

Building a participatory methodological proposal for the development of the evaluation research: a contribution of the critical theory to the Social Service* practice

Construindo uma proposta metodológica participativa para desenvolvimento da pesquisa avaliativa: uma contribuição da teoria crítica para a prática do Serviço Social

Maria Ozanira da Silva e Silva**



ABSTRACT – The article, resulting from the teaching experiences in the field of social investigation, presents a methodological proposal, which is under construction to guide the development of the social investigation practice, with a focus on the evaluation of social policies and programs. It emphasizes relevant aspects of the methodological proposal under consideration, such as: the theoretical framework adopted; the concept of evaluation research used as a reference, followed by the illustration of the methodological proposal mediating the presentation of an experiment. In the experiment report, it seeks to demonstrate the potential of the methodological proposal adopted to favor spaces of collective thinking on social programs, professional practice and social reality. It also highlights the potential of participation for the development of a critical practice directed towards the social control of social policies and programs.

Keywords – Evaluation Research. Social Programs. Methodological Proposal. Critical Theory. Social Work.

RESUMO – O artigo, resultante de experiências de docência no campo da investigação social, apresenta uma proposta metodológica em construção para orientar o desenvolvimento da prática da investigação social, com especial destaque para a avaliação de políticas e programas sociais. Destaca aspectos relevantes da proposta metodológica em consideração, tais como: o referencial teórico adotado; a concepção de pesquisa avaliativa de referência, seguindo-se da ilustração da proposta metodológica mediando a apresentação de uma experiência. No relato da experiência procura demonstrar a potencialidade da proposta metodológica adotada para o favorecimento de espaços do pensar coletivo sobre programas sociais, a prática profissional e a realidade social. Destaca ainda o potencial da participação para o desenvolvimento de uma prática profissional crítica direcionada para o controle social das políticas e programas sociais.

Palavras-chave – Pesquisa avaliativa. Programas sociais. Proposta metodológica. Teoria crítica. Serviço Social.

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** She holds a Doctor's Degree in Social Services; professor of the Graduate Program in Public Policies at the Federal University of Maranhão (UFMA), São Luís – MA/Brazil; coordinator of the Evaluation and Study Group on Poverty and Policies directed towards Poverty (GAEPP www.gaegg.ufma.br) of the same University and level IA CNPq (National Council for Scientific and Technological Development) researcher. E-mail: maria.ozanira@gmail.com
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Shadish, Cook and Leviton (1995) identified three stages in the historical evolution process of the Evaluation Research. During the 1960's, the first stage was characterized by the concern for the application of rigorous scientific methods to solve social problems. In the second stage, in the 1970's, the emphasis was on the utilization and pragmatism in the increase of the use of evaluation in the decision-making process regarding the conception, modification or continuity of programs. This context was favorable to the primacy of the utilization of quantitative evaluation techniques as opposed to qualitative techniques. According to the authors, the third stage is a synthesis of the former stages. It highlights the integration of the techniques related to the context and the evaluation objectives, as well as considers that the programs are characterized by epistemological and methodological diversities and are also politically affected, creating opportunities for the discussion of the possibility of a participatory approach in the field of evaluation of social programs.

In Brazil, the expansion of the evaluation of social policies and programs has been registered since the 1980's, within the context of social struggles against the military dictatorship, implemented in 1964, because of the demand by the social movements that included the need to expand the universal social policies as a citizenship right in the public agenda. Within this context, we expand the criticism of the standard of social policies developed in Latin America and Brazil, mainly regarding the misuse of public funds and the misguided focus of social programs on the most deprived population. It was also registered a search for decentralized participatory practices, social democratic transparency and control in the field of public policies.

During the 1990's, the demand for the evaluation of social programs is expanded, also establishing requirements by international organizations, such as the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank, within the context of the social programs reform, guided by the focus, decentralization and privatization. Thus, the financing institutions start demanding the evaluation of social policies as conditions for their financing, recommending a more rational and productive public spending, with criteria to assess the efficiency regarding the utilization of resources and the effectiveness in the search to verify the achievement of pre-established goals.

As of 1995, the impulse of the evaluation of social programs continues to develop, now within the reform of the Brazilian State context, following an international trend to adapt the country to the new order of the world capitalism. This was a time for a productive restructuring process as demanded by the State's Fiscal Crisis and influenced by the Neoliberal Project, which was belatedly assumed by Brazil in the 1990's. Within this reform process, the format of the State passes from intervener (executor) to supporter (financer) and a regulator (one that prepares norms and control). The implementation of social programs is extensively transferred to organizations of the so-called third sector, which is perceived as less bureaucratic, more efficient and dynamic than the structure of the State (Pereira & Grau, 1999). Therefore, the evaluation of social programs turns into a fundamental control mechanism of the State over the resources that are transferred to the third sector, privileged implementers of social programs (Silva, 2008, p. 109).

It is within the scope of society's contradictory dynamics that the evaluation of social programs locates itself in the agenda of social movements, the international development organizations and the reform of the Brazilian State; each subject building concepts and procedures in line with his or her vision on society and with his or her own interests. Within this same contradictory social dynamics, however, the democratization process of the Brazilian society has been expanding itself, creating opportunities for participatory practices.

In this text, it is presented the effort to build a participatory proposal for the development of social research and, in its context, for the evaluation of social programs based on the experiences of a group of researchers that are part of the Evaluation and Study Group on Poverty and Policies Directed towards Poverty (GAEPP), which is preceded by a reflection directed towards the construction of a

concept regarding the evaluation of social programs and a methodological proposal that assumes the participatory approach as reference.

Building a concept regarding the evaluation of social programs

The theoretical reference assumed when thinking about the development of a participatory approach in the Evaluation Research considers the possibility of the participation being placed towards the knowledge construction process. In view of this, the Evaluation Research is conceived as an applied social research modality that produces knowledge in the field of social policies and programs. As mentioned in previous studies (Silva, 1991, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2011), the participatory approach in the field of research can be sized according to two perspectives: one, which is prevalent in the literature of the 1960's and 70's, indicates the popular classes¹ as active subjects in the construction of knowledge. They are considered popular researchers in partnership with scientists and scholars that build knowledge to substantiate their social struggles. Another understanding considers that knowledge can be used towards the strengthening and advancement of social struggles, aimed at achieving social transformations, even when produced without the direct participation of the referred popular classes. This second perspective that guides the reflections developed along this text, considers the research participation in the awareness formation of subordinate classes² as fundamental, guiding the construction of knowledge geared towards social change. As an object of research, its reality must be critically considered. For this purpose, the committed social insertion of the researcher in the social reality is required, which is necessarily expressed by its identification with the interests and demands of the subordinate classes, social subjects truly interested in changes. Therefore, this theoretical perspective means thinking and building science, as opposed to the neutrality defended by the positivist science.

For this reason, when knowledge is situated in the field of social relations, it is possible to build a concept of Evaluation Research as a technical and political act; therefore, it does not constitute a disinterested act; it opposes the objectivity of positive science, but requires an objectivization effort in the relation of the evaluator with the social reality and the subjects that participate in the evaluation process; it is based on values and the knowledge about reality; it values the critical analysis of the social policy or program; it seeks to comprehend the theoretical and conceptual principles and foundations that guide the evaluated policy or program; it considers the interests and seeks to involve the different subjects in the policy or program process; it is based on values and conceptions about social reality, shared by the evaluation subjects; it goes against the idea of neutrality, it does not follow a single path, and considers the evaluation results as a partial version of reality, since the realities are historically constructed and have a relative and temporal nature; it considers the policy or program as a result of several factors: action by subjects, specificities of the situations, financial conditions, cultural materials and elements involved; it situates the social policy in the relation with the State and Society. It considers that all evaluations are developed within a context of subjects and interests; it is never consensual or definitive; it is a version, a judgment upon what is real. Therefore, the technical and political dimensions must be seen as complementary and in conjunction (Silva, 2008).

Based on the complex conception about social policy and program described above, the evaluation functions are considered to present three dimensions:

Technical Function: a) provide subsidies for the correction of deviations along the implementation process; b) indicate to what extent the objectives and changes occurred; c) subsidize the preparation or restructuring of social policies and programs;

Political Functions: offer information for social subjects to substantiate their social struggles in the field of public policies (social control);

Academic Function: reveal the determinations and contradictions present in the process of public policies, highlighting the deepest meanings of these policies (their essence), for knowledge construction. (Silva, 2008, p. 114).

It is considered that the political function of the evaluation of social programs is the central thread that allows the GAEPP research team to share the construction of a participatory approach to think about and develop our evaluation practice, particularly in the field of social investigation.

Building a participatory approach methodological proposal in the evaluation of social programs

The GAEPP, space for the development of the investigation and evaluation research experience considered in this article, was founded in 1996. It is an interdisciplinary Group that brings together professors and students of the undergraduate and graduate (Master's and Doctoral) programs of the Federal University of Maranhão – UFMA, Brazil. It develops research, consulting, counseling and training activities in human resources.

It is important to consider that the construction of a participatory methodological approach to guide the practice of investigation and evaluation of social programs has been an experience under construction by the group of GAEPP researchers, founded upon the theoretical framework referred above and the utilization of a critical and dialectical methodology guided by the following principles:

- The participatory dimension may join the knowledge construction process;
- There must be articulation between the subjects of the evaluation process, so there is no dichotomy between the subject and the object of the knowledge process;
- No separation between theory and practice;
- Critical and committed posture towards social change, through the provision of knowledge to assist in the struggles and social control of public policies by the subordinate segments;
- Science builds historical truths, limited to and situated within its reach;
- Science is marked by society's values;
- Knowledge is the product of a successive process of getting close to reality, seeking to go beyond the appearances in the search for its essence, even though it is always inconclusive in the explanation built;
- Reality is in constant movement and transformation.

Based on the theoretical framework and the above principles, we seek to develop alternatives to expedite the investigation and, specifically the evaluation research. Aware that, as members of the academy, we do not develop the direct implementation of social programs, we act as external evaluators, seeking to establish a participation connection with the professionals that implement the social programs and, through them, we try to reach the segments of the population that benefit from the programs and are the object of our investigations and evaluations. The assumed guiding principle is that the changes in the professional practice, inside the institutions, may contribute to strengthen social struggles, as long as the developed practice is committed to results on behalf of the public that is the target of the social programs. This is about fostering the direct involvement of professionals, considered as the subjects of public policies, in the definition and implementation of researches and evaluations. We understand that the knowledge of the professionals that implement the social programs may be superior to ours in relation to these programs, which causes our knowledge to be fundamental and complementary, making it possible to have a greater control over the object of evaluation.

By getting the professionals that implement the social programs of the institutions involved in the evaluation process, we intend to encourage these professionals to commit to the results of the developed programs. Moreover, we also foster the practice of the restitution of the organized and systematic knowledge based on the developed evaluations and studies for the professionals of the institutions responsible for the programs evaluated and for the groups that use the programs. Thus, we seek to contribute to the construction of spaces for critical reflection about the social programs evaluated and about the social reality to which the programs are directed. The development of awareness and the practice of social control by the technicians, inside the institutions, and by the users of social programs within the scope of the councils for the management of public policies and the organized social movement may contribute to strengthen the social struggle for changes.

In order to illustrate the methodological proposal under construction that has been used in the researches and evaluations of the social programs, within the GAEPP scope, an experience will be presented below.

The Unified Social Work System in Brazil: an evaluation study of its implementation

This study was developed by the faculty team researchers of the Federal University of Maranhão (UFMA), members of the GAEPP, of the Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo – PUCSP (Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo) and Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul – PUCRS (Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul). These researchers, under the national coordination of GAEPP, formed a scientific and academic cooperation network between the consolidated Graduate Programs that are part of the Social Service Area at CAPES (Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel). The network had as its objectives to raise the quality standard of the training of graduate level professionals; increase the scientific production of these Programs and contribute to the qualification of the National Social Work Policy.

Within the context of the network activities, an evaluation research was developed about the UNIFIED SOCIAL WORK SYSTEM IN BRAZIL (SUAS), addressing two dimensions of analysis: content and foundations of the National Social Work Policy and the development of an empirical study about the SUAS establishment and implementation process in the country, considering two aspects: a) management of the System at the federal, state and municipal levels and the articulation among the three levels of the government and of these with society; b) study of the Social Work Reference Centers (CRAS) and the Specialized Social Work Reference Centers (CREAS), operating spaces of SUAS and for the articulation of the basic and specialized care network offered to the population that uses the Policy.

The analysis of the content and foundations of the National Social Work Policy was developed upon bibliographical and documentary review, as the SUAS establishment and implementation process, through field research performed with the utilization of the following methodological procedures:

- Semi-structured interviews with the professionals responsible for the preparation and implementation of the Policy in the states and municipalities selected to form the nationwide study sample.
- Empirical study developed upon visits and observation, with greater emphasis on the technique of the Focus Group that made it possible to gather people with experience about the Policy in the state/municipality, so as to enable ideas and points of view about SUAS establishment to flourish. We had, among the involved subjects, technicians, managers, members of the Management Councils, professionals responsible for the social control of the Social Work Policy in the municipalities and some included users.

GAEPP was in charge of performing the field research in the following states of the Northeast and North regions that were selected to form the study sample: Maranhão, Pernambuco e Pará. 18 municipalities were researched in these states.

Throughout the study, the team included a collective discussion moment for researchers and informants, first within each group and then between the two groups, allowing for the socialization of the preliminary results. This space not only favored the complementation and furthering of the information collected up to that moment, but also made the exchange of experiences among the SUAS implementers and of these with the academy possible.

A Regional Workshop was held for the concretization of the participatory research dimension aimed at promoting the collective discussion between the researchers, managers and members of the Municipal Social Work policy Management Council about the preliminary results achieved during the field information surveying process, in order to provide more consistency for the knowledge systematized up to that moment. Therefore, we intended to complement the information gathered by furthering the study about the SUAS establishment and contribute to the advancement and systemization of the National Social Work policy.

The participants of the Regional Workshop were: GAEPP researchers; managers and technicians of the State Social Work Departments or similar agencies of Maranhão, Pernambuco and Pará; managers and technicians of the Social Work Departments or similar agencies of the researched municipalities in these states; representatives of the Municipal Social Work Councils that participated in the focus groups; representative of the Ministry of Social Development and Fight Against Hunger (MDS), national administrator of the Social Work policy; representative of the research teams of PUCSP and PUCRS.

The Regional Workshop adopted work groups in order to make room for collective debates, each session was guided by a program that made it possible to focus on the research and participants' main purpose. The program of the first work session highlighted the following aspects related to the reality of the municipalities: **a) main problems experienced by the local population**, the following were emphasized: Urban violence; poverty; lack of and precarious housing and sanitation; need to migrate to more developed centers; homeless people, including kids; unemployment; child labor; sexual abuse and exploitation; prostitution; use and trafficking of drugs and alcohol; income concentration; **b) situations observed by the technicians and managers regarding the SUAS implementation**, with focus on the weakness and inefficiency of the other public policies, resulting in the increase of demands for the Social Work policy; lack of physical and personal structure to attend to the volume of services demanded; non-delimitation of the metropolitan region; superposition of government actions; difficulty working within the intersectoral perspective; disrespect for the institutional benchmarking agencies; the population has insufficient access to information, which causes them not be included in the services; weak family ties; lack of alternatives involving activities for children and adolescents; population's low literacy makes it difficult to achieve professional qualification; difficulty to have access to income; high birth rate among the poor families; families headed by women, who do not have the necessary support; high number of convicts in the families assisted by CRAS; violence and exploitation of the elder citizens that receive the Benefício de Prestação Continuada (Continued Benefit Payment) or pension; localization of the CRAS in non-vulnerable areas; lack of structure by the CRAS to meet the demands; insufficient number of CRAS and CREAS to fulfill the needs of the population. **c) How to face the problems identified, considering** the following aspects: strengthening of a practice within the intersectoral perspective through the articulation of the Social Work policy with other social policies and programs; creation of multidisciplinary work teams; implementation of integrated action programs (many departments working on a single problem); prioritization of issues/problems by the municipal administration in order to work in an articulated way with the different departments/policies in joint meetings; organization of municipal consortia through the CREAS; creation of management committees or intersectoral chambers; stimulus towards debates with other policies, including the space utilization of the social control councils; preparation of plans to handle problems with the various representatives of social policies; expansion of the public policies coverage; articulation with income transference programs; professional

qualification/qualification of the families to generate jobs and income; outflow of production stimulus; articulation of the emergency actions with the structuring services; establishment of the Social Work specifics; need for an structural change regarding the production model, in other words, changes in the production and macroeconomic policy social relations; strengthening of the political forces that are committed to social progress, democratization, guarantee of ethical rights and commitments; strengthening of initiatives specifically geared towards the SUAS, such as: work based on the social services network; hiring more professionals and improving salaries; strengthening of the CREAS; granting eventual benefits; working towards strengthening the family ties; preventive work; furthering the concept and knowledge of the families that demand the services; promoting the individual and collective protagonism; articulation of the income transfer programs with the social work services; universality of the actions performed and the benefits granted; strengthening of the social services network and discussion about its social and political role; work intensification with users upon guidance to handle some difficulties; promoting the access to information about social rights; working towards encouraging the participation of users.

The second work session of the groups highlighted the implementation of the decentralized management model in the municipality, considering the following aspects: **a) The role of the federative agencies (federal, state and municipal)**, in which the following were emphasized: relevance of the role of the federal agency, mainly regarding co-financing, articulation of programs that involve more than one Ministry, definition of guidelines, qualification of professionals, coordination and monitoring of actions; co-financing, coordination, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of actions by the municipalities, despite the difficulties, especially related to the structure; conversion of the municipalities, mainly small municipalities, to “mere implementers” of the federal agency guidelines, due to the weak Policy structure (technical, financial, administrative support); non-compliance with its role or lack of participation by the state: this only “observes” and supervises, which has hindered the SUAS implementation in the municipalities, presenting lack of clarity by the state agency about its role within the SUAS context; lack of consulting by the state towards the municipalities, especially regarding the provision of information, monitoring, technical and financial support in the organization of special protection, training and co-financing regional services. **b) The territoriality and intersectoral matter** deserved the following considerations: the territoriality and intersectoral matter in the actions is being developed as a management principle; possibility for the municipalities to get to know and develop the reality considering their peculiarities based on the territoriality notion; adoption of the intersectoral action not only as a management strategy that must be implemented involving other agencies, but also other sectors; difficulty regarding the implementation of the intersectoral action within the integration perspective between the services and benefits, and mainly in the integration between the different agencies, especially at the municipal level; need to make progress in the debate with other policies as an issue that has to be faced in the construction of the intersectoral action; implementation of the intersectoral action unwisely, even though the different policies are discussed simultaneously during the planning, during the implementation of these actions, they are dissociated, then each of the different policies become responsible for their respective “part”; integration difficulty among the policies that form the Social Security tripod: Social Work, Health and Social Security; need to “call” the other policies to the discussion spaces of the Social Work policy as a strategy to face the integration difficulty; creation of Intersectoral Chambers as a strategy to enable the articulation among the different policies at the state level and also in some capitals. **c) The Policy financing:** important participation of the federal agency in the financing of part of the actions and, in the majority of the cases, in the financing of all the actions; participation of some municipalities in the co-financing of the majority of the actions and absence of the state in the co-financing; autonomy of the municipalities that are at the full management level regarding the development of the actions; need to guarantee the co-financing as a responsibility to be assumed and implemented by the state. **d) The family as the SUAS central unit:** implementation of actions that prioritize the family as the central unit, through the understanding of the possibilities of a psychosocial work, become more effective upon the involvement of all family members; need for further discussion

and comprehension regarding the concept of family, considering some challenges, such as, getting to know the family you are working with; discovering in the family itself the answers to deal with certain problems, strengthening the family to promote its emancipation; need to measure the emancipation of the families through the preparation of indicators to evaluate the results of the work performed, considering not only its contextual difficulties and limits, but also the difficulties and limits of the Policy itself; care so as not to fragment the family, segmenting it into groups and individuals. **e) Relation between the Bolsa Família (Social welfare program of the Brazilian government) and the SUAS**, with focus on the relation with the Bolsa Família in the actions implemented by the municipality through the monitoring of the families and their insertion in the social and educational groups and in the actions regarding the generation of jobs and income; difficulty in the relation between the SUAS and the Bolsa Família, considering the mismatch of this relation, expressed by the dichotomy between the Bolsa Família and the other services in terms of financing and political visibility, as well as in the comprehension by the beneficiaries: these identify CRAS and the Social Work policy with the Bolsa Família; lack of responsibility by the other policies (Education and Health) regarding the monitoring of the conditionalities. **f) The basic social protection and the specialized social protection**: search for adjustment of the municipalities to the protection modalities through the provision of services according to the specificities and levels of complexity, in the case of Special Social Protection; the highlight regarding the Basic Social protection was related to the difficulties concerning the structure, coverage, capacity to meet the demands of the territories by the CRAS; need for the developed practice to advance towards the Urban Social Centers, with the current need to develop social and educational actions implemented by multidisciplinary teams; need to differentiate between the protection modalities: basic and special, considering that there are misconceptions and difficulties in the organization of the services related to these protection levels.

The third session of the work groups focused on the work of the professionals in the municipalities, where the following aspects were considered: **a) Work relations and conditions of the Social Service professionals**: the professional work was considered satisfactory within the scope of the Social Work policy, only lacking a more effective interaction with the professionals from other policies; precarious work conditions in the CRAS: lack of resources and structure; precarious contractual work conditions and forms and lack of financial incentives and the existence of bureaucracy to obtain materials for the CRAS; insufficient number Social Service professionals; performing the work based on the hired personnel; qualified and motivated personnel for the job, but the professionals are undervalued for the SUAS concretization. **b) Physical structure, structure of the materials and public equipment used on the job**, in which it is considered the existence of physical structures that present the following characteristics: rented CRAS buildings, not adapted for this service; CRAS spaces without the proper conditions for the job/service in a way that is in compliance with the ethical and professional precepts; CRAS with individual assistance rooms, but without any spaces for other activities, but it was also registered by some municipalities the existence of physical structures in compliance with NOB(Basic Operational Norms)/SUAS, which enables better assistance conditions to the user; sufficient and proper spaces to perform the job. **c) The professional practice**, considering the innovation possibilities brought by SUAS in the field of Social Work, mainly concerning the new critical intervention ways, ensuring a high quality service, in which the following aspects were mentioned: carrying out periodical studies about the innovations in the area, as well as participation in training programs, seminars and courses; implementing the actions proposed by SUAS, however, the level of demand is fairly high regarding the creation of the teams and the required work dynamics.

The fourth group work session highlighted: **a) The existence and operation of the Social Services Network in the municipalities**, in which the following were pointed out: inexistence of a characterization of the SUAS network, in the majority of the municipalities; network diversity in some municipalities, formed by departments of health, education, culture, sports, construction, environment, regional management offices, universities, schools, churches, associations, private companies; difficulties regarding the network articulation with the CRAS; articulation of the institutions that form the network through meetings and referrals; lack of a more ample debate about the Social Work policy; lack of proper

training in the network; provision of social services by people without proper training; the range of services offered by the social services network includes: psychosocial services, professional training courses and workshops, in addition to the existing equipment (Youth and Elderly Centers); persistence in the development of actions to provide assistance, which is in contrast to the principles of the National Social Work policy; need to perform a survey about the entities as one of the steps to establish a quality standard for the social services. **b) Existence of a planning/monitoring/evaluation system of the Social Work policy in the municipalities:** it was highlighted the lack of a consolidated monitoring and evaluation system, only the efforts of the professionals towards such system were registered; non-disclosure of the work results was identified as one of the main obstacles; reduced number of professionals; non-identification of the planning/monitoring/evaluation as management moments.

The fifth group meeting used the "SUAS Perspectives as Public Policy" as a reference. Along these lines it was requested from the group members the indication of: **a) aspects that facilitate the SUAS establishment process**, the following aspects were mentioned: consolidation of the Social Work as Public Policy that is constitutionally established and ensured; commitment of the federal government with the Policy, providing institutional, budgetary and financial conditions for its development; existence of extensive SUAS regulations, already prepared by the MDS; easy access to information by the managers and technicians; new Policy concept, incorporating concepts, such as the territoriality and intersectoral ones, among others; flexibility and gradual expansion of the financial resources; problem-solving of the issues by the MDS; methodology planned for the System establishment: management based on territoriality, articulation with other policies, partnership with the society; more frequent investments in research, resulting in the possibility of systematic Policy evaluation; municipality autonomy within the guidelines of the federal government; professional training requirement for working in Social Services; recognition of the social service professional; more effective inspection in the use of resources through agencies like the Brazilian General Comptroller Office (CGU); existence of the Ombudsman regarding greater social control; society's consensus regarding the need for the existence of the Policy, this consensus is perceived within the scope of the Conferences, Forums; existence of Social Workers committed to the collective construction of the Policy; incentive towards the Policy construction by the Social Work Regional Councils; preparation of collective representation instances, such as municipal, state and national Conferences, resulting in the collective construction of the Policy in these public spaces of deliberation; deep involvement of the MDS in the rigorous fight against poverty; theoretical compilation as support for the professional intervention, as a result of a historical debate about the Policy; advances in the management of benefits by the MDS; fund to fund transfer of resources, from the federal agency to the municipalities. **b) Aspects that hinder the establishment process**, as an indication of the bureaucracy regarding the access to existing resources; precarity of the human resources and the work relations: the civil service test for hiring personnel did not take place; non-implementation of the career plans; low wages of the professionals; lack of personnel to directly assist users; lack of legal requirements in relation to the proper type of physical structure of the CRAS/CREAS and compatible with the transferred resources; lack of regard concerning the Social Work Policy by other policies and lack of dialogue with other areas (education, health, etc.); dismantling among the Social Security policies (Health, Social Security, Social Work); difficulty in establishing the difference between the management agency and the CRAS in some municipalities; accreditation of the Comissão Inter-gestora Bipartite (Bipartite Inter-Management Commission) according to notarial procedures; insufficient number of mechanisms and instruments for monitoring and evaluation; difficulties to build indicators to analyze the autonomy and protagonism aspects for family emancipation purposes; incomplete SUAS legal framework: lack of laws to regulate SUAS, its institution is being carried out through norms and directives; coexistence between the new and the old regarding the Policy, expressed by the a guiding view due to the government change and the resistance by the professional; lack of an organized database and unavailability of information systems and Internet in some CRAS; insufficient financial resources compared to the volume of activities; application of penalties towards the Social Work in the budgets, generating less availability of financial resources for the development of actions; weakening of the

management process; lack of social workers in management positions in the municipalities, which express its little political expression in the government management; lack of legal understanding about SUAS; knowledge about the budget is restrict to the manager, the Social Work professionals and users have no knowledge about it; difficulty by the population to recognize the Policy as their right; lack of a standard system in the CRAS; difficulty to translate into practical terms the social and familial central unit advocated by the Policy; difficulty in differentiating the roles of the different agencies that participate in the Policy; lack of understanding about the Policy by other professionals; difficulty in differentiating between the basic services and the special services; the state level fails to assume its role in the SUAS implementation; little engagement by the Policy users, through organized movements, mainly in the SUAS establishment process; technical and political weakness by the Policy operators; little systemization of the practice; insufficient debates with the civil society regarding the Social Work Policy, which results in its little social visibility. **c) Suggestions for the SUAS improvement:** establish the System through laws considering all levels: federal, state and municipal; defend the fight for an increase in the Social Work budget; strengthen the relation with the University within the education, research and continuing education levels; preparation of strategic planning as a management routine; expand the work teams and improve their hiring and work conditions; manage to involve more the state level in the co-financing destined to the expansion of the teams; better define the competences of the CRAS and the management agency; better budgetary definition in terms of financing and co-financing; prepare the municipalities to perform their duties qualifiedly; carry out a systematic professional training process, involving individuals from other policies in this process; implement a human resources policy, especially through civil service tests to enter the career; deploy a monitoring and evaluation system with the professional training of the Policy operators; prepare indicators to evaluate the emancipation level of the families for termination purposes; build instruments to verify the results according to the municipal or regional reality; systematically register the practice, enabling the study about the system, the improvement and strengthening of the Policy; strengthen the relation between the unified command structure and the Social Work Municipal Councils; establish the social surveillance system; create accountability instruments; register structural data regarding the Policy; build a brand, an identity for SUAS in order to create a standard; translate the social and familial central unit, recognizing the needs of the families per territory; advertize the Policy among the different social segments, including via radio and television; strengthen the Management Councils for social control based on the review of the electoral and representation criteria, among others.

Conclusion

Throughout the development of the reflexions made above, some aspects deserve to be highlighted for conclusion purposes:

- Knowledge can be put at the service of the social struggles of the subordinate segments of society even if it was not prepared with the direct participation of the popular classes. The participation of the critical knowledge about the social reality in shaping the consciousness of the subordinate classes is fundamental to enable their struggles and demands, with the purpose of social transformation. Therefore;
- The political function of the evaluation of social programs is the central thread that allows the GAEPP research team to develop a participatory approach to think about and carry out the social investigation, particularly, the evaluation practice.
- The methodological proposal involves professionals responsible for implementing social programs in the knowledge construction process, awakening the commitment to and responsibility for the results of the programs and contributing for their professional training;

- The practice of the restitution of the organized and systematic knowledge enables the involvement of subjects that are part of the program from the definition of the investigation project up to the analysis and complementation of the preliminary study results; The use of open or semi-structured procedures and techniques that foster the participation of subjects is relevant for the methodological proposal;
- The concern is to turn the knowledge construction into a space for critical reflexion on the collective thinking of the subjects about the social programs evaluated and the social reality in which the subjects and programs are part of. It is to contribute to the awareness development about the professional practice, the social reality and the social control practice by the technicians and users of social programs within the scope of the councils for the management of public policies, based on the strengthening of the social struggle for change perspective.

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¹ Popular classes are here referred, despite the conceptual imprecision of the term, as a “useful expression to capture the heterogeneity that is possible in this vast group of people situated in the inferior social and economic levels within the scope of the capitalist system in effect in Brazil” (Silva, 2009, p. 138).

² The subordinate category is analyzed as Gramscian legacy, referring to a diversified and contradictory group of denominated situations; according to Yazbek (1993, p.18), used to name classes, in which the subordinate condition relates to the lack of ruling power, decision-making power, power of creation and management (Almeida como citado em Yazbek, 1993, p. 18).