

**DOSSIER**

*Quality, learning and systemic assessment: discourses from international organizations for Latin American countries*

**Systemic Assessments: recommendations from International Organizations to Latin American countries*****Avaliações Sistêmicas: recomendações dos Organismos Internacionais para os países latino-americanos***

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**ABSTRACT**

The objective of the paper is to present the political and social context in which systemic assessments have been developing in Latin America. The discussions are approached in two directions: the first one highlights the centrality of systemic assessment in the globally structured agenda, while the second reveals the discourses adopted by International Organizations in the 1990s and 2000s. These two directions converge at the point of focus, namely, quality of education and learning. The methodological procedure adopted includes documentary and bibliographic research, so as to advance the discussion into the 2000s, an area still little explored under such perspective. The theme also favors the collaboration of researchers in the field of education policy, who focus on the analysis of these objects: systemic assessment and the guidelines of international organizations, allowing for various perspectives, which are synthesized in the format of this dossier. International organizations promote the adoption of educational standards of excellence, by means of systemic assessment. That discourse is critically addressed by the literature in the field, which seeks to propose alternatives that break away from the performative logic currently prevailing in most Latin American countries.

*Keywords:* Education Policy. Systemic Assessment. International Organizations.

**RESUMO**

Objetiva-se apresentar o contexto político e social em que as avaliações sistêmicas vêm se desenvolvendo na América Latina. As discussões seguem em duas direções, uma para explicitar a centralidade da avaliação sistêmica na agenda estruturada mundialmente, e outra para desvelar os discursos que os Organismos Internacionais têm assumido nos anos 1990 e 2000. Essas duas direções bifurcam-se no ponto de confluência qualidade da educação e aprendizagem. Adota-se, como procedimento metodológico, a pesquisa documental e bibliográfica, de forma a avançar essa pauta de discussão para o contexto dos anos 2000, ainda pouco

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explorado sob essa vertente. A temática propicia, ainda, a conjunção de pesquisadores da área da política educacional que se dedicam às análises desses objetos: a avaliação sistêmica e as diretrizes dos organismos internacionais, o que possibilita diversos olhares, sintetizados no formato deste dossiê. Observa-se que os organismos internacionais trazem, como discurso, a adoção de padrões educacionais de excelência, por meio da avaliação sistêmica. Esse discurso é denunciado criticamente pela literatura da área, na busca da indicação de propostas que rompam com a lógica performática que hoje prevalece na maioria dos países latino-americanos.

*Palavras-chave:* Política educacional. Avaliação Sistêmica. Organismos Internacionais.

## Introduction

The transition from the 1990s to the 2000s is relevant to understand the changes observed in the International Organizations' discourse on the priorities for education. The milestones of the period were the world education conferences held in Jomtien in 1990 and in Dakar, in the 2000s. In the first one, the main recommendation to countries was to invest in the universal access to basic education, since illiteracy rates represented major obstacles to the development of capitalism. In Dakar, the International Organizations indicated that the universalization goals were very positive, but learning was still a problem. They claimed, at that time, that learning should be the main objective of education policies for the new millennium, including the UNESCO slogan referring to lifelong learning as a central objective of their future actions. Still in the 1990s, external assessment policies had great relevance in Latin American countries, mainly due to the technical-instrumental rationality of the neoliberalism that was being installed in the region. Countries such as Chile and Colombia took the lead in the process and massively implemented assessments for all grades of primary and secondary education. Other countries, such as Brazil, advanced such policies gradually and continuously, and thus reached the 2000s with robust and complex assessment systems.

The context, associated with the relationship established between learning and teaching quality, has caused external assessments to be a central policy for the countries of the region. The growing need to link education quality to learning measurement led, for example, to the creation of programs such as the Basic Education Development Index, in Brazil, or the Provas Saber, in Colombia. UNESCO created a laboratory which is exclusively dedicated to external assessment in Latin America, called Laboratorio Latinoamericano de Evaluación de la Calidad de la Educación (LLECE). The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) created an assessment tool for the central countries, entitled Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). The countries of the region made an effort to participate in the assessments on a voluntary basis, in order to have comparative terms with the education of the central countries.

We have therefore experienced the growth in the role of the State as an assessor (Afonso, 2009), with assessment as one of the structuring pillars of the new forms of regulating education in the current stage of capitalism development. The last three decades have witnessed the adoption of quasi-market mechanisms in education, from which the remodeling of the State's role in the conduct of public policies and the performance of schools and education networks in the teaching and

learning processes, aimed at the preparation for external assessments, is materialized. Considering the centrality assumed by assessments to reference the quality of the region's educational systems, assessment policies were based on the logic of private management, thus emphasizing the results and products of the educational systems. Afonso (2009) calls this new logic as social Darwinism, whose main control and regulation tool is assessment.

International Organizations have heavily invested in the theoretical production on the positive results of assessments. They adopt success stories as *modus operandi*. They consider the establishment of assessments in countries such as Mexico, Chile, Costa Rica and Colombia as examples that should be followed by the other Latin American countries. In view of this immense theoretical production disseminated by International Organizations, critical productions on the subject should be urgently elaborated and published. Our objective, in this paper, is to present the political and social context in which external assessments have been developing in the region. We begin with the presentation of what has been called the international agenda for education (Akkari, 2011; 2017; Dale 2004; Santos *et al.*, 2020) and the centrality that International Organizations play in the context. We go on to discuss the place of systemic assessment in the agenda and how the papers that make up this dossier are located in the conjuncture described.

## **The internationalization of education and the centrality of International Organizations**

The internationalization of education is initially triggered by the process called by Chesnais (1996) as the globalization of capital. As the result of the longest and most uninterrupted phase of capital accumulation since the beginning of the twentieth century and processes of liberalization, privatization, deregulation of labor and dismantling of the social rights accumulated by the working class, the movement of globalization of capital impacts all aspects of social life. After all, International Organizations have been playing the role as the true representatives of the capital (Santos, 2014), with a central position in the dissemination of neoliberal economic and political foundations (Leher, 1999; 1998).

Strictly speaking, in the field of education, the discourse resulting from international economic rearrangements has produced tensions between the globalized context and the local dimensions, which are valued in the field of public education policies. In other words, under the discourse of globalization, the adoption of common practices aimed at improving the educational field is defended. As a consequence, an agenda for education is being built, with assumptions and contents that are similar in different national contexts. Practices and discourses considered efficient and effective are globalized; it is announced that the supposed problems in the quality of schools would reside in the way they carry out their activities. It is not, however, a matter of seeking palliative forms that establish comparable standards rather than answers to the problems and how they are originated.

Leher (1999) declares that it is no longer news that International Organizations, given the contradictions generated by the crisis of capitalism and their deliberate actions to meet political,

economic, social and cultural demands, are [... devastating the economy of peripheral countries]<sup>1</sup> (Leher, 1999, p. 19). The author explains that the action of several countries' representatives is witnessed in a very resourceful way, thus impacting fundamental economic decisions.

Still on the relationship between the economic structure and the International Organizations' actions, Mota Júnior and Maués (2014) assert:

For about two decades, multilateral organizations such as the World Bank (WB), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) have guided education policies in peripheral countries, with the aim of responding, within the limits of the educational field and its possibilities of reach, to the structural capitalism crisis in the 1970s, since education came to be seen not only as an important economic frontier to be explored, but also due to its functionality, for major capitalists, in forming a new generation of workers who would be able adapt, in terms of knowledge and techniques, to the new productive and organizational demands of a context marked by the restructuring of productive processes (crisis of Fordism and the advent of the Toyotism) and by a strong crisis in the capitalist State<sup>2</sup> (Mota Júnior; Maués, 2014, p. 1139).

The excerpt informs the material field in which the actions orchestrated by the International Organizations are produced. We may observe that the ultimate objectives are the development of capitalism, the overcoming of its crises, and the use of education as a form of human capital development (Frigotto, 2000).

Akkari (2011) poses a very provocative questioning about the real existence, within the scenario of internationalization, of purely national policies. The answer seems to indicate the impossibility of thinking of national policies free from some international interference, especially from the recommendations of International Organizations. The fact that there have been international interferences in national policies does not mean, according to the author, that they are the same and operate in the same intensity in every country. The national subsumption to the international decisions has generated, for Akkari, a certain relinquishment from [... the decision-making process related to Education at global (international) and local (subnational, regional) levels, thus reducing the power of the national State]<sup>3</sup> (Akkari, 2011, p. 15).

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<sup>1</sup> "... devastando a economia dos países periféricos" (Leher, 1999, p. 19, translated from Portuguese into English).

<sup>2</sup> "Há cerca de duas décadas, organismos multilaterais como o Banco Mundial (BM), a Organização das Nações Unidas para a Educação, a Ciência e a Cultura (UNESCO), a Organização Mundial de Comércio (OMC) e a Organização para Cooperação e o Desenvolvimento Econômico (OCDE) têm orientado as políticas educacionais nos países periféricos com o objetivo de responder, dentro dos limites do campo educacional e de sua possibilidade de alcance, à crise estrutural do capitalismo desencadeada nos anos de 1970, uma vez que a educação passou a ser vista não somente como uma importante fronteira econômica a ser explorada, mas também por sua funcionalidade aos grandes capitalistas em formar uma nova geração de trabalhadores que pudessem se adequar, em termos de conhecimentos e técnicas, às novas exigências produtivas e organizacionais de um contexto marcado pela reestruturação dos processos produtivos (crise do fordismo e advento do toyotismo) e por uma forte crise no Estado capitalista" (Mota Júnior; Maués, 2014, p. 1139, translated from Portuguese into English).

<sup>3</sup> "... da tomada de decisão em Educação nos níveis global (internacional) e local (subnacional, regional), reduzindo, assim o poder do Estado nacional." (Akkari, 2011, p. 15, translated from Portuguese into English).

One of the strongest characteristics of internationalization policies is the formation of consensus. As Gramsci (2011) points out, while analyzing the directivity strategies used by the ruling class to maintain the power, consensus is fundamental, as it does not use force (coercion), but convincing. The subaltern classes are convinced that the societal project proposed by the dominant class is the most appropriate. That is why the activities related to different social areas, such as education, are usually regarded as immutable realities. Through persuasion, Nation-States prepare changes in the educational legislative field that would deprive them of their prerogatives to make decisions and conduct actions both in this and in other fields.

In order to propagate consensus regarding an international standard of what quality education is expected to be, International Organizations use the strategy of disseminating good practices, by comparing countries. In this comparison, as there seem to be both winners and losers (Akkari, 2011), they succeed in establishing a competitive climate that makes losers act to meet the expectations and criteria that lead winners to that position. At the heart of International Organizations' proposals to reform the Nation-States were the emphasis on basic education, the decentralization of management, the accountability of schools and the centralization of school assessments. Taking assessments as an example, we observe the adoption of systemic assessments impacting on schools. In addition to international assessments, Nation-States prepare their own assessments following the principles of international assessments, which are considered models of efficiency, effectiveness, and success. However, the assessments carried out in national contexts are unfolded into other district/municipal/regional assessments, depending on each country's political organization.

The comparison among countries, embraced to demonstrate who would adopt education policies that 'transform' their practice, has been causing greater permeability to external influences and less capacity to regulate them (Akkari, 2011). As a result, some concepts have become increasingly constant in the international educational scenario: indispensable adaptation to economic globalization; decentralization; privatization of education; obligation of results; accountability; good governance; education quality; curricular reforms; and teacher professionalization.

The papers in this dossier portray, in a very convincing way, the materialization of the international agenda in Latin America. The concepts listed, incorporated into the practice of most Latin American countries, are dealt with in the 14 papers of the dossier, as we will see later on.

## **Systemic assessments within the internationalization of education**

Systemic assessments have occupied a central role in the structured global public agenda for over 30 years. The process, however, is not a linear movement. Throughout that period, changes in its logic may be noted, with the reorganization of different generations of assessment and models (Bonamino; Sousa, 2012).

This intricate movement, added to the international organizations' guidelines, imbricates nuances favorable to the neoliberal logic and to the accountability mechanisms of educational agents, especially teachers and, consequently, the unaccountability mechanisms related to the public agencies that finance education (Real; Conceição, 2024). This justifies the adherence and

pulverization of assessment systems in the various countries and, internally, at the different levels of the federation, which are interconnected with the characteristics of the processes of financial globalization, neoliberal measures, and international organizations' guidelines.

The movement also exposes complexities that must be understood and analyzed from their new materializations, as such systems continue to be implemented and restructured, with no indication of extinction, at least for the next few years. Examples of the restructuring process are: the formulation of baby PISA (Lima, 2023); the new Basic Education Assessment System (SAEB), which in Brazil includes early childhood education (Pimenta; Sousa; Flores, 2021); and the inclusion of students with special educational needs in the *Sistema de Medición de la Calidad de la Educación* (SIMCE), with the creation of contradictory inclusive policies in Chile (Valdés, Oyarzun; 2023).

The very concept that involves assessment, in this circumstance, is an issue inserted in the educational arena. After all, educational assessment, besides the prerogatives of the teaching work, has been incorporated in the public agenda, when the intention was to improve the education quality, justified as a form of accountability, that is, the way the State keeps society informed about its actions (Afonso, 2009).

It is remarkable how systemic assessment is assimilated by society by means of processes that may simplify the conceptualization of quality by means of concrete numerical indications, formalized in scores understandable to the general public (Oliveira; Sousa; Alavarse, 2011), and the intensification and sophistication of the systemic assessment results dissemination processes (Carvalho, 2016). Among such processes is the use of the media, which facilitates the access to information, in advertisements and journalistic articles (Dias; Mascia, 2022), by choosing a language that is intended for anyone, not just for technicians and/or researchers.

In view of the conceptual issue, the terms used to define the assessment dimension, coordinated by government agencies and monitored by the State, with the application of tests/examinations as a characteristic, are: large-scale assessment (Sousa, 2014); standardized or parameterized assessment (Casassus, 2009); external assessment (Machado; Alavarse, 2014; Cáceres, 2012); assessment by performance (Almeida, 2015); and systemic assessment (Coelho, 2008), among others. In this text, we have chosen 'systemic assessment', due to the lack of uniformity in the area, but, above all, to better represent its declared objectives, in order to identify the quality of the set of schools and institution networks, organized in the form of educational systems.

The literature (Bauer; Alavarse; Oliveira, 2015; Valdés; Oyarzun, 2023) on the theme arouses considerations that explain the collateral effects of the ongoing assessment in the educational system, such as curriculum standardization; school classification and ranking; the expansion of the promotion of intra-school inequalities; the precarious definition of quality as students' performance; and teachers' accountability for poor results, among other effects. However, its potential to imprint quality is not disregarded (Oliveira; Sousa; Alavarse, 2011).

Therefore, the great issue that permeates the considerations on the assessment system is to conceive assessment processes based on the systems in place which, in fact, expand the understanding of quality, beyond the reductionist logic of obtaining good results in standardized tests. It is assumed that the assessment is not neutral. The challenge is detailed by Sousa (2014, p. 415):



Seeking assessment proposals that contribute to the realization of a quality notion that is not restricted to the results of tests applied in large-scale assessments is a challenge that is posed to those who seek the democratization of education, a commitment that demands a greater scope in the analysis of the educational reality, by including, in a related way, initiatives from the various governmental bodies, as well as shared relationships.<sup>4</sup>

We admit that assessments may potentially contribute to quality improvement, when we think about the years of Latin American experience with the adoption of assessment practices that involve international systems and, notably, the systems developed by the Nation-States in the region.

These experiences, portrayed in the literature in the area here mentioned, inform study objects and themes that require a scientific look, when it comes to improving the current assessment policy, based on the assumption that the education quality lies in enabling learning for all. Such objects and themes are related to the following aspects: the curriculum; the influences of international organizations, especially the World Bank, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the OECD; the current assessment practices in the region; the concepts that involve the trinomial assessment-quality-learning; assessment as a mechanism for school and educational management. In summary, it is a matter of rethinking the assessment systems aimed at achieving an education with which everyone learns, which, implicitly, contributes to a more democratic and emancipatory aspect of the educational systems.

The present proposal, by involving the groups of texts that make up this dossier, seeks to shed light on the relationship assessment-quality-learning, with the intention to broaden the debate and the considerations, especially by revealing the changes in the international organizations' discourse over time, as well as discussing the possibilities indicated by the assessment practices in Latin American countries.

In summary, the assessment of the education quality is discussed in this paper, particularly when it highlights its processes and the uses regarding systemic assessments. Thus, the arguments included here seek more than answers. They seek to present contributions to the area, in order to rethink the ongoing process.

## **What the papers say: visions, conceptions, and recommendations for assessments in different contexts**

This paper is an introduction to a topic of great relevance to the region's educational systems. It aims at unveiling the scenario where assessment policies are developed in different contexts in Latin America. We emphasize that the process of internationalization of education has been paved under the discourse of the adoption of educational standards of excellence. We also underline that the papers in this dossier are, at the same time, an invitation to deepen the implications of

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<sup>4</sup> Buscar propostas avaliativas que concorram para a concretização de uma noção de qualidade que não se restrinja aos resultados de provas aplicadas por meio de avaliações em larga escala é um desafio que se coloca para aqueles que buscam a democratização do ensino, compromisso este que supõe maior abrangência na análise da realidade educacional, contemplando de modo relacionado iniciativas das diversas instâncias governamentais, e também relações compartilhadas. (Translated from Portuguese into English).

the discourse on the school contexts in the region and a way of denouncing the damage that such incorporation has brought to the adoption of a critical assessment that may break with the market and performance logic of the assessment systems, currently seen in most Latin American countries.

We thus organized the texts into four groups: the first group includes those papers that discuss systemic assessment, by problematizing concepts and practices from a critical perspective, regarding the directions that the practice has taken in Latin America. The texts in second group address the exam PISA, applied by the OECD, and emphasize its weaknesses and its implications for the school management and the teaching work. Group three, on the other hand, analyzes, in a more specific way, the recommendations of the World Bank and UNESCO for the education in Latin American countries. The fourth group brings more localized discussions (municipal or national) on curricular reduction and the place of systemic assessments in teachers' initial formation. This last group is about more specific cases in Latin American countries.

### ***Systemic assessment: problematizing concepts and practices from a critical perspective***

Systemic assessment is part, as already mentioned, of a global agenda and, therefore, is intertwined in a very dynamic and complex web of actors and practices involving education. This sub-theme approaches the broad aspects of systemic assessment, such as the abuse of the quantitative perspective, which makes it a metric unrelated to the rest of the teaching and learning process. This way, assessment has been gaining importance in the international scenario and interfering in educational practices, from local to global levels. This assessment perspective observes the relationship between quality and learning, by demonstrating that the two concepts are interconnected with assessment. In the research work denominated "*Trajetórias desde o global ao local em políticas de avaliação educacional na América Latina: um estudo internacional em rede*", we discuss how the concepts of learning and quality have been incorporated into assessment, according to Multilateral Organizations' recommendations. As a result, in this first unit, we briefly point out how assessment has been addressed from a conceptual point of view.

The first text, by Ana Claudia Dantas Cavalcanti and Milene Dias Amorim, called "The global agenda composed by international organizations: education in the composition of the public and the private", is the result of a network investigation entitled "*Trajetórias desde o global ao local em políticas de avaliação educacional na América Latina: um estudo internacional em rede*", whose object is the analysis of documents from international organizations for assessment. The authors' text reveals, based on the results of the research, that the recommendations of the World Bank, UNESCO, and OECD seek to link the concepts of learning and education quality to assessment, by meeting the objectives of market-oriented education.

The second text, "Large scale assessment and establishment of educational goals and indicators: uses and abuses of quantophobia", by Adriana Bauer, problematizes the emphasis given, in Brazilian municipalities, to the quantitative aspects of student performance, measured by indicators and averages of proficiency, to the detriment of assessments focused on constructive aspects, with a pedagogical, rather than punitive, meaning of the data. The author advocates that



the establishment of assessments should consider process indicators that are associated, or not, with the achievement of goals. After exposing a historical overview of systemic assessments in Brazil, Bauer demonstrates how systemic assessments have been dealt with in Brazilian municipalities and concludes on the need to densify the technical and political-pedagogical debate on the uses of assessment results and educational indicators for educational planning and propositions of public education policies.

The text titled “The World Bank’s Human Capital Project for Latin America and the Caribbean: Learning and Educational evaluation” by Cristiane Machado, Ocimar Munhoz Alavarse, and Raíssa de Oliveira Chappaz, explores how the notion of quality is shaped by the results of school learning as evidenced through assessments. The authors start with the international assessments in which Brazil participates, namely: the Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study (ERCE); Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS); Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA); and Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS).

### ***The centrality of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and its implications***

The OECD is one of the most influential organizations in terms of recommending education policies to Latin American countries. One of its main strategies is the creation of programs, projects, and proposals that directly impact school practice. Perhaps the most important program for the educational field is PISA, due to its capacity for regulation, policy formation, knowledge mediation and action as an agent in the internationalization of education. Hence, its actions contribute to the homogenization of education policies.

Considering the centrality that the organization assumes in the Latin American scenario, this section problematizes its performance and demonstrates its weaknesses as a tool for educational planning.

The first paper in this section, “Weaknesses in PISA, a global protagonist in educational policies”, was written by João Horta Neto. The author highlights the behavior of national and international external assessments over the last 30 years. He indicates that the directions taken by such assessments have not contributed to the strengthening of a perspective concerned with pedagogical results capable of informing schools and school systems about their problems and difficulties. The texts referring to cognitive tests, according to the author, go beyond the information about what is being measured; they become paths that countries must follow if they want to get closer to the results of the core countries that make up the Organization. This creates a real competition among those countries, as that intend to demonstrate that they are better than others.

We then comment on the paper by Rosimar Serena Siqueira Esquinsani and Carmem Lúcia Albrecht da Silveira, “The national education management through the protagonism of large-scale assessments of Pisa”. Its objective is to identify the actions that express the protagonism of International Organizations in Brazilian educational management, disclosed in media documents, in order to meet the demands of the PISA results. The text accentuates the important role of media texts

in the dissemination of an alleged protagonism of International Organizations in the management of national education. According to the authors, such texts disclose the alleged existence of local commitments to school management at international level, especially for the improvement of education quality indicators. They also highlight the role of PISA in directing school management practices, with media channels having a great responsibility in the naturalization of such practices as school ranking.

The third and last text of the section analyzes what are and how often teachers in Brazil, Chile, Panama, Peru, and the Dominican Republic use methods to assess the learning of their students, in addition to PISA. Written by Ronildo Stieg, Denilson Junio Marques Soares and Wagner dos Santos, the text “Assessment methods for learning: what do teachers from Latin American countries show in the PISA 2018 contextual questionnaire?” is an important call for the need to think about assessments that consider co-assessment and shared assessment, to the detriment of the almost exclusive use of hetero-assessment, present in the PISA assessment models. Despite the fact that the text points out positive aspects of PISA, such as its potential application as a predictive instrument of students’ abilities in Mathematics, Reading, and Science, the authors argue that PISA has contributed to the construction of narratives that both qualify and disqualify education. They explain that, when assessment focuses only on accountability and the creation of rankings, its ability is restricted to guiding educational planning. They conclude that, even considering the particularities of the countries surveyed, the trend is the priority use of hetero-assessment, leaving little room for peer assessments and shared assessments.

### ***World Bank’s and UNESCO’s recommendations for the assessment in Latin American countries***

International Organizations are fundamental to understanding the internationalization of education process and the transformation of assessment into a tool for controlling and inducing managerial practices. Especially since the 1990s, when the world education meetings were initially held (the first one took place in Jomtien, Thailand, the second in Dakar, Senegal, and the third in Incheon, South Korea), the recommendations of International Organizations have greatly influenced the choices and planning of the countries’ education policies. Functioning as true representatives of the capital, these organizations recommend the adoption of managerial practices aimed at a light education, management based on numbers, and assessments with a view to performativity.

The authors of the first text in the subsection are Ireni Marilene Zago Figueiredo, Simone Sandri and Dhyovana Guerra. “The World Bank’s Human Capital Project for Latin America and the Caribbean: Learning and Educational evaluation” aims to analyze the World Bank’s recommendations to Latin America and the Caribbean, in view of the project for the formation of human capital based on the educational dimensions of learning and assessment. The study surveyed the period of the Covid-19 pandemic. Taking assessment, learning, and human capital as categories of analysis, the authors conclude that the formation project based on the perspective of human capital, carried out by the Bank, is inserted into the movement of neoliberal economic reforms and policies that resort

to arguments capable of mobilizing consensus, such as economic growth, sustainable and inclusive development, reduction of poverty rates, and increase in learning levels.

The second text, which also approaches the World Bank's actions, is entitled "The World Bank Group in the field of higher education in Latin America: an analysis of dissertations and theses published in Brazil on the topic". Thiago Rodrigo Fernandes da Silva Santos discusses how theses and dissertations have been addressing the World Bank's actions in the field of Higher Education in Latin America. The results reveal the need for further research, from a theoretical-political point of view, and the lack of depth on how the agreements between the Bank and the countries of the region occur. The author believes that it is relevant to consider that the World Bank's actions take place in a consensual manner. That is, rather than imposing, the Bank succeeds in convincing countries to trust the content of its recommendations.

The following paper, called "World Bank and national policies: connections in basic school management after the 2000s", by Aline Bettiolo dos Santos and Elton Luiz Nardi, analyzes the relationships between Brazilian basic education management policies from 2010 to 2018 with the World Bank's recommendations, which are guided by regulation by results. The authors explain that the relations between the Bank's recommendations and the Brazilian education management policies are articulated from the concept of quality, which is portrayed in a generic way and is almost always associated with assessment and intertwined by the public-private perspective. The conclusions indicate a discourse that seeks to align general competencies, curricula, teacher formation, and teaching materials. They also comment on the existence of a *modus operandi* adopted by the Bank which, in the form of advice, produces documents to build consensus on the development of learning as a result of the performance in standardized assessments, making it possible for a mode of regulation based on the production of results. The authors emphasize that another consequence of the relationship studied is the association between management by results and school management.

The fourth paper included in the section was written by Mariano Moura Melgarejo and Mariléia Maria da Silva: "REDUCA as a Seeder of Consensus in Latin America: Evaluation, Standardization, and Subordination". By considering the Latin American Network of Civil Society Organizations for Education (REDUCA), the authors analyze the constitution of social networks and their diffusion by International Organizations to legitimize the capital's consensual political agenda. REDUCA is made up of different Private Hegemony Apparatuses, from 15 countries in the region. It has been favoring the participation of the private sector in the provision and management of public education and in the application of systemic assessments as generators of consensus on the formation of an educational proposal based on the regulation of the teaching work. The authors conclude that the purpose of the Network's strategies is the production of hegemony; assessment is used as a tool to produce a competitive and consensual environment in schools.

The last paper in the section is "Las prescripciones de la UNESCO en los Informes Mundiales sobre el Aprendizaje y la Educación: un análisis sobre "Calidad" y "Evaluación" para la Educación de Jóvenes y Adultos", by Juliana Fátima Serraglio Pasini, Márcia Cossetin and Margarete Chimiloski Dolla. They list the recommendations issued by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and examine the interrelations between quality and assessment. The authors demonstrate that these concepts are articulated with the slogan Lifelong Learning, widely

disseminated in UNESCO documents. From a non-historical perspective, assessment is associated with the concept of quality, moving away from economic and political aspects which, according to the authors, are determinant for current educational conditions. Such a perspective ends up by associating the concept of assessment with the expansion of actions aimed at the regulation, control, and monitoring of education.

### **External assessments in national contexts**

This subsection comprises assessments in specific situations in Latin America. This dossier aims, as shown in its organization, to display an analytical panorama, with different contexts: document production, the influence of different agents in the production, and its repercussions in practice. This subsection is inserted in the last aspect just mentioned, as it investigates how assessment policies are addressed nationwide.

The first paper, named “Large-scale assessments in the teachers’ pre-service education in Brazil: what space do they occupy?” by Paulo Sérgio Garcia and Nonato Assis de Miranda, brings an important examination of the place that discussions about systemic assessments occupy in teaching degree courses in different Brazilian regions. The study of the contents worked and discussed in the initial teacher formation courses reveals the scarcity of discussions and the possible absence of a deeper understanding of the theme by future teachers, making it difficult to analyze the technical and ideological uses of systemic assessments for the school environment.

In the second paper, “Evaluación de la práctica pedagógica en el contexto de la educación superior em Colombia”, Tomás Sánchez-Amaya, Luisa Carlota Santana-Gaitán and Martha Janet Velasco Forero investigate the discourses on systemic assessment in initial teacher formation courses in higher education public institutions in Colombia. As in the first paper of this subsection, the focus is to understand the place that assessment occupies in initial teacher formation courses, but with special attention to what is understood by assessment in such courses. The authors conclude that there is a polyphony of norms, practices, processes, scenarios, situations, instruments, and inputs, and that different subjects also put these experiences into action, from the perspective of the exercise of the future professional work of the teachers under formation.

The last text in the section, “Explorando las políticas de evaluación en la Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires: experiencias y desarrollo institucional (2007-2019)”, by Lucrecia Rodrigo, explores the public assessment policies formulated for the city of Buenos Aires, Argentina, from 2007 to 2019. The authors examine the creation of a systemic assessment system and the adoption, by the Ministry of Education, of a supervision role in the process. They identify the characteristics assumed by various components of this mechanism and the perspectives embraced by the management, which gives them meaning. Specifically, in the case of assessment, the option for a system causes significant changes, with the application of performance tests focused on results. Instead of serving as a planning tool, they meet the global logic of accountability, decentralization, and managerial management.

## Some considerations

After over 30 years since the first systemic assessments began to occupy a central place in school systems, we have observed adherence to a managerial vision for the school. Assessment assumes such centrality in the managerial logic that its meaning is inverted; it ceases to be a planning tool to become an inducer of actions and practices. The International Organizations are mainly responsible for part of such change. As we have disclosed in this dossier, they drastically influence the functioning of education in Latin American countries.

By exposing the papers in such a way for the reader to follow the trajectory of assessment policies, from the general to the most particular aspects, the dossier demonstrates the capillarity of International Organizations, whose strategies defend the adoption of educational standards of excellence, by means systemic assessment. This discourse is critically denounced by the literature in the area, in the search for proposals that break with the performative logic currently prevailing in most Latin American countries.

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