

truths more dated and situated than those resulting from more objective problems. Thus, a vaccine's efficacy tends not to vary according to the subjective and historical context. The same could never be said of an Agrarian Reform Program. For social programs, one could almost use the old adage from Clinical Medicine: each case is a case apart. One would thus have to take great care when generalizing the results of evaluating social programs. Hundreds of studies have attested to the inefficiency of public services in dozens of places, such as the former USSR, England, and Brazil, but it would still not be proper to conclude that the public sector is structurally and generically incapable of ensuring equity and social justice. Contexts have to be compared, variables have to be cross-analyzed, and one always has to ask, under different circumstances would public services not have greater potential? One has to try new arrangements and not generalize, as has become frequent in contemporary Globalized discourse. Successive negative evaluations of social programs are used politically against social development. Yet the feasibility, acceptance, efficacy, and efficiency of social programs never come ready-made; rather, they are built over the course of their very effort to counteract what had been considered possible until then. Such is the essence of macro- and micro-policy: a wager on building the future, a wager against previous evidence, against warnings that the proposal will never work. Both the right and the left invent their policies and programs arguing against the absolute value that the results of past Evaluations tend to acquire.

In short, yes, let us evaluate, as long as the Evaluation Systems have neither the first nor the last word on policy decisions. Let them act as a backdrop, as a critical conscience, which this or that social actor can employ to argue against and defeat contrary positions. Evaluation may even have the first word, I admit, as a social warning. A warning to be re-drafted by this or that subject group. Technique does not replace policy, and policy should not pertain exclusively to the Administration (Executive Branch) and Congress. Administrations and Legislatures go about their work in what appears to be a suicidal fashion, against statistical evidence. Equity depends on the radical democratization of political life at both the national and internal institutional levels. Transparency of information is just one aspect of this necessary democratization.

O autor responde

The author replies

Zulmira Hartz

Evaluation in health: regulation, research, and culture in the challenges of institutionalization

I certainly do not intend to give a rebuttal to the discussants' comments, since they are both pertinent and relevant, and I am thus tempted to reiterate them. However, I will merely highlight a few points to avoid redundancy. I thought it would be interesting to organize my remarks as clues to answers or treatment of the questions raised by Yunes concerning the applicability of the French experience, so as to form a preliminary list of ingredients in a basic recipe for Institutionalization, inspired by international cuisine, yet with a Brazilian flavor. Gerard de Pouvourville sheds considerable light on the matter when he identifies the limits of this experience "...we are still far short of many objectives..." and makes suggestions to implement institutionalization in France, since I believe that the potential for such "generalization" is reinforced by the agreement amongst the various colleagues' participating in this debate:

1) evaluation as an intrinsic part of public services management, a requisite for accountability and modernization of the state. In this sense, evaluation provides the tools for the state's regulatory role, crucially important to ensure "equity" in health care in the case of privatization of providers and hiring of local partners in decentralized interventions (which would certainly include, but not be restricted to, the "old IPDA circuit" mentioned by Yunes). Regulation, as an act to facilitate governance and quality improvement, an issue also approached by Claudia Travassos, would require the use of more participatory strategies, with flexible, decentralized evaluation structures. Ligia Vieira adds to the debate by recalling that the use of local standards should not rule out the possibility of comparing problems and interventions on national and international scales, and I feel that techno-scientific committees, together with specific health programs or councils at various levels, can provide such important back-up. It is thus interesting to highlight the different forms of regulatory logic

(techno-scientific, professional, economic, and democratic), characterized exceptionally well by André-Pierre Contandriopoulos, since they define the prime methodologies orienting the focus of evaluation and thus, in a sense, its results. This approach reappears in Ligia's commentary, evoking intersections between the scientific and professional fields and power, expressing *"the dispute over which methodologies are most valid"* and underscoring the French preference for the "sur mesure" approach. I feel it is also necessary to point out that public policy and program evaluation performed (in)directly by executive branch agencies should be the object of regulation (meta-evaluation or auditing of evaluation effectiveness) by a different branch of government, just as with any other activity.

2) funds to promote evaluation research, including the development of a community with a structure to define proper scientific work, exploring the impact of public sector activities on society, reducing the incidence of "quick and dirty studies". This prioritization agrees with that of Claudia Travassos, who, given the *"chronic and severe lack of academic and technical specialists"* in the Brazilian context, is concerned over the resources needed to stimulate the production of knowledge and training of expert personnel in this field, with the new technical skills required by evaluation teams, including communications, teaching, and policy-making. Another problem in promotion of research, in addition to the issue of scientific legitimacy identified by Gérard de Pouvourville, is the ability to promote the connection between thinking and acting, knowledge and action, essential to legitimize the evaluation of programs and technologies, *"whether they aspire to scientific research status or not"* (Maria Novaes). According to Ligia, this relationship between evaluation and decision-making is a political and ethical (rather than theoretical and methodological) issue, involving choices in which, faced with the various rationales, *"the institutionalization of evaluation for a public health system means seeking to ensure the hegemony of the technical/health rationale..."*. The counterpoint by Gastão Wagner is indispensable to avoid turning the institutionalization proposal into a "rationalist delirium", since political decisions will continue to be moved by *"the motor force of desire, interests, and needs"*. As a woman from the hinterlands, I also see the *"long and winding roads"* (with clearings and turns along the way) in this rather wild territory of evaluators. Such meandering pathways appear when one becomes aware of the on-go-

ing challenge of (de)constructing our field of activity, in keeping with the policies and programs that evolve (like the institutions) in their efficacy in the *"wager against previous evidence, against warnings that the proposal will never work"*, without losing the spirit of advocacy, to use what we know to be an unparalleled word.

3) evaluation as a process fostering democratic debate, which implies better redistribution of "access to evaluation" by the various actors who, whose own means are insufficient for them to evaluate public services and use such evaluation to counterbalance opposing interests. With regard to this approach, the comment by André-Pierre Contandriopoulos is quite "daring" in that it points to the emergence of a "true" culture of evaluation, or the generalization of its practice with the hegemony of democratic logic, like institutionalization, at all levels of society, processes fostering individual and collective learning in such a way that all actors can overcome the exclusive logic of regulation. Institutionalization of evaluation would thus foster *"the subordination of vested interest groups' power to that of individuals who collectively constitute society"*. I see a similarity between this approach and that of a *"social warning"* (Gastão Wagner), contributing to a *"radical democratization of political life at both the national and internal institutional levels"*.

In concluding this difficult task of choosing highlights, given the wealth of contributions to the debate, I would call on readers to share in the proposal raised by Yunes, viewing this debate as part of work that should be continued with the desirable exchange of ideas concerning the applicability of the French experience and other initiatives to help respond to and reformulate questions identified by him. I also consider it crucial to reaffirm my conviction that *"knowledge of the reality of others fosters a better understanding of our own"*, as stated so well by Maria Novaes concerning the justification for my article, but I agree with her that analysis of programs and policies should view them as *"socially and technically constructed alternatives for specific contexts, and not as universal models"*.