

## Editorial

# *Educational Evaluation: Groundings and policies of basic and higher education*

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The dossier on Educational Evaluation intends to focus on and foster debates about evaluation, a topic broadly discussed nationally and internationally. Evaluation is incorporated as an impulse for change, pulling away from a tautologic function. Unrestricted to the diagnosis of a situation or condition, its social, political, human, and ethical implications suppose progress in direction of improvements.

In that point of view, distinctions between measurement and evaluation are accentuated. Measurement is a quantitative description of reality and constitutes a moment of evaluation, not its synonym. In evaluation, the emphasis is on the search of information that favors the entire process's comprehension, potentially unchaining actions towards effective improvements.

Educational evaluation's field is marked by the coexistence of regulation and emancipation paradigms, both in basic and higher education institutions, and in related public policies. Those paradigms express two logics (Perrenoud, 1999) or poles (Bonniol; Vial, 2001), which situate control, regulation, and emancipatory evaluation (Saul, 2001). Emancipatory evaluation is "a process of description, analysis, and criticism of a given reality, aiming at its transformation" (Saul, 2001, p.61).

Consonte Cappelletti (2012, p.212):

Theoretical/practical challenges arise when one confronts the two conceptions of educational evaluation. The first conceives evaluation as control, while the second sees the possibilities of involved subjects' emancipation within the evaluation process. Opting for one of them implies on taking outcomes of evaluating practices and the consequences of people's formations into consideration in the evaluation process.

Rescuing theoretical-methodological assumptions grounding evaluation paradigms demands considering its objectivist, subjectivist, and dialectical-critical lines. Objectivism, whose matrix is positivism, fragments reality, assuming the totality can be explained by its parts. Practices are validated by theory. As the scientific statute is determined by objectivity, reality is constructed within the correspondence between judgements and the objective reality. Evaluation involves the verification of goals and aims by

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means of measurement instruments that enable the comparison among obtained results. In other words, evaluating means numerically verifying if goals were attained. Its static character reduces evaluation to controlling results while keeping the expected measure in sight. This selective and disciplinary type of evaluation follows its exclusionary logics, stressing failure and contributing to exclusion and cultural deprivation.

For subjectivism, the value of generalization is questionable. The subject is predominant over the object of knowledge; theory stems from practice and is validated by it. With reality being a subjective phenomenon, the world is reconstructed by the subject by means of his/her perceptions, interests, and values. Evaluation takes on a function of self-regulation and self-control, whose goal is the subject's development.

Both lines do not account for the historical and transitory character of facts. Evaluation is exempt from social values and the individual is not seen as socially contextualized.

In the dialectical-critical paradigm, education is destined to freedom, engaging in the consciousness-raising process through dialogue. Dialogue is education's essence, the subject is unique, a totality in him or herself, who creates his/her own individual and social realities. This concrete view of the being admits knowledge as something unfinished, turning the subject into an active being in a permanent process of construction. The experience of participation contributes for subjects to become agents of social transformation.

In that angle, evaluation must be historically grounded, considering change processes. According to Rodrigues (1995), its benchmark is not external or internal, but the result of a co-construction simultaneous to the development of the evaluation process. Praxis will foster changes and social transformations. One evaluates to know, reflect, dialogue, intervene.

In critical view, the prevailing conception of evaluation refers to its formative potential, aiming to keep up with the process. This function presumes an action of the evaluator towards the development and growth of the evaluated. The dialectical view inserts an essentially ethical dimension into evaluation, one related to the evaluator's commitment to monitor the evaluated subject's development process, intervening only to facilitate his/her overcoming of identified difficulties or to detect aspects to be developed. Interaction is a fundamental aspect of formative evaluation, as it is permeated by dialogue and constitutes a humanizing process that contributes to the evaluated subject's awareness of his/her own development. In spite of rewards or punishments, intrinsic motivation is targeted. Formative evaluation demands a non-punitive and non-exclusionary process, oriented by ethical principles. The exercise of formative evaluation practices favors breaks with exclusionary practices, mitigating inequalities characteristic of Brazilian society. Thus, formative evaluation contributes to cooperation by means of collective actions permeated by the intrinsic recognition of the importance of other people's actions, revealing its ethical- and emancipatory-oriented features, and problematizing democratic education.

The exercise of reflecting on the time, technique, and knowledge while knowing, considering the what of things, what for, how, in whose or what favor, against whom or what, are fundamental requirements of a democratic education able to match the challenges of our times (Freire, 2000, p.102).

Specially in our century, evaluation has been tied to the quality of education. Evaluations intend to improve the quality of basic and higher education, raising questions on the meanings, effects,

implications, and repercussions of public policies created in that sense, as well as considerations on the purpose of those assessments, that might be in service of social segregation, transformation, or justice.

As far as transformation and social justice go, the challenge is to bring up emancipatory evaluation, aiming to produce administrative and pedagogic effects that lay the path to education quality with democratic horizons.

Particularly, evaluation has an epistemological and political-ethical character. The persisting challenge is on the development of an evaluation culture that creates opportunities for reflection and practices committed to humanization and social transformation, requiring an exercise of praxis that enables self-scrutiny as a necessary tool for improvement. However, the development of evaluation cultures depends on going beyond crystallized evaluating practices, leading to problematizations of the theoretical approaches subsiding discussions, even as those discussions are permeated by certainties, uncertainties, and interrogations. As they are socialized, problematizations pervading the field of evaluation might unchain reflections and actions in the spheres of pedagogic and administrative managements.

Reflecting on the paths and displacements in Brazilian educational evaluation, this dossier intends to contribute to educators and researchers focused on that pressing topic. Its five texts, presented in alphabetical order by author, each with its singularities and specificities, embrace educational evaluation groundings and stress issues related to evaluation public policies, inviting the reader to rethink and revisit this decade's conceptions and policies on evaluation.

The first two texts focus on foundations and evaluation policies to basic and higher education. The first, authored by Almerindo Janela Afonso, points to misconceptions and ambiguities in analyses referring to responsabilisation policies. The second, by Domingos Fernandes, articulates evaluation, ethics, and public policies, and evidences how transparency in this relation might contribute to transforming people, institutions, and societies. The two following texts refer to public policies for evaluations of basic education. João Luiz Horta Neto criticizes the movement of Brazilian educational policies towards cognitive tests and points to a path that amplifies evaluation to other dimensions. Marilda Pasqual Schneider and Elton Luiz Nardi present tensions between the Basic Education Development Index and the Articulated Action Plan, both designed to improve the quality of education in Brazilian municipalities. In the last text, Sandra Zákia Sousa presents and discusses propositions and initiatives related to early childhood education present in the national debate.

Henceforth, we expect that the readings of renowned researchers and specialists in the area motivate us as critical readers.

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