Learning from innovation: educational policies seen through the Public Management and Citizenship Program[1]

Peter Spink [2]

ABSTRACT: The Public Management and Citizenship Program was set up in 1996 to identify and disseminate innovative practices in Brazilian sub-national governments that improve service provision and generate positive impacts on the construction of citizenship. Amongst the different policy areas, education has accounted for the largest single group of submissions. In this paper we examine some of these and ask whether they suggest an orthodox policy implementation cycle moving from Federal or states downwards, or whether alternative processes are in course. In doing so we also point to the contributions that studying innovations brings for policy research.

KEYWORDS: Public policies, Education, Innovation, Educational Policies

RESUMO: O Programa Gestão Pública e Cidadania foi criado em 1996 com o objetivo de identificar e disseminar práticas inovadoras, que produzem melhorias significativas na prestação de serviços públicos e geram impactos positivos na construção da cidadania, realizadas por governos subnacionais brasileiros. Dentre as diferentes áreas de políticas públicas do banco de dados a área que tem mais projetos é a educação. Neste artigo examinamos alguns destes projetos e analisamos se eles indicam um ciclo ortodoxo de implementação das políticas em educação, ou se, existem processos alternativos de implementação destas políticas.Neste estudo apontamos também para as contribuições que o estudo das inovações traz para a pesquisa em políticas públicas.

PALAVRAS CHAVE: Políticas Públicas, Educação, Inovação, Políticas Educacionais.

Introduction

The Public Management and Citizenship Program (Programa Gestão Pública e Cidadania) was set up in 1996 as a joint initiative of the Escola de Administração de Empresas de São Paulo (Fundação Getulio Vargas) and the Ford Foundation. I also receives support from the National Economic and Social Development Bank (BNDES). Its aim is to identify, analyze and disseminate innovative practices amongst sub national Brazilian governments (states, municipalities and original peoples' tribal governments) that have a positive impact on strengthening citizenship and on the quality of life. It focuses on experiences – policies, programs, projects or activities - that innovate in service provision, can be reproduced in other localities, utilize resources and opportunities in a responsible manner and extend the dialogue between civil society and public agents.

The principle method used for identifying innovations is an annual open access award cycle. The program has already identified and registered some 8,000 innovative experiences in its ten years of work, localized in 890 municipalities of different population sizes and varied socio-economic levels as well as in all the Brazilian states, a number of the indigenous peoples and amongst the executive, legislative and judiciary branches of government. The experiences registered cover many different areas of government action and provide important evidence of what is taking place in at least the more advanced areas of sub national government.

Education, with very few exceptions, has been the category that is most commonly used by those submitting entries (varying from 11% - 20%). In general, these have been experiences linked to basic education (*ensino fundamental*) which , in the Brazilian model, corresponds to grades 1-8 (*primeiro grau)*. Here there is no obvious institutional or even economic explanation that can be made to justify the data because, as Arretche(2000) pointed out in her analysis of decentralization and social policy, basic education has traditionally been the responsibility of States and Municipalities in Brazil, with the federal Government providing financial support for basic services and determining the minimum curriculum. If there has been any change at all it has been between the States and the Municipalities in the area of what is called the "municipalization" of places. That is, the transference of buildings and the organizing responsibility for education at the local level from the State to the municipality. (Interestingly enough, the federal government did maintain a tight rein on school books during the 1980s and also, until 1993, on school meals, creating in both cases huge national markets for booksellers,

publishers and food supplements with the corresponding problems that surround large scale purchasing agreements).

What the Constitution did do was to make clearer the focus of the municipality on pre-school and basic education and introduce the notion of "investments tied to income" – a practice which the constitution otherwise prohibits – exclusively for the area of education. As Article 212 states:

> "The Union will annually apply no less than 18% and the States, Federal District and Municipalities no less than 25% of the income resulting from taxes, including transferences, on the maintenance and development of education".

The "maintenance and development" of education is somewhat of an elastic notion and, depending on the degree of hostility or cordiality between the legislative and the executive at State or Municipal level, can lead to considerable conflict. However those present at the constitutional assembly made a very clear point: education – especially basic education - was important, was to be universal and to be considered as a right. Drop out rates and grade repetition at the elementary level were targeted for reduction and opportunities were to be provided for the surrounding communities to have a role in discussing educational policy (Farah et al., in press). Education, along with health, had made it up the ladder of priorities, and had gained a place on the overall public policy agenda as a matter of public concern. From 1980 to 1997 enrollment in basic education increased 34% and the numbers of teachers increased correspondingly by 27%.

Focusing the priorities of the municipality towards basic education and the state towards secondary (high school) education did not imply that these were to be a clear division of labor. As mentioned previously, the dual system of provision of elementary education that existed in the early 1980s was not substantially affected by the Constitution. Both states and municipalities remain responsible for this level of education and are required to work out appropriate arrangements depending on the location of resources and demands. In 2003, states provided 46 percent of the funds for elementary education and municipalities 50 percent, although in operational terms there was considerable difference from state to state. A similar situation exists in public universities where, even though the Federal Government is responsible for higher education including financing the Federal Universities, there are also strong State systems (São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Bahia) and many municipal universities (over 50 in the State of São Paulo alone).

With the basic education targets set on universalization, lowering drop outs and grade repetition, the main concern of policy makers and educational administrators in the 1990s was the reduction of the resource inequalities between schools, that had been produced by differential investment priorities as well as different salary and career structures. The response was the creation of the national Fund for the Maintenance and Development of Basic Education and the Enhancement of Teaching (Fundo de Manutenção e Desenvolvimento do Ensino Fundamental e de Valorização do Magistério – FUNDEF) in 1997. This fund redistributes a share of educational resources among sub national units of government (states and municipalities), according with the effective contribution of each level of government in providing educational services. With FUNDEF providing support for salary supplements and a per capita grant for educational activities, the transference of schools fro the state to the municipalities increased and "municipalization", especially at the primary level, entered the policy agenda[3]. The number of students in schools run by municipalities increased from 33% in 1996 to 45% of the total of students in 1999, while the number of students in schools run by state governments decreased from 56% in 1996 to 46% in 1999 (Farah et.al., in press). The Federal government remains responsible for setting the national curriculum for the elementary and the secondary schools, but there is now more scope for regional and local adaptations.

To what extent this expanding concern with basic education was due to moral pressures from social movements and professional associations, reacting to the very disturbing statistics of functional illiteracy, school drop out rates and even the total absence of schooling in certain parts of the country, or was also due to growing concern with changes in the structure of the labor market and the problems of urban unemployment and poverty, or of the role of education in relation to citizenship (Demo, 2000) or even to diplomatic concern with Brazil's place in the Human Development Index league table, is beyond the scope of this paper. It is certainly the case that the dominant development discourse in the 1980s and 1990s, especially that driven through the Washington based Agencies in the guise of "human capital", placed a high value on the active role of formal education as a level for development, despite many arguments to the contrary including those that pointed to the risk of reducing social capacity to the acquisition of

[3] Kingdon J. Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies. New York: Addison-Wesley, 1995.

individual skills and coded knowledge and to the changing nature of urban work (Thomas, 1995).

Teachers and educators are themselves very linked to the public nature of their roles and to the developmental nature of their work; a factor which no doubt stimulates a positive approach to innovation. Other factors, without doubt, included the creation of specific mechanisms, such as the FUNDEF, which made resource transferences much clearer and the development of sanctions – such as the 25% rule – which required investment to be made. But also present are the many transformations taking place at the municipal level within Brazil's sub national and multi layered federal model, that are producing very different and much denser notions of "local" and of "territorial responsibility" and where "kids in school" forms part of a set of day to day expectations along with solid waste removal, the absence of holes in the roads, public safety, health centers and many others. Thus, between pushes and pulls, opportunities, exhortations, invitations and threats, education – and especially basic education – was firmly on the map by the mid 1990s when the Public Management and Citizenship program began its first cycle and seems to have remained a high priority throughout the ten years, at least in relation to what sub national governments were prepared to put forward as innovative actions.

Education in the 1996 and 2005 cycles

The analyses of the database shows that between 1996 and 2005 there were a thousand programs related to education classified as semi-finalists. That is, that were considered by the different evaluation panels as having something significant to say about their area of action that in some way stood out above the other entrants. From year to year, changes took place; new themes entered and others dropped away. In order to provide a brief overview of the ten years, we have concentrated in this analysis on the first and last cycle; 1996 and 2005. The distinction is an arbitrary one, for both these years could have been "outside the curve", but it is at least the beginning of an answer to the question "what changed?". Equally, to restrict analysis of changes in education to those experiences that classified themselves under "education" is also problematic. For example, if the focus were to be on education as understood within the wider

framework of say the Delors Commission report for UNESCO in 1996[4], in which the four pillars of education were proposed as learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to be, it is possible that most if not all of the over 8,000 experiences registered in each of the different years would have something to contribute.

In the first year of the Program, 98 of the 629(15.6%) entries were self classified as education (Beltrão, 1996). Of these, 27% were state level initiatives and 73% were municipal; a distribution similar to the overall distribution of entries that year (21% state, 78% municipal and 1% indigenous) with a slight bias towards the state level. In terms of frequency and based on a content analysis of the different entries, the six most frequent types of programs, projects or activities mentioned, accounting for some 65% of the entries, were:

- education for children with special needs within a perspective of social inclusion (14%)

- educational administration and information systems, including distribution of places (12%)

- class room and teaching methods innovations of various kinds (11%)

- out of school activities and other activities focused on topping up skills and strengthening what has been learned (10%)

- specific school activities focusing on the environment and local development, including aspects of the local culture (10%)

- literacy programs for adults, reading programs & libraries (8%)

Other activities amongst the entries included: teacher training (6%), rural schools (5%), activities linking the school to the community such as PTA (4%), pre-school activities and crèches (3%), work with question of violence, drugs and sexuality (3%), student health and school meals (3%), transport (2%), other forms of professional and administrative training (2%), information technology (2%), work with indigenous populations and family support. The single entry for family support was in fact the now famous "Bolsa Escola" (school grant), one of the finalists that year and presented at the awards event by the then Governor of the Federal District, Cristovam Buarque.

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[4] DELORS J (org)Learning: the treasure within. Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century. Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 1996

In 2005, education was responsible for 118 of 722 experiences submitted (16.34%).Of these, 3% were indigenous, 9% state and 88% municipal. Again there was similarity to the overall distribution of entries (1% indigenous, 19% state and 80% municipal) with, this time, a bias towards municipal entries. Using a similar process of analysis, the most frequent types of activities, programs or projects mentioned were:

- specific school activities focusing on the environment and development, including aspects of the local culture, concerns with tourism and often involving the wider community in the activity (13%)

- classroom and teaching methods innovations of various kinds (13%)

- out of school activities and other activities focused on topping up skills and strengthening what has been learned (10%)

- activities linking the school to the community (9%)

- education within a perspective of social inclusion (8%)

- teacher training (8%)

- literacy programs for adults, reading programs & libraries (8%)

Other activities and experiences included: digital inclusion (6%), work with questions of violence, drugs and sexuality (6%), student health and school meals (5%), indigenous education, culture and language (3%), pre-school activities and crèches (3%), other forms of professional and administrative training (3%), educational administration and information systems (3%), rural schools and university access.

The similarities in frequencies between the two periods can be found in the areas of the backbone of any educational system: classroom and teaching methods; out of school activities; teacher training; student health and school meals; pre-school and crèche activities. There are of course differences in location and specific content, but the overall type of innovation submitted is very similar.

In terms of changes between the two periods there are a number of points that seem to stand out. Firstly, the appearance on the innovation agenda of digital inclusion (to be expected) and university access (a very new topic). Secondly, experiences of working with school violence, drugs and sexuality grew relative to other areas (from 3 – 6%) as did activities that link the

school more closely to the wider community (from 4% - 9%). Educational activities related to social inclusion reduced in percentage terms (from 14% - 8%) but changed in focus. Whereas, in 1996, these were very much linked to the requirements of specific groups such as the physically disabled, in 2005 they are being discussed within a wider framework of rights and inclusion. Indigenous education in the first year of the program referred to activities being developed by the state for a specific indigenous population, whilst in 2005 the experiences were being submitted by the indigenous populations themselves. Perhaps most significant was the change in the area we described as activities focusing on the environment and local development, including aspects of the local culture. Here not only did these activities increase in relative frequency amongst the experiences submitted (from 10% - 13%), but they now included very specific questions of territorial or place based local development and referred to activities that included members of the wider community.

There are, basically, two ways in which the above comments can be read: the first of these would be to assume that that there is no reason to expect any relationship between social processes and the submission of entries, the latter being a perfectly random activity based on the principle of anything goes. The second would be to assume that, for any number of reasons, administrators, managers, technical staff and politicians in a variety of ways, individually or collectively, discuss the idea of sending an entry to the annual awards and, again for a variety of reasons which can vary from the internal to the external, from an intrinsic sense of value to an extrinsic judgment of appropriateness and opportunity, decide on a particular example. In the first scenario, the results of 1996 and 2005 would simply show us that there are things going on in education that are interesting and these appear in questions with which most of us would hope and expect competent policy makers and educators to be concerned. The overall frequency of the educational presence, the specific relative frequencies and their changes would have nothing to add to the basic statement, which in itself, is not a negative one. Education is indeed on the agenda, people are concerned about it in sub-national Brazil and things are happening.

In the second scenario, which presumes discursive action and debate and in which looking forward also implies looking sideways and backwards, there may be other things to be learnt. Yes, there is much going on in the educational field, not only in its basic activities, but also in the way that schools are assuming new challenges and, most importantly, re-positioning themselves within the community. To what extent these examples and differences represent trends or even

potential waves of change is not something that an innovation program can answer. But it can perhaps point to a part of a emerging leading edge and suggest that municipalization may indeed be a way of responding to the hopes expressed in the 1988 constitutional debate.

Leading experiences in 1996 and 2005

Each year, the Public Management and Citizenship Program chooses twenty experiences from those submitted as being the most outstanding of the year. The definition of outstanding is extremely qualitative and very specific to each program, project or activity that is selected. What makes one "stand out" may be very different from the other and the discussion that lead to the final selection can go on for many hours. In 1996, amongst the twenty finalists there were two experiences with a specific focus on education. These were the program to guarantee the universalization of education in Icapuí, Ceará[5], and the School Grant (*Bolsa Escola*) from the Federal district[6]. Each, in its own way, has much to tell about education in Brazil and fortunately, in both cases, follow up information is available. In the case of Icapuí a follow up study was carried out in 2003[7], and the "Bolsa Escola" was to become a controversial symbol of the link between poverty reduction and education including its adoption by leading international agencies such as the World Bank and being applied elsewhere in Latin America and Africa. Moving forward to 2005, there was one finalist in the area of education: the indigenous education project being developed within the indian territories that encompass the upper Rio Negro in the Amazon(*Black River*), coordinated since 1999 by the Federation of Indigenous Organizations of the Black River (*Federação das Organizações Indigenas do Rio Negro – FOIRN*). Each of these experiences, in different ways, point to the challenges that education faces and the solutions that are emerging.

Icapuí - a *bootstrap approach to universal education*

The program to turn municipal education universal in Icapuí began in 1986 when there were 700 places available in the school system. By 1996, when the program was a finalist, the number of

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[5] VAZ J. Universalização do Ensino em Icapuí. Em: Peter Spink & Roberta Clemente (orgs) **20 experiências de Gestão Pública e Cidadania**. Rio de Janeiro: Editora da Fundação Getulio Vargas, 1997.

[6] ALMEIDA M.A, FARIA A. Programa Bolsa-Escola. Em: Peter Spink & Roberta Clemente (orgs) **20 experiências de Gestão Pública e Cidadania.** Rio de Janeiro: Editora da Fundação Getulio Vargas, 1997.

[7] LOTTA G., MARTINS R. . **Estudo da Continuidade dos Projetos Educacionais do Município de Icapuí.** Cadernos Gestão Pública e Cidadania, Vol. 26, 2003

places had increased to 5,256 or 650% .Table (1) shows these and other differences in what by any account has to stand out as a remarkable endeavor, especially considering that Icapuí was a small municipality which had only recently been emancipated from the larger municipality of Aracati in 1985. At this point there were less than 30 teachers of whom only 3 had reached high school level; there was a total shortage of chalk, blackboards, chairs and school material and what schooling there was only went to the fourth grade. A summary of the position in 1985 and in 1995 is shown in table (1), below. As can be seen the differences are highly significant.

The key to the turn around was for the municipality to develop its own collective teacher training program focusing on its own community members who were recommended by their neighbors to become teachers (thus the expression bootstrap in the subtitle). Classrooms were improvised in churches, in houses loaned by members of the community and even in the shade of trees. Teacher training took place alongside the work in classrooms. The municipality created a new salary structure and an open entrance exam for teachers. All children were guaranteed a place in their local, walking distance, school until at least the fourth grade, following which transport was provided for the 4-8th grades and high school. Nowadays, those that go on to University in nearby Mossoró and Aracatí also get support with transport. The organization of education was also turned outwards to the public domain with large scale public participation and involvement in school management and maintenance as well as in many academic and community based school activities. Overall in 1996, the municipality was investing 27.66% of its own income including local taxes and official transferences in education and 33.11% of its total income, which included other contracts and grants.

Table 1: Education in Icapuí 1985 – 1996

Item	1985	1996
Number of Schools	8	29 municipal, one state and two crèches
Classrooms	38	81
Pre-school enrollment	None	693
Enrollment 1- 4 grades	700	3,090
Enrollment 5 – 8 grades	None	1151
High school enrollment	None	322
Total enrollment	700	5,256
School transport	None	5 vehicles
Illiteracy over 14 years	49.3%	23.0%

In 2003 members of the Public Management and Citizenship Program revisited Icapuí to report on progress.The process that had begun some 15 years earlier was still in course. Enrollments had continued to grow before stabilizing at just over 5,000 students and the number of children successfully passing their grades had also grown to between 85-90%. Truancy rates were low, around 5.9% and nearly 90% of the students in the eighth grade had managed to graduate the basic cycle. Teacher training continued strong with hopes of having 95% of the teachers finishing university by 2004 (in 1985 only 10% had finished high school) . A number of activities were being developed in conjunction with the local communities and the Municipal Council for Education, Culture and Sports, created 1n 1995, had recently formulated the Municipal Education Plan.

The principal challenge facing the progress of education in Icapuí is coming from the economic activities of its inhabitants – lobster fishing. With a more effective control by the national environmental agency (IBAMA), lobster fishing is prohibited during the three months of the reproductive cycle (approximately between January and April). As a result the local fishermen migrate, with their families, to other parts of the coast in other states. For the children, this break in study creates difficulties which the children are not always able to pull back. The solution lies probably in developing a more flexible modular curriculum that the children can take with them in the form of distance learning. (A question that was currently being negotiated with the Federal Education Ministry).

The Federal District - *"Bolsa Escola" from local action to national policy*

In 1993, the Federal District – a mini state which includes a number of very low income cities and towns as well as the more famous federal capital town of Brasilia - had some 56,000 families whose joint family income was below that of the basic requirements for food intake (*cesta basica)*. Grade repetition and school dropout rates were high especially amongst the poor families who were without even the minimum conditions to maintain their children in school or who relied on them in order to contribute to the family income. The proposal which was developed by the Governor and his Educational team was a very simple one: to pay a minimum salary (approx 120 US$) to each poor family that agrees to place all its children between 7 – 14 years (the ages between which free access to schooling is guaranteed by the constitution) in the public school system. The family had to prove that the children were in school, that it had been living for at least five years in the Federal District and that the current *per capita* family income

was a half a minimum salary or less. When accepted by the scheme, the family were also included in other social programs linked to job training and income creation.

Variants of the school grant programs were introduced almost simultaneously in Campinas and Ribeirão Preto in the State of São Paulo and by 1997 there were already 12 cities and states with programs being implanted as well as more than 25 laws being prepared in different municipal and state assemblies (Santos Junior, 2000). The Federal District's *Bolsa Escola* was already the most commonly cited practice and used as a constant reference. The great majority of the experiences being implanted were at the municipal level. By the end of 1997, the Federal government had approved a law conceding financial support to all municipalities that introduced "minimum income programs" that were associated with "socio-educative" measures.

These phrases were to turn explicit a number of issues and controversies that have continued to today. Firstly, on the positive side, the law emphasized the importance of the municipal level of action. Family grant schemes depend on almost a neighborhood or at least community level of registration in order to guarantee that those who should receive support do so whilst those who should not, do not (this is similar to the majority of experiences with productive micro-credit). But equally, and this is where the controversy arose, the law placed the *School Grant* scheme into the same basket of social support as other minimum income schemes.

Minimum income guarantees emerged in the public arena at the end of the 1980s, championed by the economist and Senator Eduardo Suplicy [8]. Suplicy's basic proposal was that of a "citizen income", that is a fixed income payment that everybody would receive once they were of voting age. There would be no means test, no bureaucracy, no cheating because everybody would receive the same. At its simplest, it was to be a minimum income without strings. The *School Grant* , on the other hand, was an educational measure designed to remove some of the blocks that were keeping children out of school. Indeed, in the Federal District formulation, it was not even linked to performance, just to being in school. Another program was developed to deal with performance: the School Savings Fund Program.

The School Savings Fund Program was, like the *Bolsa Escola* simple and straight to the point. Each year that the student remained in school, the equivalent of a minimum salary was deposited

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[8] SUPLICY E. Renda de Cidadania: a saída é pela porta. São Paulo: Fundação Perseu Abramo/Editora Cortez. 2002

in a savings account and would earn interest and inflation correction (like the popular *caderneta de poupança)* .When the student finished the fourth year of basic education they would receive 50% of the total to date and another 50% of the total to date when they finished the 8th grade. Finally when they finished high school they would receive the rest. If however they repeated two years in a row (one year was allowed) or dropped out, the funds would return to the Federal District's Solidarity Fund.

When the School Savings Fund is added to the basic idea of the School Grant, it is very clear that for the Federal District team, the question was getting children to school. In innumerous meetings and debates they came back to the same theme. The school grant would not solve the education problem, but it would get the kids into the classes; the challenge was to make sure that the classroom, that is the teachers, the materials and the methods, was "ready for the kids".

The Lula administration was to muddy the middle ground even further by raising the – equally important and vital – question of minimum food requirements within a new Program that would pull all the other subsidies together under the title of Zero Hunger (*Fome Zero*). Individual states also developed their own minimum income programs, each with their own administration procedures, name and logo, as did some municipalities. The result was the inevitable overlap. In the city of São Paulo, for example as reported recently by the Folha de S.Paulo (26 december, 2005, p. A9), some families may receive R$ 130 (US$ 56) from the municipal minimum income program (US$ 56), between R$15 – R$95 (US$ 7 – US$ 42) from the Family Grant (the former School Grant) of the Federal government, the bottled gas grant (sufficient to buy gas for domestic cooking) from the Federal Government as well as some support from the State Government. The total hardly comes to the level of the minimum salary, currently at approximately US$ 120.

The objectives of the Family Grant were given by the executive secretary of the program in the Federal Government in a recent interview as:

> "..to ease poverty through the transference of income, to guarantee that the most poor are included and reduce poverty between generations, guaranteeing that children of poor families have access to and stay in school".[9]

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[9] "Os objetivos do Bolsa-Familia são aliviar a pobreza via transferência de renda, garantir que os mais pobres estejam incluídos e reduzir a pobreza entre gerações, garantindo que filhos de famílias pobres tenham acesso e fiquem na escola". Folha de S.Paulo, 25 de dezembro, 2005. A6

Without doubt it is a lot to expect for US$ 25 a month, but it is just one of many statements that are indicative of the confusion of cause and effect that the debate has generated. The *Bolsa Escola*, instead of remaining a specific and significant educational action (a single payment of the equivalent of US$ 120) which also made an important impact on gender relations – the mothers were the ones who held the special accounts and who could withdraw the grant – became the policy equivalent of a Brazilian public transport bus during any metropolitan rush hour; with twenty seated and over a hundred standing, squeezed into the available spaces or hanging out the doors but always with space for one more. A confusion of minimum income, family supplements, food guarantees and socio-educative priorities.

Fortunately, during the hey day of the *Bolsa Escola* as itself, a number of careful evaluation studies were made both by Brazilian and international researchers (for a summary see Santos Junior, 2000). Whereas the truancy rate was running at some 5.6% in general in the Federal District, for the school grant students this was zero. The result was that overall, the truancy rate dropped by some 40%. Grant holders were also quick to get on with their schooling and take advantage of the many other changes that the educational team were introducing. The yearly grade pass rate rose to 87.9% (a 9.5% increase) as opposed to a 1.5% increase by non grantees (79.9% in total). As one of the evaluations concluded, the *Bolas Ecolab* generated improvements in the efficiency and the performance of the Federal District educational system. The costs were negligible if not in fact positive when seen in terms of its consequences in reducing the costs of grade repetition and in reducing drop out rates. As Santos Junior (op.cit.) concluded : "Within the medium and long term, the school grant is not a cost, but an economy for public administrations"[10]. In overall terms, as a focused policy aimed at increasing the effectiveness of the educational system, the *Bolsa Escola* worked.

Alto Rio Negro - *Indigenous education*

Indigenous education in Brazil is perhaps the tip of the iceberg of a growing social phenomenon that may well have a major impact in the next 10 – 15 years. Until very recently and even today, education for the indigenous population was seen as outside the state and when it did occur it was largely linked to the different churches and missionary groups who could either be sensitive

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[10] "Assim, a médio/longo prazo a bolsa escola não é gasto, mas economia real para as administrações públicas.". (SANTOS JUNIOR op.cit. p.27)

or insensitive to the indigenous cultures, systems of knowledge or world views. Whilst Federal legislation provided for the idea of bi-lingual education, the approach adopted was that in which the indigenous language was used as either a medium through which Portuguese or western ideas were transmitted or, at best, as a specialist subject dealing with local history and culture. In recent years the different indigenous movements have been working on a number of fronts to recover and codify their own knowledge systems, to develop ways of writing their normally oral languages, and to train their own teachers no longer as users of their own indigenous languages but as bi-cultural workers with different knowledge systems. FOIRN is very representative of this movement. Within the overall Alto Rio Negro region – which includes three municipalities one of which is Brazil's largest, São Gabriel da Cachoeira – there are some 750 tribal villages with more than 35,000 indians of some 22 different ethnic groups forming part of 4 linguistic families (Tukano, Aruak, Maku and Yanomami). The program is the result of an alliance between FOIRN, the municipal secretary of education of São Gabriel and the Socio-environmental Institute (ISA) a leading activist group for indian affairs.

Pilot schools have been created, materials written, the school calendar adapted to local activity cycles, the basic curriculum re-organized and linked to each *people*[11] and culture in a process that involves the whole community, fathers, mothers and elders. In the schools the communities are also active with indigenous health workers discussing health practices, elders telling the histories and legends and agriculturalists discussing crop management and livestock, including fishing. Classes can be held anywhere in the community: in the school, by the rivers and waterfalls, in the forest and in the farmlands. Amongst the successes has been the total recovery of the Tuyuka language, threatened with extinction as well as many dances that have not been danced for many a year. Those involved make question of emphasizing that for them, indigenous education is about indigenous rights, about values, beliefs and identity.

Perhaps the best way to sum up the potential impact of this and similar activities is to use the data from the 1991 and 2000 national census (IBGE), which for the first time has been presented also for the indigenous population. In the census, ethnic origin is an option that people can choose whether or not to declare. In the 1991 census, 294,000 people declared themselves indigenous, some 0.2% of the population spread amongst some 200 peoples. In 2000, the number

[11] In portuguese: povo.

increased to 734,000 people that declared themselves indigenous, or 0.4% of the population. The increase is some 150%, the equivalent to a growth rate of 10.8% a year as opposed to that for the country as a whole of 1.6% a year. What the statistics reflect is the broad process of land recovery and ethnic affirmation that is taking place. Today's generation of indian leaders includes graduates and doctoral students, lawyers and agronomists, teachers and researchers, women and men and notions of bi-cultural education can also be found in other intercultural spaces.

Learning from Innovations

During the last five years, the overall total illiteracy rate in Brazil has dropped slightly from 9% to 7% suggesting, to outside eyes, that the country is very much part of the wider information based society. Unfortunately there has been very little change in terms of the different degrees of functional illiteracy. Participation in the information society is a privilege of only 26% of the country; 30% of the population can only read titles or phrases that localize information in a very explicit way and a further 38% can only manage a short text which requires very little interpretation [12]. It is estimated that only 21% of households have more than fifty books in all, with 33% of households having less than 10 books.

Cristovam Buarque, one of the authors of the School Grant scheme and one of the countries most ardent activists in the area of basic education has estimated that with a current 97% enrollment in primary school and with some 49% of fourth grade students being unable to read and write, the challenge is clearly now that of quality. Quality, that is not only to create new links with the learning process but to face the challenges for the over-fifteens when education competes with income generation demands. He estimated that some 1.3 million children aged 10-17 are working instead of studying whilst a further 4.8 million are forced to do both. The result is that 66.8% of Brazilian adolescents aged 18-24 have not completed high school and only 11% have completed the eight years of basic education by the age of 15; that is, are within their grade-age group. As he commented:

> "Ensuring education for all children is only the first step. It is necessary to ensure
> attendance and permanence in school until the end of secondary school. Besides, without

[12] Indicador Nacional de Alfabetismo Funcional(INAF). Instituto Paulo Montenegro. Desafios. Outubro 2005. p 65

quality in basic education, programs like Bolsa-Escola risk to become merely social assistance programs." (BUARQUE 2005, p.2)

Part of the difficulty lies with the current structure of Federal financing which focuses on basic schooling (7-14) and leaving out the pre-school. Without adequate pre-schooling, children coming from poorer backgrounds have difficulty when facing orthodox schooling and the formal curriculum for the first time at 7 years. In poorer areas also, a high percentage of the resources available are spent on transport and school meals. Equally there is the growing awareness that the continued inequality and restricted, if not largely inexistent, labor market in conventional terms, has led to a partial redefinition of the school as part of an implicit "welfare" system of reduced value school grants and basic nutritional guarantees rather than as a fundamental part of an "educational system". The result is that a significant part of the population is tied into a model of survival in which the costs of the risks entailed in breaking out from the very low levels of overlapping Federal, State and Municipal assistance and seeking, instead, marginal opportunities in an informal market, are much higher than those of the security that the minimum support supplies.

The current dilemma facing the educational sector is well illustrative of the pros and cons of learning from innovation. We have seen, by looking at some of the experiences that have been submitted, that action in this as in other fields of government policy is simultaneously easy and difficult, straightforward or tortuous. At the specific level of school based action, in places and spaces where collectivities and communities gather to try to solve direct problems, solutions such of those of Icapuí are emerging. We have examples from other indigenous communities who are showing very clearly how it is possible to develop effective bi-lingual education that is also bi-cultural and bi-epistemic; to recover languages and put them on paper in ways that break the existing hegemonies of knowledge[13]. We have examples also in a similar vein from the area of family agriculture where the alternation pedagogy of the rural family schools – which originated as a movement in France in 1937 - is already present in an estimated 300 or more schools in different parts of the country, bringing together in different ways, associations of family farmers and local governments. Sobral, in Ceará, has shown how to integrate educational and health policies in as process which includes three overlapping public councils with intense civil society

[13] BARBOSA H., CRAVEIRO S. Na Trilha da Cidadania. São Paulo: Programa Gestão Pública e Cidadania, 2004

participation covering the periods from birth through to schooling and adolescence and later employment and adulthood.

We can see also how changes can be rapid, even in large cities. Guarulhos is the second largest city in the State of São Paulo with a birthrate of 22,000 children a year. In little more than four years, the municipal education secretariat has increased the number of children in primary education from 24,000 to 75,000. Out of classroom activities include violin and choir, classes in different languages and many others. The number of places available in crèches jumped from 350 to 10,000 (nearly 30 times) and those mothers who can't find a place get an allowance of R$ 50 (US$ 20) per month providing that they attend weekly classes on child care, child health and child development (Simonetti, 2005). We can see also how ideas do move around at the practical level, either as people move around and bring the ideas with them or as others go out to find what can be done.

Statistics, because of their breadth and assumptions, can provide a broader aggregate picture of what is happening to the poorer families, to the children that are not making it into school, to overall patterns of literacy and information use. However the statistics cannot produce the picture of an individual school in a specific community in a specific region; nor should they be expected to do. This is where the innovation comes in, as a local or mid-range counterpoint, as an expression that is equivalent to a "yes, but......", that can temper the harsh face of the statistics with the humanity of action.

In work being carried out on the role of Federal and State transfers within local government programming and policy (Franceze, 2006) it is becoming clear that the orthodox view of policy as a logical pyramid of priority – policy – decision – action is very much the view that prevails from the Federal government policy manager looking institutionally outwards to the states and municipalities. In a similar manner, albeit to a lesser extent as they are already on the receiving end of policy directives, State governments also look outwards in a territorial manner. Policy, in this perspective, is that which is "pushed outwards" or, even, "downwards" to generate implementation and action through tied resources. If statistics, in general, serve the policy makers, innovations serve the social actors. For the municipalities the picture is different. Local priorities and requirements send municipal politicians and technical staff casting around for sources of funds that can be "pulled inwards" into the municipality in order for actions to take place. As funds come with connected arguments or requirements and as there are also connected

arguments and requirements of an overall fiscal nature (for example the 25% educational minimum) , the results are complex discursive processes through which policies and actions are constantly negotiated, fought over, imposed, refused and ignored; a process which continues all the way out to the field or the street (Lipsky, 1982). Within this, the Federal Government's "policy" is a local government's "resource", an instrumental marriage of convenience that is in turn used by a school director to take advantage of a neighborhood "window of opportunity". Within a process perspective, "Policy" as Colebatch(1998) has pointed out, is a social artifact, a narrative myth created both by policy makers and ourselves. The idea of the "authorized decision making of government actors" is part of our democratic and social imaginary[14]. However, in doing so – and the continuing saga of the *School Grant* is a good example – we are also aware that on the ground, in the mid range of innovation and debate, the question is that of action and the conflicting interests of different social groupings.

From a discursive point of view policies are actions, programs are actions, projects are actions, innovations are actions and activities are actions. They are all ways of packaging action. They are all actual or intended interventions into ongoing events in the world[15] and seen as actions there is very little to distinguish them, one from the other. Furthermore, when brought into the arena of government and governance, they are public actions, which is perhaps the key question that needs to be posed both to the policies and the innovations in a country such as Brazil with its high degrees of disparity and quasi-exclusion. How public are the actions; for what public are the actions being developed; with which whom were the actions discussed and who will implement them? How public, in other words are the processes that we describe as policy formation, program design, project management or work organization, how public are our practices?

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[15] GIDDENS A. Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure and Contradiction in Social Analysis. London: Macmillan Press, 1979.

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