

## Instrument to support the performance evaluation of UFRRJ's technical-administrative employees

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### ABSTRACT

People management in public administration receives influence from various sources. However, the historical models of public management coexist in these institutions, causing them to carry patrimonial, bureaucratic, and managerial characteristics that have conflicting concepts and are not empirically harmonious. Furthermore, the rigidity of the legislation, combined with cultural aspects of the public service, make it challenging to modernize management practices in public organizations, including federal universities. This article's final objective is to analyze how the performance evaluation for functional progression of technical-administrative employees in education at the Federal Rural University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRRJ) can be carried out to mitigate current procedural deficiencies. We used qualitative research based on a case study at UFRRJ to structure the methodology in this work. For data collection, due to the social isolation imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, online questionnaires were applied with intentionally selected people according to their potential contribution, response availability, and accessibility. The information collected was analyzed using the content analysis technique. We found that UFRRJ's reality is similar to what the recent literature reveals on the subject: conflicts in the assessment model, the disintegration of people management systems, benefit or harm to servers in the attribution of grades, an assessment that does not include feedback processes, precarious institutional support, among other similarities, and that the elaboration of an explanatory booklet complementary to the evaluation documents in force at UFRRJ would help appraisers and appraisees when carrying out the current evaluation.

**Keywords:** People Management; Performance evaluation; Administrative technicians.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Some negative characteristics influence people management in public organizations. Some examples are: managerial rigidity and decision-making imposed by legislation, not realizing that the citizen is a client of the institution, little emphasis given to institutional and personal performance, unrelated remuneration to performance, limited space for innovation, precarious planning, lack of concern with management, high turnover of managers and distortion in the distribution of gratified functions (SCHIKMANN, 2010).

Despite these negative characteristics, the public service can better use strategic people management initiatives, such as human resource planning, competency management, continuous competency training, and integrated performance assessment. In this case, the performance evaluation is essential because it is from there that the other processes may be improved.

The model and procedures for performance evaluation in public management are open to reflection. However, current practice indicates mere administrative routine execution and compliance with legal requirements, as occurs in the approval of the civil servant in the probationary stage and their functional progression without accurately assessing the individual's performance.

Thus, this work aimed to understand the deficiencies of performance evaluation in the public sector and provide more significant support to technical-administrative employees in carrying out performance evaluation for functional progression.

For practical support, we adopted the Federal Rural University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRRJ) as a field of study due to the researchers' accessibility and experience as a technical-administrative server at UFRRJ since 2016. In addition, it allowed us to observe that people management practices related to their class are carried out through unconnected procedures, suggesting deficiencies in processes such as performance evaluation.

## **RESEARCH'S PROBLEM AND OBJECTIVE**

The apparent shortcomings of the UFRRJ assessment procedures point to a need for guidance on performance assessment procedures for functional progression. Thus, the question is: how to provide more significant support to the technical and administrative servers in education at UFRRJ in carrying out the performance assessment for functional progression?

In order to answer this question, this article aims to analyze how the performance evaluation for the functional progression of technical-administrative employees in education at UFRRJ can be carried out to mitigate current procedural deficiencies.

## BACKGROUND

The redefinition of Brazilian public sector strategies in the 1990s towards the managerial model, based on the adoption of the private sector practices, brought increased efficiency, effectiveness, flexibility, focus on results and quality in the provision of services to citizens (CARMO et al., 2018; FONSECA et al., 2013; GONÇALVES et al., 2017). However, it coexists with patrimonial and bureaucratic traits.

Even with some changes, aspects such as conservatism, conformism, centralization, political favoritism, discontinuity, and mismatch between discourse and action still make up the Brazilian public administration (MOURA; SOUZA, 2016). It happens due to entrenched cultural elements that influence the server's behavior when faced with changes. Such characteristics contribute to the disbelief of public servants regarding these processes, hindering innovations and contributing to the State's inefficiency.

In the public sector, even with the coexistence of bureaucracy, there are strategic people management initiatives (CARMO et al., 2018). For Speklé and Verbeeten (2014), institutional performance measurement systems from the post-New Public Management era affected organizational performance in terms of "hireability," which involves clarity of objectives, selection of undistorted performance metrics, and knowledge and control of managers on the transformation process (SPEKLÉ; VERBEETEN, 2014).

Setting clear and measurable goals has a positive effect on performance. However, New Public Management ignores that ambiguous objectives are inherent to the public sector and used for political purposes (SPEKLÉ; VERBEETEN, 2014). Thus, when designing these systems, managers need to consider what to measure and how to measure it and how they will use performance information under the circumstances, as the misuse of performance management can lead to dysfunctional consequences (SPEKLÉ; VERBEETEN, 2014).

In public universities, the scenario is not different (JANISSEK et al., 2017). These institutions present an "intense concentration of authority and autonomy in their basic units" (KLEIN; PIZZIO; RODRIGUES, 2018, p.459), in addition to other typical legacies of the sector.

When observing the deliberative university instances, it is clear that there is non-neutral governance, as the actions are influenced by the values and interests of internal actors and pressured by the interests of society (KLEIN; PIZZIO; RODRIGUES, 2018).

Such influences distance the institution from the equal and universal treatment foreseen in its institutional documents.

Despite the negative nuances, there are initiatives on which university management can rely. Since 1996, the National School of Public Administration has promoted the Innovation Competition in Federal Public Management, where they demonstrate practices such as performance evaluation, continuous learning, training for exercising the function, strategic planning, management by results and focused on the user and development of managers (JANISSEK et al., 2017). People management tools, especially performance evaluation, can provide the informational support necessary for managerial decisions in universities (VALMORBIDA et al., 2014).

## **PERFORMANCE EVALUATION**

Performance evaluation is a set of procedures for measuring workers' performance to improve the organization's effectiveness (LUZ; FILHO, 2018). It is a system through which it is possible to measure individual and collective performance (ODELIUS, 2010) and diagnose the commitment between individuals and the organization (BALASSIANO; SALLES, 2005). For this reason, this instrument requires that the work dynamics and behavior of each employee, the work performed by each one, and the organizational environment are known and considered (REYNAUD; TODESCAT, 2017). Thus, it is possible to list which elements interfered with performance (LUZ; FILHO, 2018).

In organizational management, performance evaluation is able to provide information that supports management (LUZ; FILHO, 2018; VALMORBIDA et al., 2014), align goals and objectives of different work units, promote a holistic and systemic view of the organization, develop team spirit and understand the interdependence of different areas (SCHIKMANN, 2010). In addition, performance evaluation can integrate organizational strategies when it helps to fulfill the organization's mission and vision (BALASSIANO; SALLES, 2005).

At the individual level, performance evaluation allows you to monitor professional performance, identify skills, analyze strengths and weaknesses, gather information for career progression, and crystallize aspects that affect performance (ODELIUS, 2010; SCHIKMANN, 2010). Furthermore, the assessment is effective when its results are useful for decision-making and feedback to improve performance (LUZ; FILHO, 2018).

Some gains from the use of performance evaluation are: work improvement through feedbacks, increase in organizational results, appreciation of work and results, recognition of merits, insertion of the individual in the organizational context, among others (ODELIUS, 2010).

In addition to evaluation, another concept is performance management. This concept refers to the set of deeper planning, monitoring, and evaluation activities to raise individual, group, and organizational performance (LUZ; FILHO, 2018; ODELIUS, 2010). It also involves reviewing people management strategies, objectives, policies, and processes to correct deviations and provide sustainability to management and the organization.

When investigating performance management, it is usual to observe difficulties regarding inadequate criteria and procedures. We can also observe resistance to participate in the evaluation process, which does not demonstrate the reality, lack of effectiveness of policies, and non-integration of performance evaluation with other management subsystems (ODELIUS, 2010). For this, performance management has three stages (ODELIUS, 2010): (1) planning the expected results and performance; (2) performance negotiation with the team; and (3) monitoring of the results obtained. Negotiation is a fundamental part, as it is when the performance standards and results expected by the organization are explained to the workers. Monitoring requires checking whether what was planned and previously negotiated is being carried out or whether reality shows performance and results different from what was expected.

Organizational culture, job satisfaction, and leadership style are essential to measuring workers' commitment (SILVA et al., 2018; SILVA; NUNES; ANDRADE, 2019), even because the leadership style highly influence the commitment at work and the team's performance (GARCIA; RUSSO, 2019). A leadership style focused on relationships, for example, is consonant with the commitment by affiliation and encourages individual and collective performance (TRIGUERO-SÁNCHEZ; PEÑA-VINCES; GUILLEN, 2018). Another example is organizations with a high hierarchical distance, which usually have managers as autocratic bosses who rely on pre-established rules and subordinates do what they are told, having little space to develop (TRIGUERO-SÁNCHEZ; PEÑA-VINCES; GUILLEN, 2018, 2018).

Regarding the problems in the operationalization of performance evaluation, both the literature and the systems practice reveal: disconnection between the individual and

institutional performance evaluation; performance indicators that do not consider the work performed; complex procedures that are difficult to understand and that do not allow for a systematic performance evaluation; disregard for work results and the impact that context and environment have on performance; unification of evaluation methods for different positions and excessive use of forms; definition of performance subjectively; evaluations that do not distinguish the performance of the appraisee in each dimension of their work; insufficiency in the interim between an assessment or a long period between them; incomplete evaluation systems; lack of information to support training; culture and management procedures that are difficult to carry out assessments; misunderstandings and poor communication between appraisers and appraisees; resistance, disbelief and dissatisfaction with the evaluation; evaluators with no time and physically distant to know the work context and monitor performance; lack of disclosure and clarification on evaluation systems and lack of preparation of evaluators and evaluated; evaluations consider only the opinion of the head, which may have biased judgment; leniency, contaminated judgments and excessive severity (LUZ; FILHO, 2018; ODELIUS, 2010).

With these flaws, the evaluation can deviate from analyzing results and limiting itself to examining consciences to value the effort to be a good employee more than delivering quality work.

Among the evaluation possibilities there are the social comparison and the temporal comparison. In the first, there is a comparison between the performance of someone with the performance of other employees and, in the second, the comparison is between the person's current performance and their previous one (CHUN; BROCKNER; DE CREMER, 2018). The assessment is more contributory when workers receive information that allows them to mature behaviors and encourage them to improve (ODELIUS, 2010).

The temporal and social comparison evaluations can change the perception of the evaluated ones about the ethics, accuracy, and impartiality of the evaluation and how much they are receiving polite, dignified, and respectful treatment (CHUN; BROCKNER; DE CREMER, 2018). The perception of justice or injustice alters the individual's behavior and can reduce their commitment to the organization, modifying their beliefs (TRIGUERO-SÁNCHEZ; PEÑA-VINCES; GUILLEN, 2018). For this reason, using temporal evaluations helps to increase the acceptance of performance evaluations by the evaluated (CHUN; BROCKNER; DE CREMER, 2018).

Finally, establishing an assessment system depends on creating an environment where labor relations are frank and trustworthy than developing complex instruments (REYNAUD; TODESCAT, 2017). Thus, the conditions of people management systems and the use of diversified work teams can contribute to increases in organizational performance (TRIGUERO-SÁNCHEZ; PEÑA-VINCES; GUILLEN, 2018).

### **Performance evaluation in the public sector**

From the reforms initiated in the Brazilian state in the 1990s, people management in the public sector has received change initiatives to increase individual and collective performance. However, the bureaucracy of the Brazilian administration added to the idea of isonomy, delay innovations in performance evaluation systems (BALASSIANO; SALLES, 2005). Some of the aspects that hinder the strengthening of performance evaluation in the sector are the discontinuities of government actions, the lack of political will to improve it, the frequent resistance of public servants, legal barriers, among others (REYNAUD; TODESCAT, 2017).

Among the public sector people management practices, individual performance evaluation stands out. Its purpose is to expand the results of institutions considering performance's qualitative and quantitative aspects of each server and their interaction with the work. To develop a culture of results, policies related to it are essential. They also provide more significant involvement of employees from different layers of positions with organizational goals, which generates a feeling of co-responsibility with the organization's performance (CARMO et al., 2018; SCHIKMANN, 2010).

As of Law No. 11.784/2008, a new performance evaluation process was established to continuously monitor the individual and collective performances of civil servants who are part of the careers of the Civil Personnel System of the Federal Executive. The main innovations were introducing participatory evaluations, such as 360°, and creating a commission and committee to monitor the performance evaluation (CAVALCANTE; CARVALHO, 2017).

This legislation states that "the individual performance evaluation will be composed of criteria and factors that reflect the servant's competences measured in the individual performance of the tasks and activities assigned to him" (art.142, BRASIL, 2008). It also states that "the performance evaluation institutional will be composed of criteria and factors that reflect the contribution of the work team to the fulfillment of the

intermediary and global goals of the body or entity and the results achieved by the organization as a whole" (art.143, BRASIL, 2008).

The success of the performance appraisal system depends on respect for the organizational culture. However, without an adequate evaluation policy, creating a results culture is difficult since financial compensations are used as salary compensation instead of rewarding performances (BALASSIANO; SALLES, 2005). In this way, instead of performance management, there is compensation management, where pecuniary gains from the evaluation are used for salary recomposition and not for results' reward. Hence, occupants of management positions receive bonuses without evaluating their individual performance (CARMO et al., 2018).

Another problem manifest in the Brazilian public sector is that the work processes of public servants are not related to the expected results, which distorts the purpose of comparing the expected results with those achieved, limiting the assessment to compliance with legislation and other standards (BALASSIANO; SALLES, 2005).

There is still a lack of clarity about what will be the object of the assessment. Commonly, individual performance is the focus of the assessment and not the people themselves, making the assessment individual but impersonal (ODELIUS, 2010). Furthermore, due to the complexity of the services provided, it is difficult for public administration to define objective parameters to measure performance (ODELIUS, 2010; REYNAUD; TODESCAT, 2017).

The difficulty in defining criteria, allied to the pecuniary gain arising from the evaluation, makes people be encouraged to carry out only what will impact the evaluation and gains, leaving other activities aside. The public sector could overcome this hardship by adopting subjective criteria in the evaluation. However, this could lead to perceptions of injustice and a drop in performance (ODELIUS, 2010).

One of the challenges for the professionalization of the Brazilian federal bureaucracy is the implementation of evaluation systems that are not restricted to the remuneration of civil servants. Nevertheless, advances have emerged in recent years with applying performance evaluation to a larger group of servers and innovations in evaluation procedures (CAVALCANTE; CARVALHO, 2017). For example, the probationary internship period as a consolidation of the person's admission in a meritocratic manner contributes to the professionalization of the bureaucracy, as it allows the evaluation of behavioral aspects and skills.



However, Brazilian history points out that the civil servant is held in public office without being evaluated, revealing that the evaluation in the probationary stage is just another bureaucratic step. Another point is the preparation of the evaluators. Usually, the evaluating civil servants are not trained to carry out the evaluation and are not aware of the importance of this process (LUZ; FILHO, 2018).

Given the gaps observed by Valmorbidia et al. (2014) in the management of public universities on performance assessment, there is a need to develop a model that considers the institution's specificities. Moreover, a model that complies with the theory of measurement in its performance indicators, integrates the indicators to generate a representative global assessment of its performance and explains how to generate improvement actions for the identified status quo.

Some actions to improve the performance evaluation system are recommended by Balassiano and Salles (2005) and by Odelius (2010) based on the challenges observed:

- I. Expand the scope of the system through performance analysis, with the participation of the actors involved in the process, aiming to reduce the perception of injustice;
- II. Change the impact of the assessment from mere financial gain to an effective tool for professional development, implementing a model that drives the achievement of results;
- III. Observe organizational culture and adjust it through training and participation of those involved in the evaluation so that there is planning and achievement of goals through the evaluation;
- IV. Train the evaluators in the new forms of evaluation that are implemented, in addition to developing continuous training and certification programs for the servers;
- V. Take advantage of the innovation possibilities to adapt to what the studies recommend on performance management, avoiding the tendency only to reproduce what the legislation describes and what other public institutions indiscriminately do;
- VI. Ensure that the individual assessment portrays the person's performance with clear, accurate, and helpful information so that the results encourage performance management;
- VII. Make the performance evaluation a tool that observes professional performance, the results achieved, and that provides a diagnosis of the aspects that influenced them;
- VIII. Ensure that the performance evaluation is accompanied by feedbacks that value good performances and achieved results and that generate action plans to overcome limitations;

- IX. Systematically analyze the current evaluation model and compare it with what is technically recommended in order to improve the system throughout its use;
- X. Promote broad participation of evaluators and evaluated in the matters of the evaluation.

The performance evaluation applied to public servants must assume a leading role in raising the individual performance of public servants, giving them attention and treatment consistent with the potentization of the individual competencies they can achieve.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This is a qualitative research, with an interpretive epistemological approach, considering the perception that different individuals have about the same phenomenon (CRESWELL, 2014), to understand the perceptions of employees about the processes and form of performance evaluation.

As it involves contemporary phenomena of a complex reality, this work adopted the case study as a methodology, allowing the inclusion of quantitative data (YIN, 2015). It also made it possible to propose a support instrument for the technical and administrative servers of UFRRJ as an aid to performance assessment for functional progression.

The research subjects were the administrative technicians in education located at the Três Rios Campus, selected by intentional, non-probabilistic sampling, considering the wealth of information they could provide and the convenience (VERGARA, 2015). Furthermore, the selection criteria were having gone through at least one evaluation cycle of their performance for functional progression and having formal placement at Três Rios Campus.

Data collection took place through a digital questionnaire, prepared in clear and straightforward language, with questions capable of obtaining the appropriate answers to the survey (VERGARA, 2015). The questionnaire was structured based on document analysis (BARDIN, 2011), which allowed us to identify the empirical reality from the case study (YIN, 2015). The data collected in the research were recorded in text, and its contents were inductively analyzed (THOMAS, 2006).

As limitations, we recognize that documentary research uses secondary data, that labor relations and the intelligibility of questions and answers influence the questionnaire,

and that inductive analysis can generate inadequate interpretations. Therefore, we carried out a pilot study with a group of servers to mitigate these limitations. Before applying the questionnaires, the servers signed the Informed Consent Term, and subsequently, the data were categorized using the content analysis technique (BARDIN, 2011).

Organizationally, we restricted the research to technical-administrative employees located at the Três Rios Campus and performance evaluation for functional progression. The time cut of the data survey covered the period between July 2019 and November 2020.

## **CASE STUDY**

The Federal Rural University of Rio de Janeiro – UFRRJ comes from the Higher School of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine – Esamv, created in 1910 by Decree 8319 and inaugurated in 1913. The current nomenclature was adopted from Law nº 4.759/1965, and the personality was defined in 1968 when it decentralized administratively and financially (UFRRJ, 2019a).

The university has its headquarter campus in Seropédica/RJ, and the campuses of Nova Iguaçu, Três Rios and Campos dos Goytacazes (UFRRJ, 2019a). It offers 57 undergraduate courses, in which 18 thousand students are enrolled, in addition to the 2,000 students enrolled in the 41 Masters and PhDs courses available (UFRRJ, 2019b).

As for its staff governed by the Career Plan of Technical-Administrative Positions in Education – PCCTAE (BRASIL, 2005), the University has 1,036 positions, of which 1,007 are occupied, and 29 are vacant (UFRRJ, 2020). In addition, in the current career plan, there are 27 level "E" positions – higher level required, 26 level "D" – high school required, and 29 level "C" – elementary school required (UFRRJ, 2020).

The Três Rios Institute offers bachelor's degrees in administration, economics, law, and environmental management (UFRRJ, 2021). In addition, the campus has 25 technical-administrative employees in education, 5 from class E, 13 from class D, 6 from class C, and 1 from class B.

The Dean of People Management (PROGEPE - Pró-reitoria de Gestão de Pessoas) called Dean of Administrative Affairs (PROAD - Pró-reitoria de Assuntos Administrativos) until 2018, manages the performance evaluation procedures of UFRRJ's technical-administrative employees.

## **Documentary research: Performance evaluation for progression of functional merit**

In compliance with the Career Plan for Technical-Administrative Positions in Education, UFRRJ adopts criteria established therein for the employee's functional progression as a result of progression through professional training or progression or professional merit. It happens every 18 months, as long as the server shows good results in the performance evaluation.

Thus, in the performance evaluation for progression on professional merit, nine factors are considered: quality of work, the quantity of work and fulfillment of tasks, knowledge of work, initiative and dedication to work, sense of responsibility, respect for norms, and receptivity to orders, care for the institution's assets, relationship and degree of cooperation and, finally, attendance and punctuality.

## **Empirical results**

The research began by inviting the technical-administrative servers located in Três Rios to participate. Of the 25 servants who adhered to the profile, we contacted 24, and 20 participated in the survey. The data collection phase took place between October 8th and 30th, 2020.

We divided the survey form into five blocks. The first, for the agreement of the Informed Consent Form. The others answered the questions related to the participants' profile, their perception about the performance evaluation procedures for functional progression, their perception about the current form of performance evaluation for functional progression, and the participants' suggestions to improve the evaluation.

## **Participant Profile**

The block of questions about the profile of the participants aimed to characterize them in terms of education, level of job classification, length of employment with the UFRRJ, occupation of a managerial position, and participation in performance evaluations. It was composed of exclusively objective questions where the servers marked the option that best fits their profile.

Only 5% of servers do not have at least complete higher education. 70% of participants have a postgraduate degree. There were no records of servants with only elementary education or a doctorate. As for the positions, 55% of the participants indicated that they held "D" level positions, 25% at the "C" level, and 20% at the "E"

level. Regarding working time, 85% of employees have ten years or less as university employees, and no one indicated they had been for more than 25 years.

When asked about the occupation or not of managerial functions, 65% indicated they had never held a managerial position. However, a significant number (35%) indicated that they occupy or have already occupied a full or substitute manager position. As a result, 75% of the servers never participated in the performance evaluation of other servers.

### **Participants' perception of performance assessment procedures for functional progression**

In this block, perceptions were collected about results' comparison, evaluation fidelity, types of criteria, university expectations about the work, equity in evaluation, the influence of organizational aspects on performance, feedbacks, the support given by the institution, degree of knowledge about the procedures, deficiencies in procedures and suggestions for improvement.

The majority of participants (85%) indicated that they prefer comparing the most recent progression assessment results to the previous assessment results. In addition, 60% believe that the ratings assigned to servers match their actual performance. However, 15% believe their peers' grades are skewed, and 20% confess that neither theirs nor their peers match their actual performance.

As for the type of criteria used in the progression assessment, 45% of the employees preferred adopting mixed evaluative criteria (objective and subjective), and 50% preferred to be evaluated by exclusively objective criteria. No one indicated a preference for adopting exclusively subjective criteria. Currently, the evaluation used has mixed criteria.

Regarding their work expectations, 60% indicated that they knew about the institution's goals and the sector, but 35% indicated that they do not know precisely the expectations about them and would have better performance. In general, institutional goals are not broken down into sectoral goals, and both are not disseminated.

Regarding equity in progression assessment, 50% of respondents believe that employees are benefited or are harmed in the assessment since the grades do not represent actual performance. Another 40% understand that everyone is treated equally and fairly in assessments.

When expressing perceptions about the influence of organizational aspects on performance, 30% understood that the evaluation considers the organizational context and working conditions, but 60% pointed out that criteria that are not in the form are not considered, even if they influence performance. Nobody pointed out that organizational aspects are considered only for some employees, demonstrating equality.

As for receiving feedback from the head about performance, all participants would accept feedback, with 95% feeling good and 5% feeling embarrassed. However, providing feedback is not part of the current assessment procedure. When it comes to the support given by the UFRRJ in carrying out the assessments, the survey shows that 50% of the servers consider the support given by the institution to be precarious or nonexistent. However, 40% indicate they are satisfied.

Regarding the degree of knowledge of the evaluation procedures, no one attributed grade 1 (the lowest available), but 40% gave grade 3 and 35% grade 4, demonstrating a medium to good knowledge of the evaluation procedures. Another 15% consider that they have mastered the procedures and have no doubts, while 10% consider their knowledge to be grade 2.

There were also discursive answers about knowing in advance how they would be evaluated, deficiencies in the evaluation procedures, and suggestions for improvement in the procedures. The main notes reveal that knowing the expectations would allow them to perform better. The evaluation process was changed and involved more dialogue and greater participation from the leaders.

The main deficiencies pointed out by the respondents are the disregard of the organizational context, disorientation of the evaluators, absence of feedback processes, the uselessness of performance evaluation for appointment decisions, centralization of the evaluation only in the figure of the head, not having open spaces to expose information about the work, not having stimuli for better performance, the leniency of managers with low-performing people, automatic approval of servers, delays in carrying out the assessment, among others.

Regarding suggestions for improvement, the following stood out: considering the organizational environment in the assessment, using it for appointments of managers, training of assessors, guidance on providing feedback, implementing periodic meetings to address performance, carrying out the assessment by a committee, or considering the opinion of colleagues, more objective evaluation criteria, questions and open spaces for

writing on the form, joint evaluation with the server, adopting evaluation models already validated in the market, having well-defined metrics, among others.

### **Participants' perception of the current performance evaluation form for functional progression**

This block involved the participant's judgment on the current evaluation form. The survey collected opinions regarding the clarity of the information and criteria in the form, its main deficiencies, and suggestions for improvement. In addition, it included objective and discursive questions in which the respondents expressed themselves as sincerely as they thought they could.

The average perception about the evaluation form is that the information in the current form is reasonably clear (60% gave a grade of 3 or 4 and 35% gave a grade of 5) and that most of the criteria used are well described. However, the periodic training of employees on the assessment of progression and providing an explanatory booklet would contribute to a better filling out of the form.

Among the main shortcomings are the lack of space for extra observations, agglutinated criteria that could be separated, lack of clarity in the questions, the inexistence of self-assessment, lack of working conditions evaluation and an evaluation of the managers by servers, absence of objective criteria, lack of detail, evaluation subjectivity, non-comparison of the current result with previous ones, among others.

### **Participants' suggestions for improving performance assessment for functional progression**

The last block collected other suggestions for improvement for the evaluation. Therefore, the questionnaire had an open space to indicate how UFRRJ could improve the performance evaluation for progression.

The suggestions indicated by 70% or more participants were the "sending of an explanatory booklet to all employees clarifying the importance of the evaluation, the criteria and procedures" and the "periodical training of employees regarding the progression assessment procedures."

The survey ended with a discursive question about other suggestions for improvement. The most prominent comments were: the adoption of objective criteria, the mismatches in the attribution of grades that do not express reality, the performance of the assessment by a committee, the possibility of requesting a review of the grade, greater

dissemination of the employees who will be assessed so that the deadline is not lost, the justification of the grades awarded and the evaluators' indifference to the procedures.

### **Data analysis**

We performed a content analysis following these steps: pre-analysis; material exploration and coding; and categorization, treatment of results, and interpretation (BARDIN, 2011).

In the pre-analysis, we organized the information to support the other phases and establish the objective of the analysis (BARDIN, 2011). The selected document was the Performance Evaluation Form for the functional progression of Technical-Administrative Employees in Education at UFRRJ, in addition to the data obtained from the application of the questionnaire.

In the material exploration stage, we established the theme as the unit of record. Thus, the indications and statements of the participants were coded and categorized according to their meanings. By analyzing the participants' responses to the objective and discursive questions, the following four categories were found:

- 1) Institutional support, with information regarding the quantity and quality of institutional actions and leaderships supporting the performance assessment;
- 2) Preparation of servers, where we allocated the information regarding the level of preparation of the evaluating and evaluated employees;
- 3) Evaluation procedures, with the current evaluation procedures, adopted form and suggestions information;
- 4) Treatment of results, where we allocated the information about the treatment given to the evaluation results, what is done or not with them, and the server's attitude towards the evaluation results.

In this way, the contents obtained in the objective answers and the participants' speeches expressed in the discursive answers were coded and categorized. With categorization, it was possible to carry out the treatment and interpretation of results. Therefore, the third and final stage of Bardin's (2011) content analysis involves categorization, already performed by the authors, and the treatment and interpretation of results.



## **EMPIRICAL-CONCEPTUAL DISCUSSION**

The empirical-conceptual discussion was carried out based on the content analysis categories.

### **Category 1: Institutional support**

This category dealt with the quantity and quality of institutional and leadership actions regarding the provision of support for executing the performance evaluation for functional progression.

One of people management functions is to provide workers with conditions to overcome their results (COSTA; DEMO; PASCHOAL, 2019). For this to occur, clear objectives and ways of measuring performance are needed and knowledge and involvement of managers (SPEKLÉ; VERBEETEN, 2014). Nevertheless, in UFRRJ, 35% of servants do not even know what the institution expects of them and consider that they would perform better if they did.

In addition, 40% of the participants indicated that the degree of clarity of the information on the performance evaluation form for functional progression is from medium to weak, and 35% of the participants consider 3 of the nine criteria adopted in the evaluation as poorly described, which is contrary to literature (CARMO et al., 2018; MOURA; SOUZA, 2016; SCHIKMANN, 2010).

As for the support given by the institution, 50% of the servers considered it precarious or nonexistent, stating that they were not oriented to perform the performance evaluation. They also highlighted the following: the heads are not oriented to carry out the assessment, and they deliver the form already filled out with maximum grades, that there is no dialogue, that it is difficult to obtain the form, the server has no means of contesting the grades and that they continue to work with the same headship. As said by the participants, the complacency and carelessness of leaders when carrying out the assessment is foreseen in the literature (SCHIKMANN, 2010).

In empirical research, individual commitment at UFRRJ does not come from leadership skills but is on its own merit, contrasting Garcia and Russo (2019) and Silva, Nunes, and Andrade (2019). Despite this, some university leaders can better engage in dialogue, communication of goals, and feedback.

The participants suggested investing in instructions for managers to give feedback and hold alignment meetings with the team, which is in line with what was proposed by

Reynaud and Todescat (2017) and Speklé and Verbeeten (2014). They also pointed out issues about improving organizational support, greater disclosure of the employees who will be evaluated in the period, notice in the system of the evaluation period, and the use of some framework already validated in the market, with well-defined objectives, metrics, and results.

Regarding these suggestions, the modernization of performance evaluation in the public sector faces structural, environmental, and cultural difficulties, such as not encouraging development, the people management sector's lack of autonomy, and the appreciation of the length of service at the expense of competence (CARMO et al., 2018; FONSECA et al., 2013; SCHIKMANN, 2010). The bureaucracy itself slows down innovations (BALASSIANO; SALLES, 2005), making it difficult to fully transfer private sector practices, which are considered a model (CÔRTEZ; MENESES, 2019, CAVALCANTE; CARVALHO, 2017).

## **Category 2: Preparation of servers**

In the survey, 10% of the participants attributed grade 2, and 40% attributed grade 3 to the level of knowledge of the assessment procedures, demonstrating a medium to insufficient knowledge of these procedures. In open questions, they expressed that they would like to understand the evaluation criteria to improve their performance and want to be prepared for the evaluation, better understanding the work and the expected results. This result agrees with Luz e Filho (2018), who points out that the preparation of public servants regarding the evaluation is deficient.

In this sense, as pointed out by Reynaud and Todescat (2017), performance evaluation in public organizations does not promote individual, collective and organizational development as it could. Furthermore, the administrative technicians themselves indicated that they should receive training to perform their functions better and that evaluators are indifferent to evaluations. These unpreparedness scenarios harm the most compromised servers, who become discouraged and reduce their performance (LUZ; FILHO, 2018).

Another problem presented by the literature is its exclusive use for career progression, with pecuniary impact, and not for performance management (BALASSIANO; SALLES, 2005). This issue drives the obtaining of a financial bonus

without an honest performance evaluation. As suggested by Odelius (2010), this can cause the evaluation to be manipulated and suffer political interference.

Luz and Filho (2018) suggested some improvement actions: applying training on assessment and its processes, exchanging experiences with other institutions that carry out an assessment, and awareness of assessment impacts on the public career.

### **Category 3: Evaluation Procedures**

The survey showed that 15% of the participants believe that the grades given to colleagues in the performance evaluation for functional progression are distorted, and 20% confess that neither theirs nor their peers have grades consistent with their actual performance. In addition, 50% of respondents believe that servants are benefited or harmed in the progression assessment since the assigned grades do not represent the servant's actual performance.

These data refer to the coexistence of patrimonial traits (GONÇALVES et al., 2017) along with the bureaucratic model. In a public administration where equality and legality coexist with personhood, formal relations coexist with informal ones, and isonomic rules do not prevent individual treatments (BALASSIANO; SALLES, 2005).

The administrative technicians participating in the research denounced that they always receive the highest scores. They also commented that in all the other evaluations they saw, there was a maximum or close to the maximum score attributed in all the requirements, showing that leniency and contaminated judgments are common mistakes in performance evaluations (ODELIUS, 2010).

Some participants considered that the assessment carried out only by the head could cause deviations from the purpose and make it unfair. They also believe that justification and revision of the grades would increase the sense of justice. Triguero-Sánchez, Peña-Vinces, and Guillen (2018) pointed out that this perception of injustice can reduce the individual's commitment.

One of the problems pointed out in the literature is the physical absence of the evaluators, who do not allocate time to know the work, the context, and the performance of the person they are evaluating (LUZ; FILHO, 2018; ODELIUS, 2010). About this theme, the participants informed that many heads do not commit to the process and evaluate the administrative technicians without talking to them without explaining the reason for each grade, which can harm the server.

The survey results showed that 45% of the participants prefer that the assessment for progression includes mixed evaluative criteria, objective and subjective. Another 50% would prefer to be evaluated by exclusively objective criteria. The literature argues that the use of quantitative criteria has positive effects on performance, as well as the establishment of goals, which, on the other hand, can inhibit the qualitative aspects (SPEKLÉ; VERBEETEN, 2014).

In their statements, the technicians pointed out flaws in both perspectives, denouncing that the assessment does not have criteria that consider the physical and psychological work environment and pointing out the lack of objective and measurable criteria as problems in the current assessment procedures. In addition, the participants pointed out that the sentences in the current form are vague, and the criteria are delayed.

The difficulty in defining the evaluation criteria and the financial impact that the evaluation has, encourage the employees to do well only what influences their evaluation, not worrying about other issues. The use of subjective criteria could help overcome this phenomenon, but it could bring side effects such as the feeling of injustice (ODELIUS, 2010).

Of the subjects, 60% indicated that criteria not on the form are not considered, even if they influence performance. This signaling also appeared in a suggestion to improve the procedures in force at UFRRJ, where the respondent suggested that the entire structure and organizational environment of the evaluated server should be considered. In general, the authors are peaceful regarding the influence of other environmental factors on the individual's behavior and performance (LUZ; FILHO, 2018; ODELIUS, 2010; REYNAUD; TODESCAT, 2017). They believe that people management policies, leadership, the team, the organizational context and climate, interpersonal relationships, working conditions, beliefs, among other factors, influence individual performance (ODELIUS, 2010).

All survey participants would accept to receive feedback from their leadership in the assessment process for progression, with 95% feeling good and 5% embarrassed. On the other hand, providing feedback is not part of the current assessment procedure. This reality goes against what the literature preaches, as the implementation of performance evaluation requires the negotiation phase, where performance standards and expected results are explained to workers (ODELIUS, 2010). However, Luz and Filho (2018) and

Odelius (2010) recognize that poor communication between evaluators and evaluated ones is common.

Despite being considered innovation promoters, public universities are rooted in bureaucratic and traditional management processes. It happens due to the lack of preparation of those who occupy management positions (JANISSEK et al., 2017) and the backward human resources areas, limiting them to comply with legal issues (MOURA; SOUZA, 2016). Thus, at UFRRJ, evaluations still occur in isolation, without comparison with previous results and analysis of whether or not there was a performance improvement.

Some participants criticized the combination of several criteria into one, suggesting that they should be separated and the impossibility of exposing other aspects inherent to the work performed, interpersonal relationships, and other characteristics of the server not covered in the form. In addition, some questions on the form are not clear, which is a common deficiency (LUZ; FILHO, 2018; ODELIUS, 2010).

Respondents were willing to expand the performance evaluation, considering that it was also done by co-workers, by other hierarchical superiors, and by a committee, to minimize subjectivity and the restriction of the evaluation only to the head. The use of assessments restricted only to the head's opinion, which increases the possibility of biased judgments, is also a common deficiency (ODELIUS, 2010).

Another suggestion was that the assessment for progression be done jointly between the assessor and the assessed so that there is dialogue, examples, justification of grades, feedback, and maturation. At this point, social exchange brings this alignment of expectations and increases the effectiveness of actions (TRIGUERO-SÁNCHEZ; PEÑA-VINCES; GUILLEN, 2018).

One of the concerns expressed in the survey questionnaire was the need to adapt the assessments for each sector. In this regard, using indicators that generically consider the position and not the work performed, adopting a single evaluation method for different positions, and the blurring of performance according to the dimensions of work is considered problematic (LUZ; FILHO, 2018; ODELIUS, 2010). In this sense, the performance evaluation carried out at UFRRJ is close to the difficulties described in the literature.

#### **Category 4: Treatment of results**

Results' treatment allocated questions about what is done or not with the results obtained in the evaluation for functional progression at UFRRJ. In addition, it brought aspects regarding the attitude of the servers through the results of their evaluations.

There are some possibilities for comparing performance appraisal: social comparison, when there is a comparison between two people's performances; and temporal comparison when comparing the person's previous performance (CHUN; BROCKNER; DE CREMER, 2018). When asked, 85% of the participants indicated that they prefer the most recent progression assessment results to be compared with the previous assessment results to analyze the evolution from one cycle to another. However, it is essential to highlight that such comparison is not part of the current evaluation procedures.

When the temporal comparison is used, appraisees develop a sense that details about their performance are observed, and the evaluation is individualized. In addition, it creates a sense of accuracy, impartiality, and ethics, in addition to demonstrating that the evaluator is making an effort to carry out the evaluation, increasing the acceptance of performance evaluation (CHUN; BROCKNER; DE CREMER, 2018).

In the research, there was an indication of the culture of non-punishment existing at UFRRJ, highlighting that servants progress in their careers automatically since managers give good grades to those evaluated even if they do not play a good role. However, the participants also accused that public servants do not fulfill the 40 hours of work per week, showing a lack of commitment to the institution, which does not influence the assessment. On the other hand, the literature points out that work relations must follow a new logic that replaces the focus on physical presence for results, loyalty for commitment, obedience for flexibility, and performing tasks to achieve organizational goals and progression over time by merit progression (SCHIKMANN, 2010).

The performance evaluation monitors the employees' way of working and results and the things that help or hinder their performance, allowing the proposition of action plans for improvement (LUZ; FILHO, 2018). On this aspect, some participants explained that the servant must have good performance regardless of the evaluation, and their performance should not be limited to the criteria established in the form.

One of the participants' complaints was that at UFRRJ, evaluations are not taken into account when designating management positions. Thus, people are appointed to

gratified positions and functions according to administrative and political interests, hindering the organization's strategic direction (FONSECA et al., 2013, SANTOS, 2009).

This fact opposes the objective of performance evaluations. Therefore, in addition to aligning institutional goals to the performance of professionals, portraying the reality of the worker's performance, and providing training, it should support decisions to improve the evaluated person's performance, point out priorities and support professional training plans (SCHIKMANN, 2010; VALMORBIDA et al., 2014).

## **PROPOSAL FOR AN EXPLANATORY BOOKLET**

In the empirical results of the research, 70% of the participating administrative technicians indicated that the availability of an explanatory booklet for all employees clarifying the importance of the assessment, its criteria, and procedures would contribute to better completion of the form and better execution of the progression assessment procedures.

The purpose of the explanatory booklet is to alleviate the doubts that the evaluated employees and evaluators have regarding the form and the performance evaluation process for functional progression. It brings with it related legislation, explanations of the criteria adopted, description of procedures, among other elements.

Developed for all UFRRJ employees who assess or are assessed for the functional progression of administrative technicians in education, we based the booklet on the literature on the subject, mainly on the primary data of this research. In addition, the booklet was designed with an interactive layout and language to facilitate understanding.

Initially, we identified relevant content to achieve the objective of the booklet: evaluation form, legislation, UFRRJ guidelines, among others. Then, based on the notes of the servers and the bibliographical research, other contents were extracted. Subsequently, the researcher concatenated the contents obtained and prepared the texts contained in the booklet to be complete, concise, and clear. He also looked for images that could help in the user's understanding, memorization and interaction.

Thus, we organized the explanatory booklet to answer the following questions: 1) Why evaluate performance?; 2) What is performance assessment for functional progression?; 3) What do I do before the performance evaluation?; 4) What criteria should I consider when evaluating or being evaluated?; 5) How do I assess someone's

performance or have my performance assessed?; 6) What do I do after the performance review?

Although the proposed booklet meets the gaps observed in the literature and in-field research, we recognize that it is not enough to change UFRRJ's performance assessment policy since there are legal and administrative issues involved. However, its proposition fulfills the objective of supporting the evaluative and evaluated servers.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Aiming to reach the main objective of analyzing the performance evaluation for the functional progression of technical-administrative employees in education at UFRRJ, we concluded that there is a set of deficiencies that interfere with performance evaluation.

The main characteristics are related to: institutional goals not communicated and negotiated with those evaluated, who do not know what the organization expects from them; confusing and dubious form information; a good part of the servers without having good knowledge of the evaluation procedures; inadequate support provided by the institution to evaluators and the ones being evaluated; complacency and leniency on the part of the evaluators, who usually give maximum or close marks to the evaluated ones; performance evaluation results disconnected from management decisions and practices, such as training and appointment to positions and functions; motivation and purpose of exclusively financial performance evaluation and for career advancement; grades awarded that are not consistent with the actual performance of those evaluated, who are benefited or harmed; servers preferring to be evaluated by objective or mixed criteria; failure to consider structural and environmental aspects that influence performance; performance evaluation processes without innovation; evaluation involving only the opinion of the head, without including the evaluation of peers to the person evaluated and subordinates to the head; deficient evaluation system; and reality far from the performance of performance management. All these traits are present at UFRRJ are foreseen in the literature and condemned by the authors.

We also concluded that the way to alleviate the current procedural deficiencies for a better filling out of the form and better execution of the progression assessment procedures would be from the availability of an explanatory booklet and the implementation of periodic training on the assessment.



Finally, this article provides the people management area of public organizations with a view of the users of the performance evaluation system for functional progression, evaluated and evaluators, on the main difficulties they have and the most severe procedural deficiencies. This article presents the possibilities covered by the specific legislation for modifying performance assessment for functional progression to suggest future research.

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