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Teacher-led
Learning Circles
for Formative Assessment

Teacher-Led Learning Circles for Formative Assessment: FINAL REPORT BRAZIL



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**Teacher-Led Learning Circles for
Formative Assessment Project**

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1. Introduction

Brazil is one of the countries participating in the Teacher-Led project, coordinated by Education International. Several reasons justify the selection of this country for the sample, from its size and economic significance in the Latin American region to the severe problems it faces in education. To understand the specificity of the experience with Teacher-Led Learning Circles in the Brazilian context, it is of utmost importance to consider some data about its national setting. Brazil is the largest and most populous country in South America, and despite having a strong economy, ranked ninth in the world's largest economies¹, it harbors significant social inequality. Brazil entered the 21st century with a substantial social debt affecting broad sectors of the society and an extremely unfair wealth distribution, being the eighth most unequal country in the world, according to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). In the Human Development Report 2021/2022, the country fell from 84th to 87th position².

This situation was further exacerbated by the political context between 2016 and 2021, leading to greater inequalities both socially and educationally. The federal government led by President Jair Bolsonaro (Liberal Party) from 2018 to 2022 proved incapable of responding effectively to the demands imposed by the worsening health crisis brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the resulting economic problems. Since the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff in August 2016, the country has been subject to a policy of economic austerity. Public resources were gradually withdrawn from social domains to pay public debt, benefiting banks and private companies (Alencar Júnior, Fattorelli, Gonçalves Filho; Gomes, 2020). These measures weakened the economy, further increased unemployment, and widened the vast gap between rich and poor, which was exacerbated by the pandemic (World Bank, 2022).

Despite the policies implemented during the governments of Lula (2003-2010) and Dilma Rousseff (2011-2016), which promoted the inclusion of historically vulnerable segments of society in the educational system, the full right to education for all remains an unpaid debt. The education level of the Brazilian population is considered quite low, with 53.1% of people aged 25 and over having only completed Elementary Education; and among young people aged 18 to 24, only 24.2% are in higher education (IBGE, 2022).

The Brazilian school system, historically marked by the exclusion of significant sectors of the population, particularly Black and Indigenous people, became even more unequal with the COVID-19 pandemic. Data from the Continuous National Household Sample Survey by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (Continuous PNAD/IBGE) from 2022 show that 40.8% of Brazilian children aged 6 to 7 years could not read or write in 2021, i.e., they were not literate during this period, representing a considerable increase of 65.6% compared to 2019.³ This situation is deeply concerning and reveals the damage that the pandemic has caused and continues to cause in the country, highlighting the already known social and educational inequalities: the poor physical infrastructure of many schools, the lack of access to and support for technological resources for professionals and students, teachers untrained in the use of

1 Between 2010 and 2014, Brazil maintained the 7th position. In 2019, it ranked 9th, and in 2020, it dropped to the 12th position. By 2022, Brazil fell another position, occupying the 13th spot. However, with changes in the political and economic scenario in Brazil starting from 2022, with the beginning of Lula's third term in government, the country climbed several positions, returning to the 9th position in the world economy in 2023. For more information, see: <https://agenciabrasil.ebc.com.br/economia/noticia/2023-12/brasil-salta-duas-posicoes-e-se-torna-nona-economia-do-mundo-em-2023>

2 <https://static.poder360.com.br/2022/09/idh-2021-2022-8set-2022.pdf>

3 In 2019, the number of Brazilian children aged 6 and 7 who could not read and write was 1.429 million, increasing to 2.367 million in 2021.

digital technologies, and the vulnerability of many families who, in addition to being unable to provide the necessary support for their children's studies, rely on schools to feed them.

Educational provision is highly unequal across geographic regions, between urban and rural schools, and even within cities when considering the infrastructure of schools located in central and peripheral neighbourhoods. The poorest and black populations generally attend the most precarious schools⁴. During the pandemic, the conditions for remote teaching were no different and reflected the unequal offerings of the school system, both in terms of access to technological resources and educational support, as well as nutritional support.

Another aspect that deserves mention when discussing the current Brazilian educational context is the rise of right-wing movements in recent years, which have focused on the educational sector, expressed through campaigns such as "School without Party"⁵ and against so-called "gender ideology", as well as the advocacy for the militarisation of public schools⁶ (Santos & Pereira, 2018; Lima, Golbspan & Santos, 2022). The growth of the right in Brazilian society is notable in recent years, despite the defeat of then-President Jair Bolsonaro in the 2022 presidential election. In the educational field, these movements have threatened the autonomy of teachers, in a school context already weakened by the accountability policies that have been implemented in public schools since 2007 (Oliveira, 2022).

2. Country profile

2.1 The Brazilian Educational System

The Brazilian state is characterized by a federal organization, whose political structure is founded on a regime of cooperation and autonomy among the Federal Government, the states and the Federal District, and the municipalities. This collaborative regime, established in Article 211 of the Federal Constitution, is responsible for ensuring all social rights, including education, to the entire population. Thus, the decentralization of education is defined in the Federal Constitution (1988), distributing responsibilities for its levels and stages among the federative entities, granting relative autonomy to the states and municipalities.

Brazilian educational policies are the result of a historical construction spanning just over two centuries, marked by numerous reforms. Particularly in the last three decades, broader reforms that introduced a new rationality to the Brazilian state, based on New Public Management, have significantly impacted educational management. These were implemented paradoxically at the same time that society was undergoing processes of redemocratization, after 21 years of military dictatorship (1964-1985), with demands from social movements for greater transparency and participation in the development and execution of public and social

⁴ <https://observatoriobranquitude.com.br/a-cor-da-infraestrurura-escolar-diferencas-entre-escolas-brancas-e-negras/>

⁵ The movement orchestrated by conservative sectors of civil society seeks to "discipline" teaching work, especially in public basic education schools, based on the assumption that teachers engage in political-partisan proselytizing and restrict the right to learn of students. The movement gained momentum after the coup in 2016, and since then, various bills have been circulating through the legislative houses of the country (Santos & Pereira, 2018).

⁶ The militarization of public education in Brazil is not a recent phenomenon, given the initiatives by some Brazilian states starting in the 1990s. However, it took on a new dimension as it became the main educational policy promoted by President Jair Bolsonaro, who created the Civic-Military Schools Program (PECIM) under decree no. 10.004/2019. The militarization of schools occurs on two special fronts: the inclusion of reserve members from the armed forces, military police, or fire brigade in daily school routines; and the sharing of school management with the military, who then oversee and supervise administrative and disciplinary aspects (Lima, Golbspan & Santos, 2022).

policies (Oliveira, 2008; 2020, Gentili & Oliveira, 2013). The Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education of 1996 (Law 9.394/96) represents this contradiction as it expands rights, responding to demands for greater equity and democratization in access to public education, while corroborating this new model of public services management, focused on evaluation processes for control and administrative flexibility purposes (Cury, 2008, Oliveira, 2015).

The aforementioned law is the principal instrument for structuring and organizing Brazilian education. It determines the purposes of education, the administrative bodies responsible for providing educational services, the levels and modalities of teaching, among other aspects that characterize the Brazilian educational system, in convergence with constitutional principles.

According to Law 9.394/1996, education in Brazil is organized into two levels: basic and higher. Basic Education consists of the following stages: Early Childhood Education, Elementary Education, and Upper Secondary Education. Municipalities are responsible for Early Childhood and Elementary Education, in technical and financial cooperation with the states and the Federal Government; the states are responsible for Elementary and Upper Secondary Education, as observed in the framework below. The Federal Government is responsible for Higher Education, in addition to coordinating national education policy, with normative, redistributive, and supplementary functions.

Table 1 - Organisation of National Education in Brazil

Levels of School Education				Priority Jurisdiction
Basic Education (Mandatory and free from ages 4 to 17, with its free provision guaranteed even to those who did not have access at the appropriate age - Constitutional Amendment No. 9/2009)	Early Childhood Education	Nursery	0 to 3 years	Municipality
		Preschool	4 to 5 years	
	Elementary Education	Initial Grades Year 1 to Year 5	6 to 10 years	Municipality, State and Federal District
		Final Grades Year 6 to Year 9	7 to 14 years	
	Upper Secondary Education	Year 1 to Year 3	15 to 17 years	State and Federal District
Higher Education	Undergraduate Studies			Union
	Postgraduate Studies	Lato Sensu		
		Stricto Sensu		

According to the School Census of Basic Education for the year 2023 (Inep/MEC, 2024), the Brazilian educational system currently comprises 47.3 million enrollments across 178.5 thousand schools. The highest number of enrollments in Basic Education is found in municipal networks (49.3%), followed by state networks with 30%. Private schools account for 19.9% of enrollments, while the federal education network holds 0.8%. Enrollments in Basic Education are concentrated in urban areas, accounting for 88.8%.

A recurring issue in Brazilian education is grade-level distortion, where students are older than the recommended age for their enrolled grade level. This issue becomes more pronounced from the second year of Elementary Education onwards, affecting 17.0% of enrollments in the Final Years of Elementary Education (6th to 9th grade) and 19.5% of enrollments in High School. Proportionally, across all educational stages, male students tend to exhibit a greater age gap compared to female students (Inep, MEC 2024)

Table 1 - Enrollment by Educational Stage/Network

Stage/Type of Education		Federal	State	Municipal	Private	Total
Early Childhood Education	Nursery	942	3,905	2,748,671	1,369,355	4,122,873
	Preschool	1,525	56,192	4,112,950	1,167,615	5,338,282
Elementary Education	Initial Grades	6,881	1,610,033	10,027,344	2,782,392	14,426,650
	Final Grades	16,847	4,611,839	5,144,660	1,908,212	11,681,558
Upper Secondary Education		236,147	6,415,026	39,223	986,347	7,676,743
EJA [Adult and Youth Education]	Elementary Education	607	312,668	1,187,758	74,771	1,575,804
	Secondary Education	8,548	859,041	20,836	125,586	1,014,011
Special Education	Mainstream classes	8,123	485,511	975,478	148,308	1,617,420
	Exclusive classes	559	10,731	27,154	115,566	154,010

Source: Inep/School Census (2023)

The Brazilian education system is also divided into modalities, namely: Adult and Youth Education - EJA (Primary or Upper Secondary Education), Vocational or Technical Education, Special Education, Distance Education (EAD), Rural Education, Quilombola Education, and Indigenous Education. EJA has been decreasing over the years in the country, by 20.9% between 2019 and 2023, reaching 2.6 million in 2023. Vocational and Technical Education reached 2.4 million in 2023, an increase of 26.1% compared to 2019, mainly concentrated in private institutions, representing 44.4%, followed by state and federal public networks, with 38.2% and 13.7%, respectively. Special Education has 1.8 million enrolments in 2023, an increase of 41.6% compared to 2019. The biggest contraction is in Elementary Education (62.9%). It is also worth noting the growth in enrolments in this modality in Early Childhood Education, with a 193% increase in nursery enrolments and a 151% increase in preschool enrolments (Inep/MEC, 2024).

An important element in characterizing Brazilian students is the unequal access by skin colour/race in certain stages and modalities of education. Blacks and browns constitute about 55.5% of the Brazilian population; however, access to nursery education (0 to 3 years old) is mostly white (49.7%). In contrast to this reality, the modality of Adult and Youth Education (EJA) is mostly composed of black students (74.9%), demonstrating the effects of racial inequality on the educational process of these individuals (Inep/MEC, 2024).

Regarding teachers, according to the 2023 School Census (Inep/MEC, 2024), there are 2,354,194 teachers in Basic Education in Brazil, with the majority working in Elementary Education (60.3%). It is important to highlight that out of the 685 thousand teachers in Early Childhood Education, 96.2% are female, a difference that decreases as one progresses through the stages of education (in Elementary Education, female teachers account for 77.6%, and in Upper Secondary Education, 58.6%).

Table 2 - Teachers by Educational Stage and Network

Stage/Type of Education		Federal	State	Municipal	Private
Early Childhood Education	Nursery	154	621	254,538	121,559
	Preschool	206	3,535	267,156	90,920
Elementary Education	Initial Grades	720	86,104	502,553	196,495
	Final Grades	1,737	309,765	340,111	164,741
Upper Secondary Education		29,871	414,869	3,184	107,035

Source: Inep/School Census (2023)

In terms of educational attainment, the 2023 School Census (Inep/MEC, 2024) indicates that teachers in Early Childhood Education have the lowest rate of completion of full higher education (80.7%), those working in the Initial Years of Elementary Education (Year 1 to Year 5) are at 87.3%, and those working in the Final Years are at 92%. In Upper Secondary Education, this rate is 96%. Despite holding qualifications in higher education, this does not always align with the subject they teach. In this regard, the most challenging situation is among teachers in the Initial Years of Elementary Education who teach Foreign Language (36.3%). In Upper Secondary Education, the discipline of Sociology presents a similarly low rate, with only 36.9% of classes being taught by appropriately qualified teachers. Across all three educational stages, Physical Education is the discipline with the best indicator of qualification adequacy, with rates of 84.2% in the Initial Years of Elementary Education, 76.6% in the Final Years of Elementary Education, and 75% in Upper Secondary Education.

2.2 Current assessment policies

Brazil, like most countries worldwide, is significantly influenced by international organizations in its education policies. The circulation of educational policies globally is characterized as a knowledge transfer movement aimed at models and strategic guidelines for organizing education systems and policy management. The diffusion of these models originates from specific centres and under the perspective that specialized knowledge should help address educational crises, regardless of their location. This movement, sometimes referred to as policy borrowing (Steiner-Khamsi, 2016), occurs through individual agents—politicians and consultants—or agencies—such as private foundations, think tanks, non-governmental actors, and international organizations. The influence of these organizations on the global education

agenda has been extensively explored by studies and research in recent decades (Rizvi & Lingard, 2012; Robertson, 2009; Verger, 2019).

In Brazil, given its federative organization, the circulation of educational policies occurs both internally, characterized as a 'policy borrowing' from one municipality or state to another, and externally, where states are influenced and seek support from international experiences. Private foundations play an important role in this regard, especially in the direct partnerships they develop with states and municipalities, disseminating well-known models of 'best practices' in education (Moura, 2022; Oliveira & Carvalho, 2021; Tarlau & Moeller, 2020). Among the recommendations are large-scale learning assessments, which are gaining increasing importance in the global educational context.

Currently in Brazil, this trend is well-established. Despite Law No. 9394/96 establishing, in its article 24, that assessment should be continuous and cumulative, serving learning rather than certification, with a prevalence of qualitative over quantitative aspects and of results over final exams.

In the last three decades, there has been a proliferation of large-scale education assessment systems at the federal, state, or municipal levels, justified by the pursuit of improving the quality of education, establishing curricular and management parameters for educational systems. Nationally, the Basic Education Assessment System (Saeb) stands out, implemented in the early 1990s. This policy follows a global trend of configuring the model of the Evaluating State, which, according to Maroy (2011, p. 32), "assumes that the objectives and programmes of the education system are defined centrally and that educational institutions have significant autonomy in pedagogical or financial management, but, on the other hand, they are subject to contracts and external evaluation systems of the establishments' performances."

Despite the promotion of policies to address poverty and recognize diversity observed in the school context since the 2000s, mainly through actions of the federal governments of Lula and Dilma Rousseff (Workers' Party), there has been an intensification of large-scale assessment systems with the creation in 2007 of the Basic Education Development Index (Ideb) (Clementino; Oliveira, 2023). This index uses the average of the member countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) as a comparison object. Ideb has become the benchmark for assessing the quality of Basic Education, combining students' performance data in the Saeb test with their school progression, which represents the sum of the number of students approved, failed, and who dropped out of school in the reference years of the exams.

The Saeb, which since 1990 administered a test every two years to a sample of students from each state, along with a socioeconomic questionnaire, was restructured in 2005 to become census-based (universal). It now consists of a set of large-scale external assessments of both public and private school networks, targeting students in the 5th and 9th grades of Elementary Education and students in the final year of Upper Secondary Education (3rd year), assessing their skills in Portuguese Language and Mathematics⁷.

⁷ In 2005, the Saeb (Brazilian System of Educational Assessment) was restructured to include the National Basic Education Assessment (Avaliação Nacional da Educação Básica - ANEB) and the National School Performance Assessment (Avaliação Nacional do Rendimento Escolar - ANRESC), also known as Prova Brasil. The latter was conducted in a census manner, allowing for the generation of school-specific results. However, in the 2019 edition of Saeb, the terminologies ANEB, ANRESC, and ANA (created in 2013) were discontinued, and all external assessments were identified solely as Saeb. Available at: https://download.inep.gov.br/saeb/outros_documentos/nota_tecnica_detalhamento_populacao_resultados_saeb_2019.pdf

In addition to federal-level assessment policies, several state and municipal systems have been developing their own assessments and quality indicators based on the reference framework of Saeb (Bauer & Gatti, 2013). These states and municipalities have adopted accountability policies with bonuses and rewards for teachers (and in some cases for students) based on student performance in large-scale assessments (Oliveira, 2018; Oliveira & Carvalho, 2021). This is the case in states like Ceará, Paraíba, and Pernambuco, which have been developing statewide assessment systems aimed at promoting quality education based on results, establishing new curricular and management parameters for educational systems, as well as teacher performance (Clementino & Oliveira, 2019).

In 2019, during Jair Bolsonaro's government, Saeb underwent a transition period between the reference frameworks used for the exams since 2001 and the new frameworks developed in accordance with the National Common Curricular Base (BNCC). This Base was approved during Michel Temer's government (2016-2018) with the support of business movements, contrary to discussions in the academic field and social movements, including unions, advocating for an emancipatory educational proposal (Tarlau & Moeller, 2020). Additionally, the evaluation of institutions offering Early Childhood Education was included through the application of electronic questionnaires for teachers and directors of nurseries and preschools, as well as public network managers; assessment of 2nd-grade students in Elementary Education in Portuguese Language and Mathematics tests; and tests in Humanities and Natural Sciences for 9th-grade students in Elementary Education aligned with the BNCC.

According to the National Institute for Educational Studies and Research Anísio Teixeira (Inep), which administers the Saeb and calculates the Ideb, in 2023 the assessment was conducted with students: from the 2nd year of Primary Education in some selected schools, assessing Portuguese Language and Mathematics content already adapted to the BNCC; from the 5th and 9th years of Elementary Education and the 3rd and 4th years of Secondary Education, from almost all public schools and some selected private schools, assessing Portuguese Language and Mathematics with the same content as previous editions of Saeb; from some selected public and private schools from the 5th and 9th years of Elementary Education, also selected to take tests in Natural Sciences and Humanities with content aligned with the BNCC⁸. The same alignment is expected in 2025 for the tests of Upper Secondary Education, aligned with the BNCC.

With the election of Lula for the presidency of Brazil in October 2022, changes in the direction of the assessment system in the country are already being announced, with the development of new instruments and the adaptation of some existing ones. These changes are based on matrices more focused on correcting imbalances and seeking greater equity in educational provision.

⁸ Exceptions: Very small schools with fewer than ten students enrolled in the assessed grades; schools or classes that only serve students who are the target audience for special education; indigenous schools where Portuguese is not spoken; classes for Youth and Adult Education (EJA), teacher training, and multigrade classes (Inep/MEC, 2023).

2.3 Learning and professional development for teachers in the use of formative assessment

Teacher professional development, understood as one of its dimensions being training to enter the profession, is supported by the mentioned Law 9.394/1996, in its article 62, which states that “teachers to work in Basic Education must have initial training at the undergraduate level, in a comprehensive teaching degree course, with a minimum qualification for teaching in Early Childhood Education and the first five years of Elementary Education being that offered at the secondary level, in the Normal modality.” This law stipulates in its article 61 that the training of education professionals should have as its foundations:

- I - the presence of a solid basic education, which provides knowledge of the scientific and social foundations of their work competencies;
- II - the association between theories and practices, through supervised internships and in-service training;
- III - the use of previous education and experiences, in educational institutions and in other activities. (Law 9.394/1996).

Since the 2000s, various measures have been developed by the federal, state, and municipal governments seeking to expand the provision of initial higher education training for teachers and enhance their professional performance through continuous training processes at universities or within schools.

Among the programmes developed by the Federal Government, the following stand out: the Teacher Training Consolidation Programme (Prodocência), established in 2006, aimed at funding projects focused on the training and professional practice of future teachers; the Open University of Brazil (UAB), also established in 2006, is an integrated system of public universities that offers undergraduate and continuous training courses for basic education teachers, targeting populations with limited access to university education through distance learning methodologies; the Institutional Programme of Teaching Initiation Scholarships (PIBID), established in 2007, which grants scholarships to students enrolled in teacher training courses who undertake pedagogical activities in public primary and secondary schools, encouraging teaching careers among undergraduates and enhancing the teaching profession; and the National Plan for the Training of Basic Education Teachers (PARFOR), established in 2009, designed to provide higher education training for in-service teachers in state and municipal public schools to meet legal requirements. All these programmes are currently in operation.

Another noteworthy programme is the National Pact for Literacy at the Right Age (PNAIC), one of the main continuous training actions for literacy teachers observed in the past decade, though it was discontinued in 2018. The PNAIC was instituted by the Ministry of Education during Dilma Rousseff's government in partnership with states and municipalities for the continuous training of literacy teachers in Portuguese Language and Mathematics in public schools, aiming to improve literacy among children studying up to the 3rd year of primary education (Ordinance No. 867/2012). The PNAIC included participation in external evaluations conducted in the public education system, the Saeb, through the National Literacy Assessment (ANA), a biennial evaluation aimed at assessing literacy and numeracy in Portuguese Language and Mathematics among 3rd-year primary school students in public schools.

Another important measure regarding the training and valuation of Basic Education teachers, which aims to ensure their specific higher education training in the field of knowledge in which they work, is the National Education Plan 2014-2024 (Law 13.005/2014), in its goals 15, 16, 17, and 18.

Goal 15: Training of Teaching Professionals (higher education level);

Goal 16: Training of Teaching Professionals at the Postgraduate Level and Continuous Training;

Goal 17: Salary Valuation of Public School Teachers;

Goal 18: Career Plan for Teaching Professionals. (Law 13.005/2014).

Despite the significant progress made by the National Education Plan (PNE) in valuing education professionals through the establishment of the four goals mentioned above, the same Law 13.005/2014 contains provisions that have negatively and directly influenced the issue of teaching. For example, Goal 7 links the quality of education to the Ideb and PISA, and its strategy 7.36 states, “establish policies to incentivize schools that improve performance in the Ideb, in order to value the merit of the teaching staff, management, and the school community,” which ends up reinforcing accountability policies in schools.

However, changes in the national political context since 2016 have made the full implementation of the actions provided for in this Law, which established the National Education Plan (PNE) for a 10-year period, unfeasible. Successive funding cuts and changes in government strategy compromised the execution of the PNE.

The implementation of the National Common Curricular Base (BNCC) from 2018, as a national curriculum to be implemented in the stages and modalities of Basic Education, despite much resistance, has represented an unprecedented change in schools (Tarlau & Moeller, 2020). Arguing that the BNCC presents an organic and progressive set of essential learnings, the literacy of children is now expected to occur by the second year of primary education, different from what was provided for in the PNAIC and the PNE.

The BNCC is oriented towards the development of competencies with a focus on large-scale assessments. It dictates not only the school curriculum but also the initial and continuing training of teachers to adapt to the new curriculum. This adaptation is provided for in Resolution CNE/CP No. 2, of 20 December 2019, which defines the current National Curriculum Guidelines for Initial Teacher Training for Basic Education and establishes the National Common Core for the Initial Training of Basic Education Teachers (BNC-Formação). The document emphasizes the need to intensify the links between training institutions and the school reality from the beginning of training courses and to implement a system of course evaluation and certification of teacher competencies (Silva, 2018).

Another measure that impacted the autonomy and professional development of teachers, especially those working in the early years of primary and early childhood education, was the establishment of the National Literacy Policy (PNA), replacing the PNAIC in 2019 (Decree No. 9.765/2019). The PNA prioritizes the literacy of students already in the first year of primary education, further anticipating children’s literacy. Additionally, the policy goes against the debate

on literacy by adopting a single methodological perspective for literacy, with approaches and methods considered outdated in the specific academic literature (Centro de Alfabetização, Leitura e Escrita, 2020). Furthermore, the “Time to Learn” Programme was created to “address the main causes of literacy deficiencies in the country,” including the implementation of performance awards for Basic Education professionals.

These measures were not sufficient to improve the literacy rates of children in the country. As mentioned, the results were particularly poor during the years 2020 and 2021, exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

In 2023, the Lula government instituted a new policy aimed at literacy, the National Commitment to Literate Children (Decree No. 11,556/2023). Through the combined efforts of the Union, States, the Federal District, and Municipalities, the goal is to guarantee the right to literacy for Brazilian children, considered by the federal government as a “structuring element for the construction of successful educational trajectories.” Among the objectives of the Commitment is the implementation of policies, programs, and actions to ensure that Brazilian children are literate by the end of the second year of primary education. To this end, resources will be made available for teacher training and improvement of pedagogical practices, the provision of supplementary teaching materials and other pedagogical resources, and the improvement of school infrastructure, as well as the use of evaluation systems. It is expected, through an effort among the federated entities, to establish strategies to identify, recognize, reward, and disseminate successful pedagogical and management practices aimed at ensuring the right to literacy, developed by early childhood education and early primary education teachers (art. 34, I).

What is observed is that regardless of the government, learning and teacher professional performance are increasingly tied to large-scale assessment policies and less to formative assessment processes that aim for emancipatory, humanistic, and holistic education. Despite this predominant orientation in the scope of government policies, within the school context, there are resistances and diverse teaching experiences (Araújo, 2019).

2.4 Formative Assessment Practices in the Early Years

Assessment has always been an integral part of educational practices, serving among other functions to monitor student learning, thereby providing a meaningful teaching and learning experience.

According to Perrenoud (1999), true formative assessment must be accompanied by differentiated interventions, whether through radical transformations in school structure, changes in class schedules, etc. Formative assessment is a pedagogical strategy to combat educational failures and learning disparities.

Mendez (2002) contends that formative assessment should continuously serve pedagogical practice to enhance it and benefit its participants. However, arguments regarding formative assessment practices encounter objective difficulties within the school context. Among these difficulties are the gaps between what is advocated as formative assessment in official documents and the pressures within schools to orient teaching towards large-scale assessment tests, particularly under accountability regimes.

The BNCC (MEC, 2018), for example, views assessment in various dimensions as a process aimed at providing a comprehensive and integral analysis of the student. In this regard, it is argued that formative assessment considers the contexts and conditions of students' learning, making records as a reference to improve school performance. Beyond cognitive knowledge built by the student, the framework anticipates that assessments in Elementary Education should encompass the development of skills and competencies.

Despite the BNCC advocating formative assessment processes, what is observed in practice is quite different. By establishing essential learning through the definition of competencies and skills, what ultimately prevails is the curriculum based on large-scale tests that dictate how these objectives will be met, outlining the most suitable pedagogical strategies to achieve the desired outcomes in assessments.

The BNCC in Brazil mandates the creation of a Political-Pedagogical Project (PPP), which should compile the necessary school action proposals for the teaching and learning process, aligned with the objectives of each school. This involves teachers, students, families, and staff, enabling the planning and monitoring of curricular practices. However, the working conditions for teachers in the country do not provide the means for these objectives and actions to be effectively implemented, rendering these approaches often under-contextualized.

Despite these challenges, following the publication of the BNCC, states and municipalities have adjusted their curricular proposals to align with the new guidelines. According to data released by the Observatory - Movimento pela Base, all 27 Brazilian states and 99% of its municipalities (5,564 in total) have aligned their curricular frameworks with the BNCC⁹. This alignment occurred in a context marked by the Covid-19 pandemic, which led to the suspension of in-person school activities for an extended period.

A study on formative assessment of learning during the Covid-19 pandemic by Lima, Sales, Silva & Noronha (2022) analysed the challenges and possibilities of its implementation in remote education due to social distancing. The authors noted that teachers were keen on conducting formative assessments and tried to develop them through various methods and tools, such as oral or written feedback from students, portfolios, self-assessment, and peer assessment.

At the governmental level, notable formative assessment initiatives during this period include the program "Curricular Pathways and Learning Tracks in Times of Pandemic" by the city of Belo Horizonte, the capital of Minas Gerais in the southeastern region of the country. Faced with the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, the Municipal Education Secretary (Smed) launched this program in 2021 to redefine the curricular practices of municipal schools. According to the program, assessment is a routine task through which teachers commit to reflect on the successes and failures of teaching plans, understanding that results and processes complement each other in grasping reality. Assessment begins with the knowledge of results from previous actions and materializes when it produces information about the processes implemented to achieve these results and aids in making future decisions to improve them.

To this end, Smed proposed the organization of an Annual School Portfolio as a fundamental tool in the processes of continuous assessment, allowing for the organization of records on the learning process and facilitating the monitoring of students' performance evolution in proposed

9 Available at: <https://observatorio.movimentopelabase.org.br/educacao-infantil-e-ensino-fundamental/>

activities. Teacher teams from each student group were expected to interact to create unique work scripts, incorporating various proposed activities so that students understood what they were expected to do and adhered to the defined deadlines for each set of requested actions.

At the close of 2022, the Smed conducted a review of the year, noting advancements in various aspects, particularly in the learning of students supported by actions of individualised monitoring outside regular school hours, such as: the implementation of school reinforcement plans, the use of digital materials, the introduction of new actors in classrooms during and outside regular hours to encourage educational reinforcement, the establishment of a system for monitoring learning through the application of diagnostic tests, and the energy of the professionals involved in the process of resuming and advancing municipal education (Dalben, Silveira, Alves & Luz, 2023, p. 28).

Nevertheless, it is evident that even in formative assessment experiences, the goal remains the improvement of learning indicators. The educational reinforcement outside regular hours and the methodologies employed predominantly focus on cognitive development.

2.5 Research on Assessment Policies in Brazil

The global circulation of educational policies has led to the normalization of a conception of education and teaching quality that is partial because it fails to take into account other dimensions. This quality, measured by large-scale assessments, focuses on the learning of a limited set of subjects: Mother Tongue, Mathematics, and Sciences, reflecting a specific conception of education grounded in Human Capital Theory. The PISA is its primary tool, dictating the curriculum and influencing the work methods of educational professionals. In Brazil over the last five years, the energies (and public resources) for teacher training have been directed towards implementing the curriculum determined by the BNCC, that is, aimed at performance in large-scale tests. This movement towards BNCC training, which involves various actors from the educational field, promotes a limited and impoverished view of training, losing the critical and constructive perspective of the educational process and has restricted teacher autonomy.

In Brazil, many studies have sought to understand the effects of large-scale assessments on curricula and teaching practices, as well as exploring the consequences that accountability policies have on working conditions in schools and on teacher professionalism.

A study conducted by Gestrado in 2019 showed that assessments have had a strong emphasis in the policies of the nine states of Northeast Brazil, with at least three forms of assessment policy implementation being identifiable (Oliveira & Clementino, 2019).

These policies were classified in the study into three groups: high accountability; medium accountability, and low accountability. The first group consists of states that develop high accountability policies or high stakes, adopting strategies of bonuses and rewards for results achieved by both teachers and students: Ceará, Paraíba, and Pernambuco. The second group includes states with a system of medium accountability, where the incentives for performance improvement are not directly aimed at teachers in the form of rewards or sanctions, but participative strategies that seek engagement and commitment from them are evident: Alagoas, Maranhão, and Piauí. The third group presents low accountability (low stakes) or an absence

of accountability by adopting policies that, although recognizing assessment as an indicator of educational quality, did not have a very developed system or even lacked assessment, and in which no clear normative provisions were found that include actions directed at teachers by the secretariat in pursuit of results in tests: Bahia, Rio Grande do Norte, and Sergipe (Oliveira & Clementino, 2019).

Clementino (2023), in investigating the education systems of Pernambuco and Paraíba, which are considered to have strong accountability, notes that the actions of these state governments have led to demands and illnesses, according to reports from teachers in these educational networks. Such policies have created significant pressure for results, particularly on teachers of Portuguese Language and Mathematics, the subjects assessed in the tests, leading to an increasingly test-oriented approach to teaching and the manipulation of school pass and fail rates as these are also measured by the Ideb. This could directly relate to the fact that the high school stage in the state of Pernambuco has shown the best student performance rates in Brazil, according to the Census (Inep/MEC, 2022). On the other hand, despite the efforts of school management and teachers to improve results, the Ideb scores for the educational stages investigated in Paraíba were below the national average, as were those in the Early Years of Elementary Education in Pernambuco, demonstrating that the accountability policies adopted by the states may not be the solution to educational problems, and indeed they are not.

A study by Novaes (2014) explored how teachers in the early years of Elementary Education in São Paulo perceived the impacts of large-scale assessments conducted by the state education network, specifically the São Paulo State School Performance Assessment System (SARESP), on pedagogical work. The research revealed a close relationship between external assessments, accountability policies, and the bonus policy adopted by the São Paulo State Education Department (SEE/SP), which warranted careful consideration. The study observed that linking external evaluations to a results-based bonus policy, amidst a backdrop of precarious working conditions for teachers, was triggering the adoption of questionable practices within schools. Such practices included aligning the school curriculum to the SARESP framework, training specifically for the tests through the maintenance of informal tutoring sessions and “big tests”, among other more subtle forms of curriculum manipulation. According to the author, this served as a means of controlling teacher work and the curriculum and had effects on the self-esteem of these professionals. This situation created new subjectivities and often unclear ways of relating to the profession, serving only to increase their distress and frustration.

On the other hand, Garcia, Bizzo & Rosa (2019) demonstrate in their studies how the prioritization of subjects included in large-scale assessments has contributed to the process of devaluing the work of teachers in other disciplines. Through reports from Science teachers, it was noted that teachers of Portuguese and Mathematics had access to more material resources, more pedagogical support time, and ongoing training opportunities than other teachers. Furthermore, the majority of schools had school reinforcement projects that were limited to the assessed subjects, making it unfeasible for Science teachers to participate and denying them the opportunity to increase their remuneration through reinforcement classes.

3. Results of the Teacher-Led Project in the Country

3.1 National Strategy for Teacher-Led Learning Circles

The Teacher-Led Brasil project launched its Learning Circles, conducted by teachers for formative assessment, in February 2023, following an invitation from Education International (IE) in 2022. The project in Brazil is partnered with the National Confederation of Education Workers (CNTE) and is carried out by the Study Group on Educational Policy and Teaching Work (Gestrado) at the Federal University of Minas Gerais.

The objective of the Learning Circles conducted by teachers for formative assessment was to enable teachers to develop formative assessment practices, reflect on these practices, and share the outcomes. The initiative developed in Brazil is part of a broader project aimed at developing Learning Circles for formative assessment led by teachers in different countries and sharing these experiences with the global professional community. Additionally, the project seeks to identify, test, and disseminate teaching and learning strategies that can assist other teachers and meet the learning needs of their students.

Given the objective conditions found in Brazil for the execution of the Learning Circles led by teachers for formative assessment, the Gestrado team, in discussion with the CNTE and the international project coordination, decided to embrace the vast diversity of the Brazilian educational context in their approach. For viability, the activities were primarily conducted in a remote format, thus including participation from teachers in urban and rural areas, as well as indigenous and quilombola communities.

The selection of participants to join the Learning Circles led by teachers for formative assessment was conducted by the CNTE with support from local unions. Thirty educators from public schools, who were active in the Early Years of Elementary Education¹⁰ and lived in different regions of the country, were chosen. Three Learning Circles for formative assessment were established, each comprising ten teachers. Each Circle was supported by two facilitators and were named: Circle A, Circle B, and Circle C. The activities of the Circles were also monitored by a union representative.

However, some teachers faced challenges in continuing their participation. These issues were mainly related to internet connectivity, scheduling difficulties, lack of time, and personal matters. These teachers had to be replaced. As the Learning Circles progressed, some substitutions were made to ensure that each Circle maintained at least 10 members. Despite efforts by the CNTE to make new nominations and facilitators' attempts to ensure all teachers remained until the end of the project, the activities concluded with 21 teachers (7 in Circle A, 8 in Circle B, and 6 in Circle C). At the end of the activities, the circles comprised 21 teachers, but 22 portfolios were delivered since one of the facilitators from Circle B, who also works as a teacher in the Early Years of Elementary Education, conducted the formative assessment experience with her students and developed a portfolio. Thus, the total number of participants in the Learning Circles in Brazil was 22 teachers from 22 different schools, as detailed in Table 2.

¹⁰ What corresponds to Year 1 to Year 5 of primary education in Brazil.

Table 2 - Profile of the Educators in the Learning Circles

Teacher	School	Category	State	Gender	Qualification
Adriana Ferreira	Faustino Antônio da Silva Municipal Basic Education School	Regular	MT	Female	Pedagogy
Alison Santos	Monteiro Lobato Municipal School	Regular	PR	Male	Social Sciences
Ana Roberta Xavier	Class School 16 of Planaltina	Regular	DF	Female	Teaching/Geography
Cibele Brito	Professor José Bento de Assis Municipal Elementary School	Regular	SP	Female	Pedagogia
Cristiane Sálvio	George Ricardo Salum Municipal School	Regular	MG	Female	Teaching
Francismére Grandis	Germano Lazaretti Municipal Elementary School	Regular	MT	Female	Teaching
Glaucineide Souza	Favo de Mel Municipal School	Regular	MS	Female	Teaching
Luciane Guimarães	Ramão Martins Indigenous Municipal School	Indigenous	MS	Female	Teaching
Maria Cícera Leandro	Professor Silvia Celina Nunes Lima Municipal School	Regular	AL	Female	Teacher Training/ Biology/ Education (in progress)
Maria da Penha e Silva	Quilombola José Nêu de Carvalho Municipal School	Quilombola	PE	Female	Teaching
Maria Inez dos Santos	Esther Crema Marmentini Basic School	Regular	SC	Female	Teaching
Maria José Mariano	Dona Santinha Municipal School	Regular	MG	Female	Language & Literature
Raimunda de Sousa	Antônio de Almeida Veras Municipal School	Regular	TO	Female	Teaching
Rejane Martins	Lizamara Aparecida Oliva de Almeida Municipal Basic Education School	Regular	MT	Female	Teaching
Rosana de Moraes	Class School 11 of Sobradinho	Regular	DF	Female	Teaching
Rosecler Werlang	Caiçara State Elementary School	Regular	RS	Female	Teaching
Sibeli Siegle	Guerreiro Lima Municipal Elementary School	Regular	RS	Female	Teaching

Sonia Regina Martins	Mont'Alverne State Elementary School	Regular	SC	Female	Teaching
Tania da Silva	Municipal Centre for Specialised Educational Services	Special Education	TO	Female	Letras
Vera Lucia da Silva	Manoel Benício de Siqueira Municipal School	Regular	PE	Female	Teacher Training/ Language & Literature
Virginia dos Santos	Marechal Luiz Alves de Lima e Silva State Elementary School Bibiano de Almeida Municipal Elementary School	Regular	RS	Female	Teaching
Vivian Padilha	Jose Jorge de Farias Sales Municipal School	Regular	PE	Female	Teaching

In total, teachers from the five regions of Brazil participated (7 from the Central-West, 6 from the South, 4 from the Northeast, 3 from the Southeast, and 2 from the North), including 22 women and 1 man, with 15 white, 6 black or mixed-race, and 1 indigenous¹¹.

Overall, it was a group of teachers with considerable professional experience, averaging 19 years in basic education, according to the survey conducted with participants at the project's outset.

Circle A was predominantly composed of women with qualifications in pedagogy, with 5 working in regular urban education and 1 in Indigenous Education in a village in Mato Grosso do Sul. The only man who remained in the project until the end of the year was part of group A and had a degree in Social Sciences. The group members were between 30 and 50 years old and had teaching experience ranging from 5 to 31 years.

Circle B consisted of 8 female teachers from the Early Years of Elementary Education, from all regions of Brazil and urban areas. The selected teachers were between 42 and 53 years old, with an average of 23 years of teaching experience. One teacher worked in Special Education¹².

The teachers participating in Circle C were distributed across four of the five Brazilian regions (Central-West, Northeast, North, and South) and had an average age of around 42 years, all female. One of the teachers worked in Quilombola Education¹³, at a school located in the rural area of her municipality¹⁴.

Based on two surveys prepared by the IE and completed by the teachers at the beginning (April 2023) and at the end (December 2023) of the Learning Circles, it was observed that, on average,

¹¹ Indigenous School Education is a type of teaching that takes place in specific schools located in communities and on indigenous territories and lands, always considering the presence of indigenous peoples in different contexts. These indigenous schools are intercultural, bilingual, and multilingual and have unique realities. Therefore, they need to operate with their own pedagogies, respecting the ethnic-cultural specificities of each people or community, while observing constitutional principles, the national common core, and the guidelines that govern Brazilian Basic Education. Available at: <https://legis.senado.leg.br/sdleg-getter/documento?dm=9251257&disposition=inline>

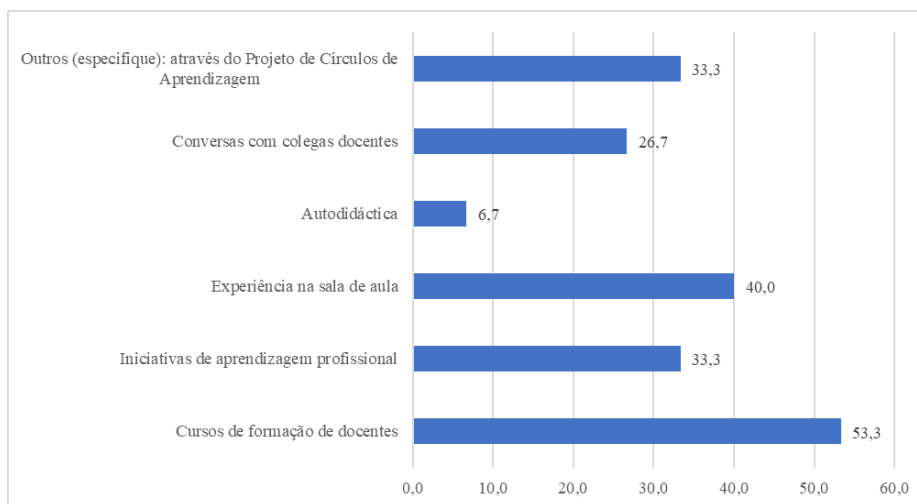
¹² A form of school education offered preferably in the regular education network, for students with disabilities, global developmental disorders, and high abilities or giftedness (Article 58, LDB 9394/1996).

¹³ Quilombola School Education, considered another form of teaching, is developed in educational units located in remaining quilombo communities. It similarly requires its own pedagogy that respects the ethnic-cultural specificity of each quilombola community, while adhering to constitutional principles, the national common core, and the guidelines that govern Brazilian Basic Education. Available at: <https://legis.senado.leg.br/sdleg-getter/documento?dm=9251257&disposition=inline>

¹⁴ In the initial formation of the project, there was a greater presence of indigenous teachers, teachers from Rural Education (a form of teaching that ensures the provision of education while respecting the peculiarities of rural life and each region), and male teachers. However, unfortunately, for various reasons, they could not remain until the end of the project.

the teachers taught classes with up to 30 students, with most participants indicating that they had between 21 and 30 students in their classes. Regarding professional development and its relation to formative assessment, teacher training courses and classroom experiences were identified by the teachers as the primary sources of learning about formative assessment up to the start of the project, as shown in Graph 1.

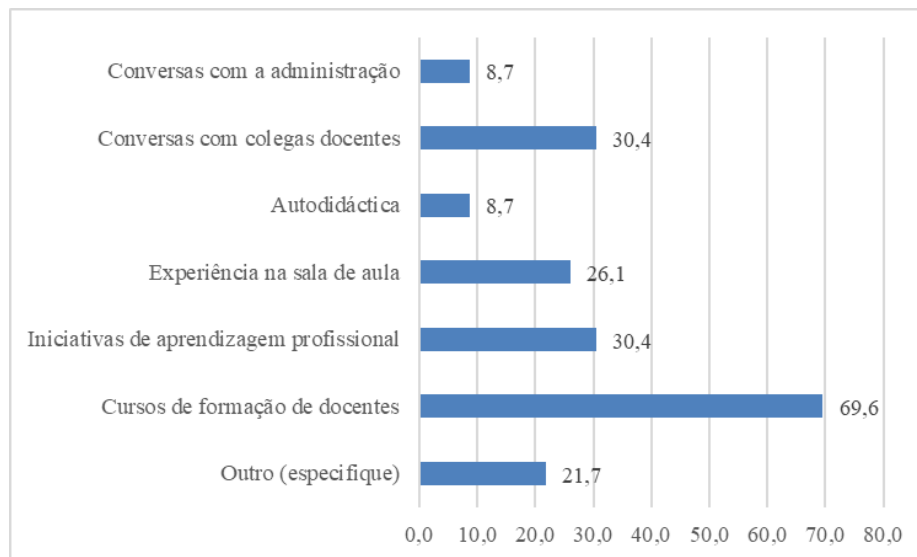
Graph 1 – Spaces for Professional Development and Learning about Formative Assessment as Indicated by the Teachers Participating in the Learning Circles in the First Survey Conducted (%)



Source: Prepared by the authors based on the survey conducted in the research

At the end of the Learning Circles, the participants' perception of their professional development and learning about formative assessment had changed, with one-third of the respondents indicating that the project was the primary source of information that allowed them to advance their understanding of formative assessment.

Graph 2 - Spaces for Professional Development and Learning about Formative Assessment as Indicated by the Teachers Participating in the Learning Circles in the Second Survey Conducted (%)



Source: Prepared by the authors based on the survey conducted in the research

The meetings of the Learning Circles led by teachers for formative assessment were conducted according to the initially proposed schedule (Annex I), following the sequence determined by the facilitators' manual¹⁵, with activities held every month throughout 2023 and early 2024. These activities included various formats of workshops, tutorials, and networking sessions. Two meetings were held in person, with the support and participation of representatives from CNTE, IE, and Gestrado: one in Brasília/DF, on 25 and 26 July 2023, and the other in Belo Horizonte/MG, on 25 and 26 March 2024, marking the conclusion of the teachers' participation in the Learning Circles, as outlined in the attached programmes (Annex II).

Both seminars were attended by the teachers involved in the project, representatives from IE, CNTE, and Gestrado, as well as invited researchers from the Ministry of Education, Inep, and various Brazilian universities. The seminars also included an exchange of practices from Learning Circles led by teachers for formative assessment in countries such as Switzerland, with a video presentation, and Uruguay, with part of the team participating in person at the second meeting. The seminars were organised around round tables and workshops with the teachers. Among the topics discussed at the round tables, the challenges of formative assessment and the role of the teacher in the Brazilian educational context were central to the discussions. The teachers were able to express their concerns and dissatisfaction with the intensification of external assessments in the country and their impact on teaching practices. At the same time, they were able to deepen their understanding of formative assessment, which was still relatively unfamiliar to them. The workshops were important for presenting portfolios and exchanging experiences on development work. During these workshops, teachers could

¹⁵ In addition to following the manual, which was adapted to the Brazilian context and problematized as necessary, the facilitators conducted two training activities at the beginning of 2023 with Professor Rony Medina and Professor David Frost from HerstCam. The first one particularly followed the progress of the workshops more closely, providing support to the Brazilian team upon request. With the exception of the first in-person seminar in Brasília, all meetings were recorded with the consent of the teachers.

present, provide opinions, make suggestions, and ask questions about their work and that of their colleagues. According to the teachers' reports, the in-person meetings were significant in strengthening their commitment to advocating for an education based on diversity and the holistic development of students.

At the end of 2023, the 22 teachers submitted their portfolios, reflecting on their experiences in the Learning Circles and the formative assessment practices they implemented in their classrooms and schools. Due to the richness of the experiences and practices reported in the portfolios, Gestrado, in partnership with CNTE and IE, invited external experts to select the top three portfolios that demonstrated the most evidence of the work developed throughout 2023. The external evaluation committee comprised two union representatives from CNTE, two university representatives (professors and researchers involved in the subject), and one representative from the Ministry of Education of Brazil. The evaluation criteria included:

- 1 - Conception and action of formative assessment;
- 2 - Documentation of the experience: networks and leadership, density of the narrative of the experience;
- 3 - Narrative and pedagogical reflexivity: the narrator's self and its impacts on teaching work, analytical capacity;
- 4 - Materiality of the portfolio: structure, language, images, sources, creativity.

At the end of the evaluation, the committee selected the portfolios of Luciane Guimarães - Circle A, Maria José Mariano - Circle B, and Francismére Grandis - Circle C. These teachers were invited to represent Teacher-Led Brasil both at the second in-person seminar held in March 2024 in Belo Horizonte/MG, as part of one of the round tables, and at the International Education Congress to be held in July 2024 in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The committee also highlighted three other portfolios with significant and promising experiences: Rosana de Moraes - Circle A, Sônia Martins - Circle B, and Sibeli Siegli - Circle C. The six experiences and portfolios mentioned will be emphasised below.

3.2 Promising Teacher-Led Formative Assessment Practices

In the collection of experiences and portfolios presented by the teachers, the majority focused on student learning in reading and writing. This can be attributed to their roles in the early years of Elementary Education and the learning gaps of students caused by the suspension of in-person classes during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021. However, the portfolios also involved text production, interdisciplinary themes (such as Capoeira, Environment, and Gender), autonomy in orality (targeted at indigenous students), Mathematics, among others, as shown in the table below.

Table 3 – Characterisation of the Portfolios

Teacher	Year	Objective	Tools
Adriana Ferreira	Year 2	To Develop Students' Reading and Writing Skills	"Whisper Phone", collective corrections (peer assessment), folder compiling each student's development, feedback, self-assessment, etc.
Alison Santos	Year 5	To Promote the Appreciation of Afro-Brazilian Culture and Improve Students' Reading and Writing Skills	Capoeira, Theatre, Puppetry, and Excursions – Activities Conducted Interdisciplinarily with Teachers from Other Subjects, Especially Portuguese.
Ana Roberta Xavier	Year 1	To Analyse Each Student's Learning Individually by Observing Their Development in Various Aspects	Reports and Student Evaluations, Use of Stories, Discussion Circles, Drawings, Production of a Book with a Collective Story, Self-Assessment, etc.
Cibele Brito	Year 3	To Develop Gender Discussions with Children	Didactic Activities Based on the Book "A Girl Thing or a Boy Thing?", Involvement of Other Teachers, Toy Library, etc.
Cristiane Sálvio	Year 3	To Ensure Students Understand the Decimal Number System in Mathematical Operations	Project "Mathematical Operations: Addition with Regrouping", Feedback, Self-Assessment, and Peer Assessment.
Francismére Grandis	Year 1	To Improve Students' Reading Skills	Feedback, Self-Assessment, Drawings, Family Involvement, Game Construction, Collective and Individual Reading, Pleasure Reading, etc.
Glaucineide Souza	Year 5 C.P.	To Train Teachers and Implement Formative Assessment in Their School	Diagnostic Assessment of Students from Year 3 to Year 5, Reorganisation of Classes, Individualised Tutoring, Adoption of Portfolios by Teachers, etc.
Luciane Guimarães	Year 2	To Revive the Three Indigenous Languages of Their Village (Terena, Guarani, and Kaiowá), Value Indigenous Identity, and Make Students' Orality More Autonomous	Didactic Sequences, Feedback, Annotation Sheets, Appreciation of the Educational Process and Small Achievements, Among Others.
Maria Cícera Leandro	Year 1	To Work with Children on Phonological Awareness Concepts through Activities in Reading, Writing, and Different Text Genres, Using a Segment of the 17 SDGs/ UN as a Background	Pleasure Reading, Conducting Seminars Involving Students and the School Community, etc.
Maria Inez dos Santos	Year 2	To Develop Students' Text Production Skills	Text Production, Self-Assessment, etc.
Maria José Mariano	Year 5	To Foster a Love of Reading Among Students	Books from the "Cachorrinho Samba" Collection, Self-Assessment, Discussion Circles, Theatre, etc.
Raimunda de Sousa	Year 5	To Develop Students' Skills Based on the Descriptors of External Assessments (Especially SAE) in Reading, Writing, and Mathematics	"Show Class", Diverse and Playful Activities.

Rejane Martins	Year 1	To Expand Knowledge and Promote Changes in Teaching and Learning Aimed at Formative Assessment and the Literacy Process of Children	Playfulness, Concrete Materials, Peer Assessment, Feedback, etc.
Rosana de Moraes	C.P.	To Redefine Students' Reading and Writing through Reflections and Analyses of Texts Produced and Read by the Students	Active Participation of Students and Other Teachers in Discussion Circles, Application of Questionnaires, Collective Correction of Texts Produced by Students, Among Others.
Rosecler Werlang	Year 4	To Work on Students' Self-Esteem and Individuality	Flipped Classroom, Learning Corner, "Box", etc.
Sibeli Siegle	Year 5	To Improve Students' Reading, Text Interpretation, and Argumentative Skills	"Mock Trials", Text Workshops, "Dramatisations", Seminars, Feedback, and Self-Assessment.
Sonia Regina Martins	Year 2	To Assess Students' Development in Writing and Reading Through Text Production	Text Production by Students, Self-Assessment, Peer Assessment, etc.
Tania da Silva	C.P.	To Use Formative Assessment Tools in the Evaluation of Special Education Students	Feedback, Dialogue with Teachers and Family, etc.
Vera Lucia da Silva	Year 4	To Develop Reading and Text Production Skills Through Various Text Genres	Pair Activities in Peer Assessment Format, Daily Reading, Self-Assessment.
Virginia dos Santos	Year 2 Year 4	To Use Concrete Materials in Teaching Mathematics to Improve Students' Skills in the Subject	Self-Assessment, Feedback, etc.
Vivian Padilha	Year 5	To Improve Students' Learning in Reading, Writing, and Text Production	Peer Assessment, etc.
Maria da Penha e Silva	Year 5	To Work on Reading and Interculturality in Quilombola Education	Individual and Pair Reading, Reading Cards, Partnerships with School Staff, Utilisation of School Spaces (Library and Courtyard).

The majority of the portfolios presented highly insightful reflections on the assessment process in Brazil, particularly regarding the development of formative assessment practices by the teachers. The committee found that all the portfolios provided evidence demonstrating dedication, sensitivity, humanism, effort, determination, and commitment to Brazilian education, in the face of the challenging and diverse realities encountered in the country's school context. While it is impossible to report on all the experiences, the promising practices selected by the external evaluation committee will be highlighted.

Professor Luciane Guimarães sought to develop practices at the Ramão Martins Indigenous Municipal School, located in the Jaguapiru village in Dourados (Mato Grosso do Sul), aimed at reviving the three indigenous languages of her village (Terena, Guarani, and Kaiowá), valuing indigenous identity, and making students' orality "more autonomous." She chose to align her development work with another project she was also involved in, the Indigenous Knowledge Action in Schools, which conducts activities that engage with indigenous realities. The actions she developed were dedicated to implementing didactic sequences with meaningful activities for indigenous children through music, feedback, annotation sheets, appreciation of the

educational process, and small achievements, among other methods. However, she faced several challenges at her school, especially resistance from the school administration and the education department, which prioritized standardized tests.

Teacher Rosana de Moraes, from Planaltina (Federal District), aimed to redefine reading and writing in a Year 4 class of Elementary Education through reflections and analyses of texts produced and read by the students. Her action plan was based on the “Livros Caindo N'alma” project, already implemented by the school, with the overall goal of promoting the formation of a “competent reader, writer, and speaker, knowledgeable of their mother tongue, to exercise effective social participation, expressing themselves and positioning themselves critically and autonomously in various formal or informal communicative situations, as well as developing a love for reading.” According to her, this already constituted formative assessment. Given her performance in the Learning Circle, she was invited to take on the role of pedagogical coordinator at the school, which helped to disseminate her project within the institution. The teacher established strategies that involved the active participation of students and other teachers, including discussion circles, questionnaires, collective corrections of texts produced by students, among others. By the end of the year, Teacher Rosana observed an improvement in students' performance in their reading and writing processes. The students felt encouraged to participate actively in tasks, demonstrating a deeper understanding of the content and supporting each other in learning. Additionally, the teacher noted that the questions posed by the students led to further clarifications and consolidation of important concepts.

The project developed by Maria José Mariano, a teacher at the Dona Santinha Municipal School in Lagoa Santa (Minas Gerais), aimed to encourage reading as an enjoyable and pleasurable activity, especially considering the diversity of genres and productions available. This project countered practices that view reading merely as a procedural act of school assessments. In this vein, the teacher used the “Cachorrinho Samba” book series by Maria José Dupré as reference material for her formative assessment practice. These books helped students develop a love for reading. According to the teacher's reports, students who previously did not have the habit of reading books began asking their families or guardians to purchase the books because they did not want to wait for the long queue to borrow them from the school library. Additionally, Teacher Maria José noted that the children's enjoyment was so great that they even began to go to bed only after finishing a chapter. In her various activities, the teacher used virtual tools (Wordwall) to encourage reading, but also self-assessment and discussion circles. Theatre was also used as an artistic expression to retell the stories and explore other dimensions of the adventures of Cachorrinho Samba.

A common point among the practices mentioned so far was the establishment of connections with existing actions within the school. These associations, to some extent, facilitated their implementation, despite the challenges faced, especially the resistance posed by the management of the institutions where the teachers worked.

Teacher Sônia Martins from Mont' Alverne Elementary School, located in the city of Aurora (Santa Catarina), aimed to verify the development of students' writing and reading skills through textual productions. She positioned her students as protagonists of their learning through spontaneous writing and collective and collaborative text production. Simultaneously, she guided reflections on orthographic and grammatical norms and intonation during the reading of each production to the class. Teacher Sônia conducted her project using a notebook

in which all the words and texts were written, allowing each child to track their progress in writing. This enabled her students to see their advancements in writing stages, helping them understand from where they had started and how they had developed and matured in their literacy processes, resulting in increased self-confidence and self-esteem among the children.

The development of reading skills among children was the objective of the actions taken by Francismére Grandis, a teacher at Germano Lazaretti Municipal Elementary School in Campos de Júlio (Mato Grosso), and Sibeli Siegle, a teacher at Guerreiro Lima Municipal Elementary School in Viamão (Rio Grande do Sul). To bring their ideas to fruition, the teachers employed practices such as “mock trials,” feedback, text workshops, dramatizations, seminars, etc., with the intention of developing new and diverse reading practices. Additionally, these activities aimed to encourage and strengthen the children’s text interpretation and argumentative skills.

Teacher Francismére Rodrigues worked with her students on developing reading fluency. She utilized various pedagogical resources such as game construction, collective and individual reading, and pleasure reading to ensure the advancement of her Year 1 students in reading. By the end of her project, there was noticeable progress in reading skills as well as an increase in companionship and mutual support among peers. The teacher also observed an increase in the students’ confidence and well-being.

Teacher Sibebe Da Silva planned to work on the development of her students’ reading, text interpretation, and argumentative skills. In her report, as documented in her portfolio, the teacher noted that the initial objectives were met. She observed an increase in the students’ argumentative capacity, primarily due to the use of the “mock trial” methodology, where students were required to “defend” or oppose certain situations. This practice became a “project within the project,” with the “mock trial” developed by the teacher gaining prominence in the municipality and even competing for an award as an innovative teaching project.

Regarding the development of the project, it is noteworthy that both teachers, like the others, faced obstacles from the school management. However, despite these challenges, they managed to achieve success. The teachers mentioned that the formative practices helped to boost the children’s self-esteem, making them see themselves increasingly as protagonists in their learning processes.

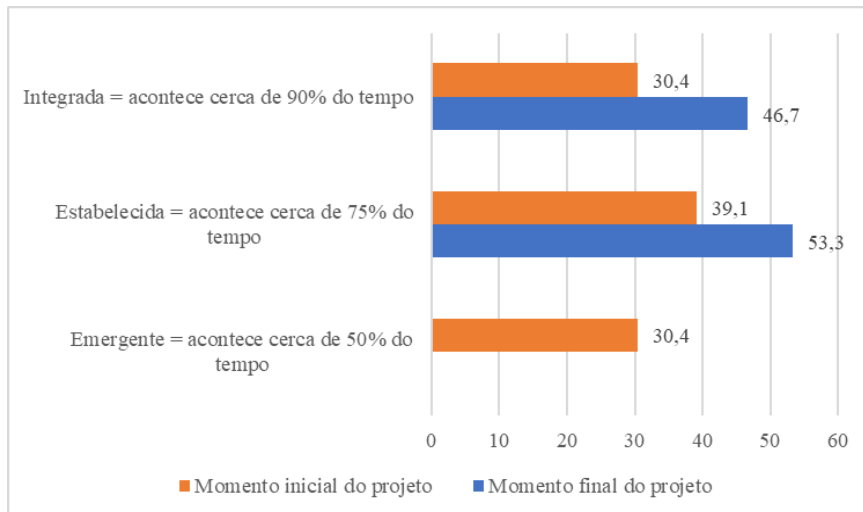
The concept of formative assessment seemed relatively new in Brazilian schools and practices. Initially, there was a great deal of curiosity about what kind of experiences the teachers should develop. Through readings and discussions in the workshops, the professionals realised that much of what they were reflecting on was already being implemented in their daily activities.

The teachers reported that they maintained a continuous dialogue with the students about their learning processes, encouraging them to reflect on their progress or difficulties and how they could collectively overcome them. This made the teaching/learning relationship transparent and established a mutual commitment to knowledge.

Feedback was a practice adopted and reported by the teachers. Through this method, ways to enhance and develop each child’s potential were identified. According to the teachers, feedback created an awareness among learners of their progress in learning, showing the result they had achieved and the intended outcome at the end of each activity. The progress

in this practice is evident when comparing the results of the two surveys conducted with the teachers participating in the project. The graph below illustrates this comparison, showing that feedback became a more consistent practice in these teachers' classrooms.

Graph 3 - Use of Feedback in the Classroom by Teachers in the Learning Circle, Before and After Participation in the Project (%)

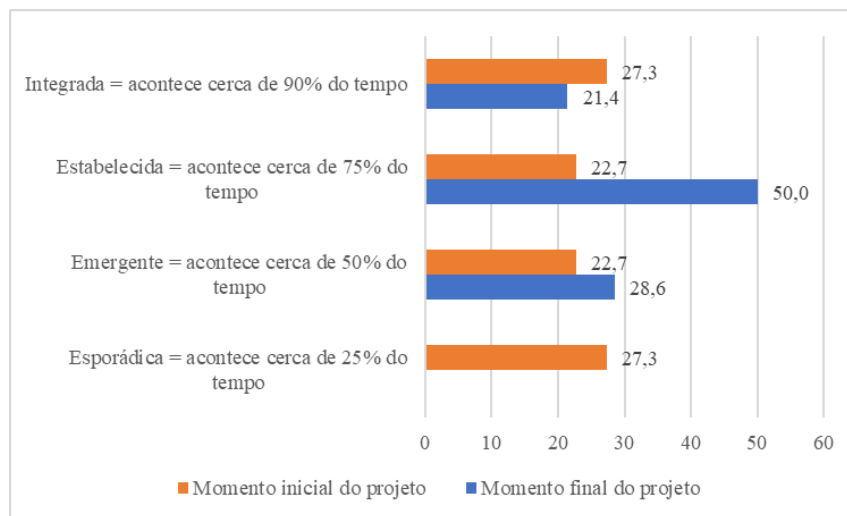


Source: Prepared by the authors based on the survey conducted in the research

Another widely used tool by the teachers was peer assessment, a key strategy in formative assessment. By encouraging each child to evaluate a peer's work, the teachers observed growth among the students. This exchange of ideas about the studied content allowed each student to gain insight into their own performance.

Finally, the use of self-assessment in the evaluative processes was also highlighted. According to the teachers, this practice was often incorporated into their routines. They noted that self-assessment is extremely important for students to become aware of their mistakes and progress, thus enabling them to construct their learning meaningfully. The teachers emphasized that through self-assessment, students reflected on their behaviour and commitment in classes and school activities. The increased use of self-assessment practices is also evident in the survey conducted with the project's teachers. Although it was already a known tool, its use was still incipient. The Learning Circles led by the teachers for formative assessment seem to have contributed to establishing the use of self-assessment in these teachers' practices.

Graph 4 - Use of Self-Assessment in the Classroom by Teachers in the Learning Circle, Before and After Participation in the Project (%)



Source: Prepared by the authors based on the survey conducted in the research

Throughout their journey, the teachers frequently and variously used technologies, employing them for multiple purposes but always with the common goal of making school practices more playful and stimulating. WhatsApp, although not highlighted in all the portfolios, was widely used as a means of communication. In the Learning Circles, we observed that this tool was one of the avenues used to raise awareness among peers about the project's development in schools, aiming to involve others in its implementation and to facilitate communication with the children's families. For example, Teacher Maria José used WhatsApp to provide access to the project's base book. Given the limited availability of physical copies of these materials and their purchase by families, the teacher made it available digitally, allowing for easy and democratic access, which was essential for the implementation and continuity of the planned actions.

Despite already developing formative assessment practices, the teachers noted that they did not recognize these practices as such. In this sense, they emphasized that the dialogues and tools from the Circles largely redefined their trajectories and perspectives on teaching and learning processes, conceiving them in a broader way. This included integrating more dynamic and dialogic educational actions that aligned with the realities and experiences of the students.

The teachers highlighted that increased student engagement was one of the observed impacts, where formative assessment practices helped boost students' self-confidence and involvement in school activities. Another perceived impact was the redefinition of mistakes with the children, understanding and qualifying them as an essential part of knowledge construction and school life, rather than as an expression of individual failure.

3.3 Professional Learning Processes to Support Teachers' Formative Assessment Practices

The Learning Circles Project demonstrated how continuous professional development is essential for the professional growth of teachers. Through meetings, seminars, peer interactions, and other training activities, the participating teachers were able to learn about new theories and practices related to formative assessment, develop their implementation skills, and enhance their understanding of the benefits of this approach.

The development of the Learning Circles constituted communities of practice in which groups of teachers regularly gathered to share experiences, exchange ideas, and discuss challenges related to formative assessment. These communities provided teachers with a safe and collaborative space to learn from each other, reflect on their practices, and develop innovative solutions to the problems they faced, as evidenced by the account of one participant:

Continuing education is already a practice here in RS. However, something as grand as this research project, with all the exchange of experiences in such a geographically diverse context, was enriching. (Participant of the Learning Circle in response to the survey conducted at the end of the project).

The tutoring sessions developed with the facilitators were a valuable resource for the teachers, providing guidance, support, and feedback, helping them to overcome challenges and develop their implementation skills.

Self-assessment also emerged as an important process for the professional development of the teachers. By reflecting on their own formative assessment practices, the teachers were able to identify their strengths and weaknesses and determine areas where they needed improvement.

Action research was also a resource used in this experience. It is a research methodology that allows teachers to investigate their own practices and develop solutions to the problems they face in their classrooms. During the Circles, action research allowed teachers to address issues relevant to their specific context and develop evidence-based solutions.

Therefore, the professional learning processes supported teachers in developing their formative assessment skills, including:

- Deepening theoretical knowledge of formative assessment, including understanding its principles and purposes, as well as the various tools and strategies that can be used.
- Reflecting on their own assessment practices, enabling teachers to analyze their experiences with formative assessment and areas for improvement.
- Developing new skills and strategies, providing teachers with the opportunity to practice new formative assessment techniques and receive feedback from colleagues and facilitators.
- Collaborating with other teachers, facilitating the sharing of experiences and ideas among peers.

It is important to emphasise that the professional development experienced was crucial for teachers to implement formative assessment in their classrooms, taking into account their specific needs, the context of each school, the availability of time and resources, and the evaluation of the process.

By providing teachers with the opportunity to learn, reflect, practice, and collaborate, the learning processes in the Circles contributed to the improvement of teaching and learning for the students involved.

4. Conclusions and Next Steps

The project of Learning Circles led by teachers for formative assessment certainly constitutes something pioneering in the Brazilian context. Due to the continental dimensions of the country, the remote format contributed to allowing us to have a diversity of experiences in one place. Despite the difficulties that this format presents (such as connection problems, physical distance between participants and facilitators, for example), we understand that the project consolidates itself as a valuable tool for the continued education of teachers. Naturally, adjustments must be made, especially regarding incentives for maintaining the group of teachers and to mitigate the most elementary structural issues.

Moreover, some problems faced by the investigated teachers, as well as other Brazilian teachers, need to be taken into consideration so that significant and lasting changes like those occurring in the Learning Circles can indeed happen. Such as the heavy workload, inadequate working conditions, temporary employment contracts (lack of job stability), low salaries, inadequate support from school administration, discipline problems with students, and detachment from school decision-making. Factors that significantly impact the turnover¹⁶ of elementary school teachers in the country (Pereira Junior & Oliveira, 2016) and the attractiveness of the teaching profession.

The teachers participating in the Learning Circles also faced other barriers such as the imposition of participation in projects determined by the education departments and the constant demands for good performance in various institutional assessments, which hindered the development of projects in schools. However, despite the adversities, the majority of teachers managed to develop portfolios, adapting them to the activities they already carried out in the classroom in order to meet and improve external requirements.

At the end of the Learning Circles experience, we believe that the project planted a seed of change in the 22 different school contexts, which could spread to their educational networks considering that several of them are having the opportunity to present their projects and provide training on formative assessment for other schools and even for the education department. Moreover, the Learning Circles contributed to thinking about new educational strategies regarding assessment from the perspective of teachers, who are usually not listened to or invited to participate in the development of educational public policies.

¹⁶ Internal mobility within networks and systems, where teachers choose to change schools for personal or professional reasons, in pursuit of better working conditions or more convenient geographical locations, and sometimes even due to leaving the profession (Pereira Junior & Oliveira, 2016).

The CNTE and Gestrado intend to continue the Learning Circles, expanding their reach to more Brazilian teachers through the Entre Docentes¹⁷ platform and other training spaces, as well as conducting studies on the topic based on data collected in 2023.

We believe in the importance of teachers in transforming education, but we also know that they are not the only ones responsible for what happens in the educational system. Initiatives like the Learning Circles are extremely important, but there are still many problems that need to be addressed. Teachers need support in carrying out their work in schools, improvements in their professional careers, and more suitable working conditions. These are challenges that governments need to tackle with public policies aimed at these goals. In this sense, the role of unions is fundamental in facilitating dialogue with governments and teachers in their workplaces.

¹⁷ <https://entredocentes.docencia.net.br/>

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Annex I

Timetables of Learning Circles led by the teacher for formative assessment - Brazil

SCHEDULE OF THE CIRCLE A		
1°	Session 1 of the Workshop	06, 07 & 08/03/2023
2°	Session 2 of the Workshop	10, 11 & 12/04/2023
3°	1st Tutorial	24 to 26/04/2023
4°	Remote networking event	15/05/2023
5°	Session 3 of the Workshop	05, 06 & 07/06/2023
6°	2nd Tutorial	19/06 to 21/06/2023
7°	Session 4 of the Workshop	03, 04 & 05/07/2023
8°	In-person networking event	25 & 26/07/2023
9°	Session 5 of the Workshop	11, 12 & 13/09/2023
10°	Session 6 of the Workshop	02, 03, 04/10/2023
11°	3rd Tutorial	06/11 to 08/11/2023
12°	Session 7 of the Workshop	1, 12 & 14/12/2023
13°	Closing networking meeting	25 & 26/03/2024

SCHEDULE OF THE CIRCLE B		
1°	Session 1 of the Workshop	07/03/2023
2°	Session 2 of the Workshop	11/04/2023
3°	Tutorial	24 - 28/04/2023
4°	Networking event	15/05/2023
5°	Session 3 of the Workshop	06/06/2023
6°	Tutorial	19 - 23/06/2023
7°	Session 4 of the Workshop	04/07/2023
8°	Networking event	25 & 26/07/2023
9°	Session 5 of the Workshop	12/09/2023
10°	Session 6 of the Workshop	03/10/2023
11°	Tutorial	07/11/2023
12°	Session 7 of the Workshop	12/12/2023
13°	Closing networking meeting	25 & 26/03/2024

SCHEDULE OF THE CIRCLE C		
1°	Session 1 of the Workshop	01/03/2023
2°	Session 2 of the Workshop	05/04/2023
3°	Tutorial	26/04/2023
4°	Networking event	15/05/2023
5°	Session 3 of the Workshop	07/06/2023
6°	Tutorial	19 - 23/06/2023
7°	Session 4 of the Workshop	05/07/2023
8°	Networking event	25 & 26/07/2023
9°	Session 5 of the Workshop	06/09/2023
10°	Session 6 of the Workshop	04/10/2023
11°	Tutorial	10/11/2023
12°	Session 7 of the Workshop	14/12/2023
13°	Closing networking meeting	25 & 26/03/2024

Annex II

Programme

Seminar "Teacher-led Learning Circles for Formative Assessment" - Grand Bittar Hotel, SHS, Brasília/DF.

Tuesday, 25th July 2023

9:00 AM - Participant Reception

9:30 AM – Opening – Room 1 (Monumental Room)

Heleno Araújo (President, CNTE)

Martin Henry (International Research Coordinator, IE)

Dalila Oliveira (National Research Coordinator, Gestrado/UFGM)

Guelda Andrade (Director of Educational Affairs, CNTE)

Chaired by: Ana Maria Clementino (Gestrado/UFGM)

10:00 AM – Participant Introduction in Room 1 (Monumental Room)

Chaired by: Ana Maria Clementino (Gestrado/UFGM)

Introduction includes name, school, city/state, teaching year, and motivation for joining the research

11:00 AM – Presentation of facilitators and current work in each Circle in Room 1 (Monumental Room)

11:30 AM – "The Experience of the Teacher-Led Project in Uruguay" in Room 1 (Monumental Room)

Eloisa Bordoli (Universidad de la República)

Video from Teacher-Led Switzerland

12:00 PM – Lunch

2:00 PM – Challenges of formative assessment and the role of teachers in the Brazilian educational context in Room 1 (Monumental Room)

Fernanda Litvin Villas Bôas (CAPES)

Sâmara Araújo (Gestrado/UFGM)

João Horta (Inep)

Chaired by: Alexandre Duarte (Gestrado/UFGM)

4:30 PM – Coffee Break

5:00 PM – Meeting of the 3 Circles (Discussion on the topic) in Room 1 (Monumental Room - B), Room 2 (Executive Room I - A), and Room 3 (Executive Room II - C)

6:00 PM – End of day's activities.

Wednesday, 26th July 2023

9:00 AM – Sharing of Discussion (Report from Each Group) - Room 1 (Monumental Room)

Chaired by: Maíra Santos (Gestrado/UFGM)

10:00 AM – Group meeting: “How to develop an experience in formative assessment based on the school context?” Presentation by each participant to their Circle in Room 1 (Monumental Room - B), Room 2 (Executive Room I – A), and Room 3 (Executive Room II - C)

12:00 PM – Lunch

2:00 PM – How to build a portfolio on the experience in formative assessment?

Chaired by: Cristiane Sálvio (Gestrado/UFGM) in Room 1 (Monumental Room)

2:30 PM – Separate Circle meeting for portfolio discussion and sharing in Room 1 (Monumental Room - B), Room 2 (Executive Room I – A), and Room 3 (Executive Room II - C)

4:00 PM – Final plenary: “What will I take away from this experience?” “How does this meeting contribute to the development of my work in Teacher-Led?” “And how does Teacher-Led contribute to my work as a teacher?” in Room 1 (Monumental Room)

5:00 PM – Closing.

Programme

Seminar “Teacher-led Learning Circles for Formative Assessment” – Faculty of Education, UFGM, Belo Horizonte/MG.

Monday, 25th March 2024

8:30 AM - Participant Reception and Listener Registration

9:00 AM – Opening Panel – Luiz Pompeu Auditorium

Heleno Araújo (President, CNTE)

Martin Henry (International Research Coordinator, IE)

Dalila Oliveira (National Research Coordinator, Graduate Programme/UFGM)

Vanessa Ferraz (Director, Faculty of Education, UFGM)

Chaired by: Lívia Fraga (Graduate Programme/UFGM)

10:00 AM – “Teacher-led Learning Circles for Formative Assessment”: Sharing Global Experiences

Martin Henry (International Research Coordinator, IE)

Dalila Andrade Oliveira (Teacher-Led Brazil, UFGM)

Eloisa Bordoli and Ana Maria Novo (Teacher-led, Uruguay)

Chaired by: Ana Maria Clementino (Graduate Programme/UFGM)

11:30 AM – “Global Experiences of the Teacher-Led Project”

12:00 PM – Lunch

2:00 PM – Teacher Leadership in Developing New Assessment Practices: Learning Circles in the Union Agenda

Undarmaa Batsukh (Education International)

Fátima Silva (CNTE)

Elbia Pereira (Teacher-Led Uruguay and FUM)

Chaired by: Alexandre Duarte (Graduate Programme/UFGM)

3:30 PM – Break

4:00 PM – Joint Internal Meeting of the 3 Circles (Congregation Room)

Chaired by: Sâmara Araújo and Cristiane Sálvio (Graduate Programme/UFMG)

6:00 PM – End of Day's Activities

Tuesday, 26th March 2024

9:00 AM – Experiences of Formative Assessment: Sharing Practices Led by Educators

Luciane Machado da Silva Guimarães - Circle A

Maria José Mariano - Circle B

Francismére Rodrigues Depieri Grandis - Circle C

Noelia Beguerie - Teacher-led Uruguay

Commentators: Marlei Fernandes (CNTE), Marta Nörnberg (UFPeI)

Chaired by: Danilo Marques (UFMG)

12:00 PM – Lunch

1:30 PM – Challenges of Educational Assessment in a Federative Country: Inequalities and Diversity

Elizeu Clementino (UNEB)

Guelda Andrade (CNTE)

Flávia Xavier (UFMG)

Rubens Campos de Lacerda Junior (Inep)

Chaired by: Maíra Kascher (Graduate Programme/UFMG)

3:30 PM – Break

4:00 PM – Assessment in the Educational Context: Constructing Alternatives

Heleno Araújo (FNE and CNTE)

João Horta (Inep)

Daniela Silva and Ana Maria Novo (Teacher-Led Uruguay and FUM)

Chaired by: Ana Maria Saraiva (Graduate Programme/UFMG)

6:00 PM – Seminar Closure



Teacher-led
Learning Circles
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