Assessment of teacher training in the Brazilian educational context

Avaliação na formação de professores no contexto educacional brasileiro

Evaluación en la formación del profesorado en el contexto educativo brasileño

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Abstract

Evaluation is intrinsic to the pedagogical process and it is related to the use of particular instruments, models and interpretations of the political and social impacts of Education in the Brazilian context. Teacher training is presented here as a focal point in achieving better learning outcomes among pupils. Understanding the importance of these themes in current discussions and based on related legal documents and studies, the article aims to discuss the demands, gaps and contributions of evaluation and assessment in the initial and continuing education of teachers in the context of Brazilian education. In order to accomplish this

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objective, a documental research of national and international legal frameworks was conducted. We identified the demands, disparities and lacunae in the educational assessment, first in the initial and then in the continuing education of teachers, as well as considering that the assessment can contribute to Education in several facets of the Brazilian reality.

**Keywords:** Educational Evaluation. Initial training. Continuing training.

**Resumo**

O ato de avaliar é inerente ao processo pedagógico e está relacionado ao uso de instrumentos, modelos e interpretações dos impactos políticos e sociais da Educação no contexto brasileiro. A formação de professores tem sido apresentada como temática central para alcançar melhores resultados de aprendizagem. Compreendendo a importância desses temas nas discussões atuais e tendo como embasamento documentos legais e estudos sobre esses temas, o artigo tem o objetivo de discutir as demandas, lacunas e contribuições da avaliação na formação inicial e continuada de professores no contexto educacional brasileiro. Para responder esse objetivo, foi realizada uma pesquisa documental, com marcos legais, de âmbito nacional e internacional. Identificamos demandas e lacunas da avaliação educacional na formação inicial e continuada dos professores, bem como consideramos que a avaliação pode contribuir com a Educação em diversos aspectos voltados à realidade brasileira.

**Palavras-chave:** Avaliação educacional. Formação inicial. Formação continuada.

**Resumen**

El acto de evaluar es inherente al proceso pedagógico y está relacionado con el uso de instrumentos, modelos e interpretaciones de los impactos políticos y sociales de la educación en el contexto brasileño. La formación del profesorado se ha presentado como un tema central para lograr mejores resultados de aprendizaje. Entendiendo la importancia de estos temas en las discusiones actuales y basado en documentos legales y estudios sobre estos temas, el artículo tiene como objetivo discutir las demandas, las brechas y las contribuciones de la evaluación en la formación inicial y continua de los profesores en el contexto educativo brasileño. Para responder a este objetivo, se realizó una investigación documental, con marcos legales, de alcance nacional e internacional. Identificamos demandas y brechas en la evaluación educativa en la educación inicial y continua de los docentes, así como consideramos que la evaluación puede contribuir a la educación en varios aspectos relacionados con la realidad brasileña.

**Palabras clave:** Evaluación Educacional. Formación Inicial. Formación Continuada.
Introduction

The act of evaluating is inherent to the pedagogical process and is related to the use of well-developed instruments, adequate models and applicable interpretations of the political and social impacts of Education in the Brazilian context (VIANNA, 2000; PONTES JUNIOR et al., 2016). In olden times, teachers already used some processes to evaluate students, but without a specific method. In the nineteenth century, educational systems began to establish themselves and in that period, there began tests with scores to corroborate specific courses (ESCORZA, 2003).

From ancient times to the present, there have been great changes in educational systems, and consequently in the evaluations that deal with education too. Thus, competency in evaluating teaching and teacher performance is fundamental in the assessment of the quality of education. It is also essential in tracing government’s accountability to society regarding investments in activities, people and financing in education and the political measures which permeate the obtained results (BAUER; ALAVARSE; OLIVEIRA, 2015).

It is widely appreciated that improving the quality of education involves several factors. In current debates, teacher education has been presented as a central theme to achieve better learning results. The teacher training process is continuous, with the initial part of the training being the moment when the subject is trained as a teacher and continued training must be thought out according to the demands that arise in schools, with the aim to respond to the challenges of society (MORORÓ, 2017; JUNGES, KETZER, OLIVEIRA, 2018; GUEDES, 2019).

Among the demands that arise in the learning institutions are assessments, whether specific to learning or systems. These are pivotal and should be developed from the initial, through to the continuing training and education of teachers.

In this initial analysis, we investigated whether teachers are prepared to employ assessment methods in the educational context, at first as students and later as teachers. We had few opportunities to explore experiences related to educational assessment in the initial and continuing training courses we went through.
In the face of personal and professional experiences and the characteristics of Brazil's education systems, the following questions arise: Do teachers receive initial or continuous training aimed at assessment? How does this training occur? What are the gaps that exist in this process?

Thus, understanding the importance of these topics in ongoing discussions about teacher training, a brief overview will be provided regarding the demands, gaps and contributions of evaluation in the initial and continuing education of teachers in the Brazilian educational context. To this end, a desk research will be carried out with the following national and international legal frameworks: National Education Guidelines and Bases Law (LDB), National Education Plan (PNE), Resolution No. 2 of 2015, Common National Curricular Base (BNCC), Common National Basis for Basic Education Teacher Training, Reports of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the UNESCO Incheon World Education Forum Policy Development Guide for teachers.

We chose these documents because they are both primary and secondary material, from reliable, contemporary sources and have important information for discussion in the Brazilian context, meeting the characteristics and criteria of desk research (MARCONI; LAKATOS, 2003; FLICK, 2009). These documents fit well as sources for this research due to the following pertinent reasons: they are highly representative of the Brazilian education system; the sources of the documents are experts, from legal to scientific, therefore they provide reliable insights in the field under study; the information proffered by the documents is up to date; the coverage is also wide, from international reports, to legal declarations and national or international benchmarks of teacher training.

The above mentioned documents therefore aptly form the basis for arguments and points raised in the discussion of the theme of assessment of teacher training in the Brazilian education context.
Teacher training and educational evaluation in Brazil

Carneiro (2015) notes in the Law No. 9,394 of 1996, known as the National Education Guidelines and Bases Law (LDB) in Item VI, Article 62, which deals with teacher training at a higher level that, the professional referred to in this article is a teacher, who must be qualified to teach, being subject to specific knowledge for such practice, and cannot be a professional from other areas.

In relation to the specific knowledge concerning the teaching profession, Tardif (2002) submits the notion of plurality, which maintains that knowledge for teaching is formed by and from different sources, such as in training institutions, in curricula and in daily practice.

Returning to the Law mentioned above, in Article 9, item VI, the national process of evaluation of school performance in the different schools is guaranteed, in a regime of collaboration between the systems of the Union, State and Municipality. This process, according to Carneiro (2015) is a way of gauging public investment in education and the collective effort articulated by all those involved in the system. In article 24 of the same Law, rules of organization of the elementary and secondary levels are dealt with, item V being specific for the criteria of verification of school performance and specifically about assessment in paragraph (a). The criteria related to the theme are evaluation as a continuous and cumulative process that includes quantitative and qualitative variables. In this regard, Carneiro (2015) submits that when thinking about criteria, the Law establishes pedagogical processes that must be organized and adhered to in a consistent way when it comes to evaluation.

Articles 61 and 62 address teacher training as an operative of Basic Education that takes place at a higher level and in collaboration with government bodies, whether initial or continued. However, it does not specify what should be covered by such training.

At the time that the LDB was enacted in Brazil, there already existed an evaluation system called the Basic Education Assessment System (SAEB) that was created in 1991, and it was based on a sample of students from the country,
covering Elementary and Secondary Education. The above-mentioned System influenced the creation of evaluation systems in the states and municipalities.

As discussions on the topic progressed, a Basic Education indicator called the Basic Education Development Index (IDEB) was created in 2007. It was made up by the school flow rates and the performance averages in national assessments. The System, together with IDEB, contributed to the development of scales and the interpretation of data generated by administrators and teachers, among other purposes. This is one of the demands to be worked on in the training courses.

The National Education Plan (PNE) was sanctioned in 2014, with goals devised to be guaranteed by 2024. Its main objective was to articulate investments in a collaborative regime between the Union, states and municipalities in order to improve the country’s quality of education. Among its propositions, goal 15 of the document deals with the guarantee of article 61 of the LDB, so that it takes place among the authorities and within one year from the validity of the document.

Another relevant document in teacher training discussions is Resolution No. 2 of 2015, which sets out the National Curriculum Guidelines (DCN) for higher education and further education. In this document, Article 1 defines points that must be observed in policies, management and training programs, taking as an example the processes of evaluation and regulation of the education institutions that promote such training.

Among the evaluation and regulation processes of the mentioned institutions, it is worth mentioning the National Exam of Student Performance (Enade), which aims to analyze the level of learning of graduating students vis-a-vis the subject matter prescribed in the curricular guidelines of each course, including didactic-pedagogical and learning evaluation content.

In recent years, several authors from different areas have been devoted to distinguishing the performance of graduates in the basic content of their initial training (SANTOS NETO, DANTAS, MACHADO, 2017; SILVA, ROCHA, FAGUNDES, 2017; SOUSA et al., 2017; MOIMAZ et al., 2018; LOPES et al., 2019).

In the last Enade of 2017, in which 16 undergraduate courses were evaluated, only 5 presented at least 1 question about educational evaluation in their specific
tests. In other words, only 31% of the courses had questions to test the knowledge about educational evaluation of the graduates of the courses.

Resolution No. 2 of 2015, brought forward points such as the organization and detailing of the workload of initial teacher training; the alignment of the national common basis with teacher training; the knowledge and skills that training courses should promote; the structure and curricula of the courses, among other important points.

Many advances were brought by the Resolution; however the measures provided for were still in progress, when a new document on the matter was established, and there was not enough time for the proposals to be put into practice, especially to analyze the advances and underlying difficulties of the propositions, which could potentially bring grants for possible new paths for teacher training (GUDEDES, 2019).

In 2017, the Common National Curricular Base (BNCC) was established. The document aims to usher in a new era for Basic Education in the country and should guide the curricula of the Brazilian educational system. Among the objectives of the BNCC is the elaboration and application of formative evaluations that consider the circumstances in which learning takes place in the classroom context and that are references for the improvement of the performance of schools, teachers and students. Another objective is to foster continuity of teacher training, on a permanent basis and offer guidance through supportive materials given to teachers.

In addition to addressing in detail the Basic Education and the necessary skills to be developed and worked on with the students, the BNCC aims to align the policies for initial and continuing teacher training, according to current educational needs and standards.

A Proposal for the Common National Base for Basic Education Teacher Training was drafted in 2018 and regulated in 2019. This document is in line with the competences placed in the BNCC in the initial and continuing training courses for teachers working in Basic Education. The document establishes three specific skills in the teaching profession, namely knowledge, practice and engagement (BRASIL, 2019).
Also, according to the aforementioned document, the initial training courses will be evaluated in a specific way, according to reference matrices that consider the required skills for each course, and the teacher training courses for Basic Education will be carried out in line with the Brazilian educational legal frameworks.

The assessments by skills and competences in SAEB and the National Exam of Upper Secondary Education (ENEM) have been used since 1995 and 2009, respectively. As a result, subjects such as Item Elaboration, Classical Test Theory, Item Response Theory and Bloom Taxonomy have become part of the initial and continuing training of teachers. On the other hand, there are reflections and criticisms of these technical aspects that are deemed overvalued as more important above others, such as Formative Assessment, Hidden Curriculum, Inverted Curriculum, Exam versus Evaluation, Focus on Learning, Ranking Policies, Self-evaluation of teaching practice, and Peer Training, among others.

The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) is currently the main instrument for assessing the quality of the world’s school systems. In the 2015 results, presented in a report, in addition to the disclosure of quantitative data, the document provides support for governments to identify effective actions that can be adapted according to the educational needs of each country assessed. It should be noted that there are well-founded methodological criticisms posited by Fernandez-Cano (2016) with regards to the research design, analysis and inferences that are made using this evaluation.

Among the action points laid out by the document as possibilities for improvement in education, is the continuous monitoring of learning, which implies the need for diverse and continuous evaluations in the students’ learning processes. The guidelines also emphasize the need for teachers and principals to be prepared for their respective duties and conclude that, although modifying the practice of teachers is something that is difficult to execute, government officials must seek ways for this to happen so that they can provide better quality teaching (PISA, 2018). This subsequently entails another pertinent demand for training courses, especially for continuing training courses.
Other relevant documents that can be cited on the topic are outcomes of the 2030 Agenda. In 2015, at the World Education Forum organized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) held in Incheon, education priorities were established in accordance with the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The United Nations System Advisory Group in Brazil prepared thematic documents for the 2030 Agenda, thus creating 17 SDGs for the transformation of the world.

SDG number 4 (SDG4) is about ensuring inclusive, equitable and quality education, that provides opportunities for lifelong learning for all. Within this objective, point 4.c guarantees that by 2030 the number of well qualified teachers will increase significantly, as this occasion acknowledged the strong relationship between initial and continuing teacher training and the promotion of educational quality.

Also, at the World Education Forum in Incheon, a Policy Development Guide was developed for teachers, reinforcing the idea that teachers should be at the centre of countries' policy investments. The document also deals with initial teacher training, where it suggests that teachers be recruited according to local specificities, as well as the curricula and content worked on in the courses. Continuing professional development courses should form part of the budget dedicated to teachers and be based on their practice (UNESCO, 2015).

In view of the documents presented, it is reaffirmed that educational assessment is a requirement in school institutions, consequently, in the training of teachers, be it initial or continuous. In the next topic, some examples of how these two themes have been discussed in current studies will be highlighted.

**Evaluation in Teacher Education: demands, gaps and contributions**

Amaral (2015a) reports experiences lived as a trainer in the continuing training offered by the National Pact for Literacy at the Right Age - PNAIC, a national policy that, among other mandates, establishes continuous training as an
important element of teacher professionalization and provides structured teaching and pedagogical materials for teachers.

This author has worked as a trainer at centres in the state of Rio de Janeiro and observes in her study that the discussions that took place in relation to evaluation, in continuing education courses, were the object of concern among teachers, because it is a subject that requires further theoretical and critical development. She also reports, in her experience as a trainer, the need for evaluations in the field of literacy to consider the difference between reading and textual understanding. In her experience, Amaral also points out that it is necessary to build pedagogical policies and evaluation tools that meet the demands and specificities of school communities and teachers (2015b). The author also warns that the training that takes place in the municipalities has greater autonomy and that it is not tied to government policies (2015c).

Still on this challenge, there is a lack of clarity between the subjects involved and the objectives of the external evaluations applied. For lack of understanding, they often emphasize the concern in the results and their technical dimensions, not considering the contexts that according to allow to establish education more broadly and design more effective interventions (BAUER, ALAVARSE, OLIVEIRA, 2015; BANFIELD, RADUNTZ, MAISURIA, 2016).

André (2015a) carried out a survey on action points for teachers at the beginning of their careers and the entry into professional life in 15 education departments, among Brazilian states and municipalities. The data collected in the survey pointed out that the continued education of the states and municipalities researched had the objective of integrating the curriculum proposal, with Portuguese Language and Mathematics as priorities. Other disciplines appeared in the training, but with less pertinence.

The author draws attention to the focus on Portuguese Language and Mathematics and considers that this is because greater importance is given to these subjects in the students' learning or because they are present in external evaluations, which, as the author states, also guide the training (2015b).

The author also points out the risk of training focusing only on these areas, as it is known that the full development of learning cuts across several fields, and
thus there may also be an impoverishment of the curriculum. In addition to pointing out that the continued training should not be related to teacher training in the search for better scores in external evaluations, it is highlighted that the teaching demand is rather more related to themes of practice and how to conduct classes.

Nevertheless, in the search for better scores, the rankings among school institutions, the result of political actions of the leaders and consequences of proficiency scales, all place evaluation as a ranking instrument and encourage competition among schools. In these situations, it is common to lose focus on the teaching-learning process that occurs between teachers and students, as teaching becomes directed to the tests, based on tips that may point to better short term results (SANTOS, 2013; COSTA, 2016).

The emphasis on educational outcomes can disguise, overvalue and even validate a merit that is out of context in the economic interests of those concerned (THEMELIS, 2017). With the results of the evaluations, it is possible to carry out themonitoring of the teaching networks of each school, classrooms and students specifically, allowing support for the administrators in the elaboration of educational policies with greater consistency, particularly in the management of resources and on the students' learning (BAUER; ALAVARSE; OLIVEIRA, 2015). Curricular impoverishment as discussed according to Bonamino e Sousa (2012) and Santos (2013) relates to the creation of proficiency standards and the school administrators’ concern to prepare students for external evaluations, which influences the education systems to focus on certain content. Schwartzman and Knobel (2016) draw attention to curricular and social problems of national assessment systems for Higher Education in Brazil, China, Turkey and Chile. Among the problems of ENEM, the authors emphasize the rigidity of the subjects in the schools’ curricula to meet the demands of the Exam.

Paula et al. (2018) analysed the curricula of Physical Education teacher training courses in eight countries in Latin America and identified that of the institutions investigated, 38 offer Educational Assessment disciplines. The authors observed that these subjects dealt with curriculum, teaching and learning related to Physical Education. The authors discovered a dearth of disciplines that deal with evaluation systems in the researched curricula.
Stieg et al. (2018) in their study on educational assessment in Physical Education undergraduate courses, state that assessment systems need to be better elaborated in teacher training courses, as it is a theme that future teachers will encounter in their practices.

Another point that can be worked on with future teachers and those already working in teaching is the assessment matrices that make it possible to standardize and compare the tests applied, allowing pedagogical interpretations by education professionals (Alavarse, 2013).

With the application of SAEB and the subsequent systems created, it was possible to draw up scales of results, enabling the population to know the reality of the teaching offered in schools. Fernandes (2020) proposes that the dissemination of these results should occur in a clear manner, demonstrating what the students have managed to achieve, while giving guidance on the areas in which they had difficulties and also suggesting that the communication of the results happen in varied formats.

Alavarse (2013) comments that using the results of the evaluations, the administrators started to incorporate the indicators as one of the instruments used to interpret their realities. They were therefore employed to set targets and to make the necessary interventions for the improvement of education. Another positive practice to be implemented in the training courses are the possible dialogues between the internal evaluations of the schools and the evaluations carried out by the systems, considered as external evaluations. This is because the greater the amount of information obtained by education professionals, the greater the understanding of the students' learning process (Horta Neto, 2010).

Black and Wiliam (2009) and Pontes Junior et al (2016) observe that there are countless demands that are the teacher’s responsibility, as he is responsible for planning and establishing activities that contribute effectively to the students' learning. For this he must have theoretical and technical knowledge about the issues related to his practice. Among these demands, there is the position of teacher trainer when taking on the supervision of an intern. Thus, self-knowledge and self-assessment of teaching and internship practice are also part of the initial and
continuing training of supervising teachers and interns (LIMA, ANDRADE, COSTA, 2020).

Therefore, it is clear that there are assessment practices that can contribute to the teacher training process, as it is necessary to understand the path chosen to assess the student, in order to be aware of the limitations and possibilities of each instrument (FERNANDES, 2020) and the possible political and social impacts on Education.

### Considerations on Educational Evaluation in Teacher Education

Legal documents on the subject are numerous, but they deal with the topic extensively and are still not fully complied with Examples of this lack of conformity are the existing gaps found as highlighted in this paper. As a synthesis of the documents and studies presented, we identified the following demands and gaps in educational assessment in the initial and continuing education of teachers: interpreting educational data; creating pedagogical policies and evaluation tools; enhancing autonomy in teacher training; training to promote quality education and teaching performance; evaluating in a continuous and diverse manner; discussing technical and curricular aspects of the evaluation; knowing the evaluation systems and understanding how they work.

Therefore, we believe that evaluation in initial and continuing teacher education can contribute to Education in several ways, such as accountability to society, monitoring of education networks, construction of standardized matrices appropriate to different contexts, interpretation and dissemination of results in order to contribute to all the entities involved and last though not least, possible dialogues between internal and external evaluations. All the above-mentioned may contribute to varied decision-making processes, from the teacher's planning to the formulation of new policies.

This text analysed documents and studies focused on the Brazilian reality and context, making it possible for other researches to compare teacher training carried out in Latin American countries, OECD members, BRICS groups or even
developing countries of the South-South Cooperation. We believe that this article contributes to the academic community by presenting the relevance of assessment of teacher training and enhances discussions in the courses for the possibility of incorporation of disciplines, learning objectives, mainstreaming, skills and competences, among other strategies for the use of assessment in teaching.

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