change • Interim indicators for internal monitoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ex-ante: government development objectives • Ex-post: government popularity and re-election
State processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Auditing: TCU (legislative branch accounts court) • Sector ministry • Ministry of Planning: PM/SPI • Ministry of Budget: PM/SOF (secretariat) • Vice-presidency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sector ministry • Ministry of Planning: PM/SPI • Research institute (IPEA) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sector ministry • Research institute (IPEA) • Federal and state universities • State-level research foundations • Marginal evaluations implemented by WB, UN, IDB
Products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operational audits • Quadrennial Development Plan (PPA) Annual Evaluation • Government Priority Programs Annual Evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quadrennial Development Plan (PPA) Annual Evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sporadic formal evaluations, mostly executed by government agencies or contracted out to public universities • Quadrennial Development Plan (PPA) Annual Evaluation

FIGURE 3. GROWTH IN SCHOLARLY ARTICLES CITING EVALUATION



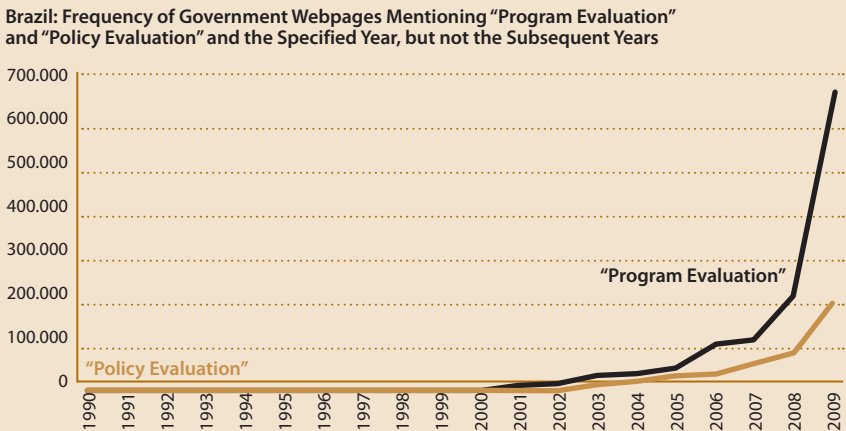
Source: Google Scholar, December 2009.

FIGURE 4. GROWTH IN SCHOLARLY ARTICLES CITING SPECIFIC EVALUATIONS



Source: Google Scholar, December 2009.

FIGURE 5. GROWTH IN PUBLICITY ON GOVERNMENT EVALUATIONS



Source: Google Scholar, December 2009.

from 2002 onwards (figure 3).

The number of articles citing specific evaluations has similarly grown (figure 4).

Finally, government has increasingly publicized, produced and discussed programme and policy evaluation, as can be seen in figure 5.

TABLE 1. BRAZIL: NUMBER OF SELECTED GRADUATE AND POST-GRADUATE COURSES (2009)

GRADUATE AND TECHNICAL COURSES		POST-GRADUATE COURSES	
Public policy management	7	Environment and ecology	62
Public administration	49	Public health	75
Social sciences	98	Education	142
Economics	55	Economics	70
		Urban and regional planning	29
		Sociology	75
Total	209	Total	453

Source: Ministry of Education website and Capes website, December 2009.

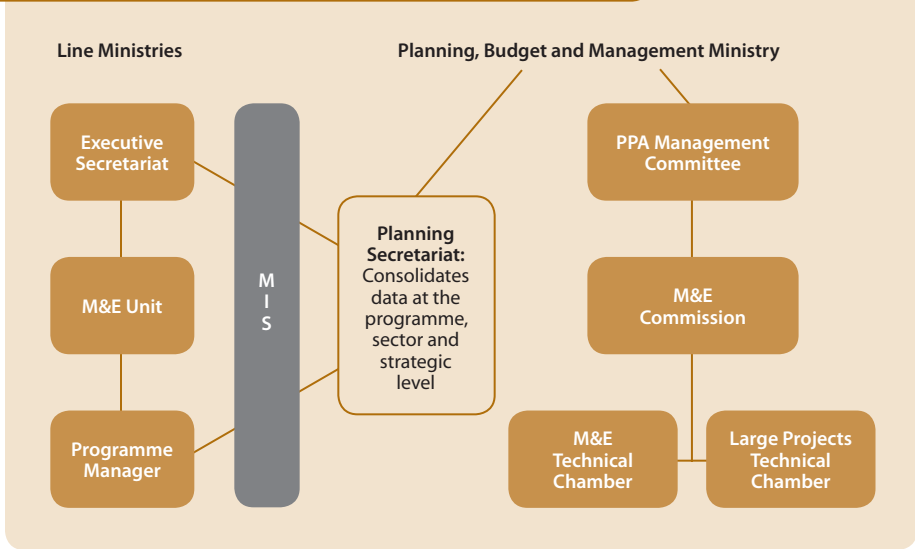
Notwithstanding past evaluation efforts, assessing the capacity for evaluation is a rather different matter. It would be ideal to perform a survey of professors' profiles, post-graduate courses that include evaluation disciplines and the institutional capacity within government. Even without this capacity, the number of graduate and post-graduate courses that should theoretically promote evaluative knowledge and culture somewhat illustrates this potential. In the past seven years seven public policy management graduation courses emerged that might indicate a trend of renewed interest in public administration, already well established as a field (table 1).

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT EVALUATION SYSTEM

During the 1996-1999 PPA, the federal government piloted a radical reform to integrate planning activities with budget and management tools. The intention was to promote constant monitoring and revision of planning and budgeting, based on measured results. This model changed the organization of budget categories, condensing and simplifying the previous structure into programmes. These corresponded to the 'solution to problems precisely identified' and were measured. The idea was then to integrate an evaluative tool to monitor the goals set for each programme. The full expansion of this idea came in the 2000-2003 cycle.⁷

7. Garcia, Ronaldo Coutinho, 'A Reorganização do Processo de Planejamento do Governo Federal: O PPA 2000-2003', Texto para Discussão n. 726, IPEA, May 2000, at <www.ipea.gov.br/pub/td/2000/td_0726.pdf>.

**FIGURE 6. FLOW OF INFORMATION BETWEEN
LINE MINISTRIES AND PLANNING**



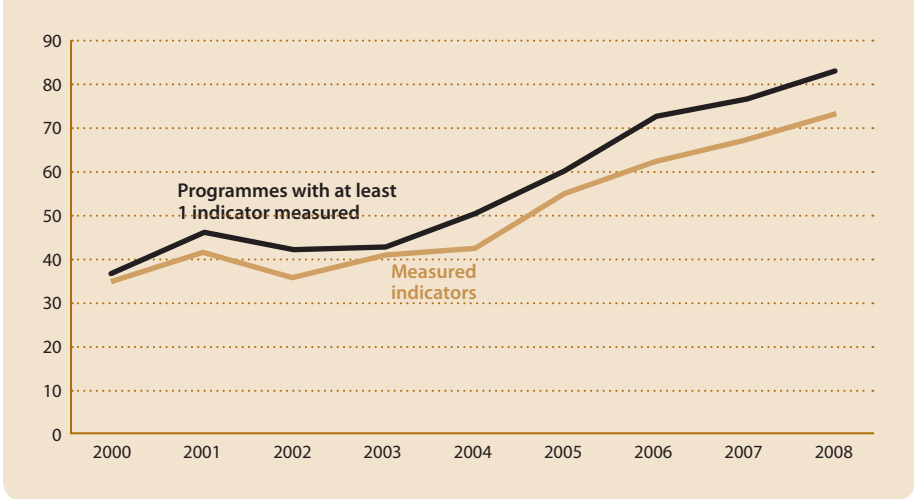
The evaluative system under the PPA was institutionalized in 2004, with the creation of an M&E Commission under the Ministry of Planning, Budget and Management to provide specific M&E guidelines and support. In the same year M&E units were established in every line ministry to provide technical support for evaluation. Figure 6 shows the flow of information between line ministries and planning, which is supported by a management information system (MIS-SIGPLAN).

Some of the basic characteristics of the evaluation system are: (i) it is recommended to all programmes but is not mandatory; (ii) it takes place annually; (iii) it is ex post; (iv) it aims to evaluate process and outcomes; (v) it includes a self-evaluation questionnaire for use by programme managers; and (vi) it is summarized at three levels: priority level, ministry level and programme level.

Notwithstanding these previous efforts, an important leap in the government's evaluation culture took place with formulation of a specific methodology by the Research Institute of Applied Economics (IPEA), a federal agency linked to the planning ministry. The methodology uses logic models as a basis for explicit programme theory and performs evaluation planning.⁸ The IPEA logic models were applied to over 60 programmes involving around 700 civil servants between 2007 and 2009. This contributed immensely to

8. For the methodology see: Helder Ferreira, Martha Cassiolato e Roberto Gonzalez, 'Uma Experiência de Desenvolvimento Metodológico para Avaliação de Programas: O Modelo Lógico do Programa Segundo Tempo', Texto para Discussão n.1369, IPEA, Jan. 2009, at <www.ipea.gov.br/sites/000/2/publicacoes/tds/td_1369.pdf>.

FIGURE 7. PERCENTAGE OF INDICATORS MEASURED



Source: Ministry of Planning, Budget and Management.

harmonizing programme objectives among managers, organizing programme structure and setting valid, relevant and quantifiable indicators for each programme.

Over the years, the system improved monitoring and evaluation practices within line ministries as shown by the percentage of indicators actually measured over those originally intended to be measured (figure 7). In 2008 a total of 778 indicators was set to be monitored at the beginning of the cycle, and 571 were actually computed, a completion rate of 73 percent. Just five years earlier the completion rate was 41 percent.

CHALLENGES AND THE WAY FORWARD

One fundamental challenge arises from the fact that the evaluative effort is meant to inform planning of challenges faced by programmes, on the assumption that the Ministry of Planning is empowered enough to promote changes. Has this been the case in recent Brazilian government history? Hardly.

The point is, a technical solution does not make up for the loss of technical and institutional capacity in all ministries that took place during the recession of the 1980s and 1990s. Furthermore, the period of structural adjustment led to a culture of short-term, budgetary cash control over medium- to long-term planning capacity, and thus, management. The fact that budget decisions prevail over planning and management discredits evaluation efforts. In this environment, where planning does not really have enough power to promote change or to favour planning over short-run budgetary restrictions, evaluation becomes meaningless. It serves the purpose of transparency and reporting, not transformation.

Another challenge emerges from the fact that the PPA implied a total fusion of budget and planning. This forced planning to lose its selective nature. As a result, the PPA evaluations

end up producing poor indicators for all budgetary items, while concentrated effort is put into quality evaluations of government priorities and innovative proposals. The result is a lack of planning or evaluation for non-budgetary activity.

Some of the operational challenges related to the PPA evaluation system are: (1) the programme structure is not detailed enough for MIS-SIGPLAN to be used as an internal management tool, causing duplication of work; (2) the indicators end up being too broad to encompass activities that lie under each programme; (3) the annuity aspect and the questionnaire do not account for programme diversity (such as investment with longer maturities, decentralized expenditures and implementation); (4) the self-evaluation aspect implies a greater conflict of interest (which is present anyway in every evaluation sponsored by the programme manager); and (5) ministries have insufficient institutional capacity to generate, contract and oversee formal evaluations.⁹

The challenges are great, but the effort made to date shows the viability of moving forward with positive expectations. There is little doubt that the government would benefit from continuing the logic models effort. It should also try to deepen selectivity of planning and evaluation efforts. Despite some recent improvements, priorities are still too broad. Finally, the government should organize an institutional and funding structure to support rigorous evaluations, whether qualitative or quantitative.

In conclusion, Brazil is showing a growing institutional capacity to boost evaluative efforts. The recent growth in evaluative activity has been substantial, in both government and academia. In this setting the design and improvement of an evaluation system linked to the PPA has increased incentives to evaluate government programmes and contributed to a results-based public management over the past nine years. Nonetheless, challenges remain, given the low level of formal qualitative and quantitative research, especially using experimental or quasi-experimental methods.

9. Many of these critiques are shared by a World Bank qualitative evaluation of the PPA evaluation system, which has not yet been published.

ANNEX 1. PUBLIC SECTOR THINK TANKS WITH PROVEN EVALUATION CAPACITY

Horizontal

Applied research: Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada (www.ipea.gov.br)

Research: Virtually all federal and state universities: USP, UNICAMP, UNESP, UFMG, UFRJ, UERJ, UPFE, UFBA, UFRG, UFSC, UFPR

Auditing court: Tribunal de Contas da União (<http://portal2.tcu.gov.br/TCU>)

Sectoral

Health: Fundação Oswaldo Cruz (www.fiocruz.br)

Education: Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais (www.inep.gov.br);
Secretaria de Educação Continuada, Alfabetização e Diversidade (www.mec.gov.br)

Social assistance: Secretaria de Avaliação e Gestão da Informação (www.mds.gov.br/sagi)

Environment: Instituto Brasileiro do Meio Ambiente e dos Recursos Naturais Renováveis
(www.ibama.gov.br)

Agricultural development: Empresa Brasileira de Pesquisa Agropecuária (www.embrapa.br)

State-level research centres

São Paulo: Fundação Sistema Estadual de Análise de Dados (www.seade.gov.br); Fundação
de Desenvolvimento Administrativo (www.fundap.sp.gov.br)

Minas Gerais: Fundação João Pinheiro (www.fjp.gov.br)

Pernambuco: Fundação Joaquim Nabuco (www.fundaj.gov.br)

Bahia: Superintendência de Estudos Econômicos e Sociais (www.sei.ba.gov.br)