

Role of educational evaluation in initial teacher training for early childhood

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“Tell me how you evaluate and I'll tell you what kind of professional and person you are” (Santos Guerra, 2003)

By way of introduction

In Chile, talking about quality in education is a challenging and complex issue that raises certain consensus from a theoretical perspective. However, quality acquires other nuances from practice, since the cultural, social, political, historical and economic context or the needs and interests of people determine the conception of it.

In addition to the above, talking about quality for early childhood education suggests thinking about it since and with infancy, which complicates the task.

There are several tensions that emerge in the public debate around the improvement of education, for

example, the relevance of initial training or professional teaching is problematized, all by virtue of contributing to the quality of early childhood education as a right of girls and boys (MINEDUC, 2018, p. 25).

In the case of initial teacher training, the formative programs and graduation profiles are questioned. Regarding pedagogical practices, there is a debate about the relevance of the learning experiences offered to toddlers, and how these are evaluated to make pedagogically based decisions. The latter is relevant, insofar as educational evaluation assumes a key role in ensuring the quality of early childhood education. This leads to reflectively asking how pedagogical knowledge linked to evaluative practices is contemplated in initial teacher training for early childhood.

Therefore, the purpose of this bulletin is to contribute to reflection on the role of evaluation as a guarantor of the quality of early childhood education, within the framework of some actions implemented in public policy and that impact on the training trajectories of the students of pedagogy in Early Childhood Education and their subsequent professional practice.

Paradigmatic position regarding educational evaluation

Like the development of the curriculum, educational evaluation can be understood and implemented from the paradigm on which it is based. In this regard, Santos (1996) suggests two ways to understand evaluation, the first dimension called technological positivism and the second reflective criticism, that is, evaluation as understanding.

As a synthetic way of characterizing these two dimensions, it could be said that they favor the following functions (Castro, Correa and Lira, 2014, p. 177-179):

Technological positivism dimension	Reflective criticism dimension
Control	Diagnostic
Selection	Dialogue
Verification and accreditation	Comprehension
Hierarchy	Feedback
	Learning
From this perspective, pedagogical and evaluative practices are not very democratic since content, criteria or their application are rarely negotiated, which forces students to accommodate to the demands of the teacher.	From this perspective, pedagogical and evaluative practices become a generator of positive traits in the school culture, as well as, generating deep and well-founded changes.

From these representations and in the case of initial teacher training in early childhood, it is hoped that the evaluation is oriented towards a critical reflective dimension, which implies treating it as fundamental pedagogical knowledge when it comes to ensuring the quality of education, given its dialogical and transformative nature.

On this track, the Guiding Standards for Early Childhood Education Training (MINEDUC, 2012) define educational evaluation as pedagogical knowledge. What it means to conceptualize it in terms of knowledge and know-how, highlighting its theoretical and practical aspects in the training trajectories of pedagogy students.



Educational evaluation as pedagogical knowledge in early childhood education



Educational evaluation as pedagogical knowledge in early childhood teacher training is a challenging task since there is no consensus as to what it means in practice. In this regard, concepts, strategies and instruments are suggested, innovation is called for as a way to combat standardization or the use (or abuse) of eminently quantitative instruments, but the definition of the role of educational evaluation does not end with these conceptualizations.



In this framework, María Victoria Peralta in her book *Building Postmodern Curricula in Latin American Initial Education* (2017) gives a complete chapter to the conceptualization and understanding of evaluation, describing it as:

A constant, systematic and dynamic process that aims for objectivity, but assumes subjectivities, through which relevant information is collected, which is analyzed from the context of the different agents and elements of the curriculum, issuing an evaluative judgment that helps the determination of new decision alternatives (2017, p. 179)



From this declaration, different key elements emerge in understanding educational evaluation. On the one hand, it is understood as a "constant, systematic and dynamic" process that outlines a flexible and multidirectional path that is permanently renewed and fed back, unfolding in a spiral way. And on the other, the evaluation aspires to objectivity accepting its subjectivity through the gathering and analysis of meaningful and real information, that is to say, authentic.



Another element that this definition provides, is that judgments are not only made regarding the learning experiences of the students, but that it also recognizes and values the different contexts, actors and elements that intervene in the development, implementation and evaluation of the curriculum. This is reaffirmed when she maintains that, "(...) in accordance with the expansion of the field of action of educational evaluation, the formulation of a judgment about the educational value of a center, a curricular project, the organization of a classroom, a book of text, or of any other reality" (Peralta, 2014, p.149). Such components must be considered in the pedagogical field in order to ensure educational quality from the role assumed by evaluation.

Obviously, for educational evaluation to make sense as pedagogical knowledge in early childhood education, a paradigmatic position must be assumed that permeates initial teacher training, and in this way position its role. Thus, the current Guiding Standards for Training in Early Childhood Education establish the knowledge, skills and pedagogical, disciplinary and professional dispositions of preschool educators when they have completed their formal training (MINEDUC, 2012, p.7).

Of these standards, there is one in particular that treats evaluation as pedagogical knowledge and is defined as follows (MINEDUC, 2012, p. 30):

The kindergarten educator who has completed her initial training understands evaluation as a systematic process of obtaining evidence to verify the development and learning of girls and boys, with the purpose of improving learning. Knows, designs and adapts different strategies and instruments that provide different and sufficient opportunities for girls and boys to demonstrate what they have learned. Understands that evaluation strategies and criteria must be consistent with the learning objectives and opportunities offered and that they must be communicated in a timely manner. It is prepared to offer opportunities for [the] students to develop their capacity to monitor their own learning. They understand that it is their responsibility to certify the level of achievement of the learning objectives, and that they are related to the requirements of Early Childhood Education.

As it is possible to visualize, this standard refers directly to the evaluation of learning, as a systematic process for obtaining evidence that allows comparison of the level of achievement of

the learning of girls and boys during a certain period or level, through the ability to design, apply and examine the relevance of certain evaluation strategies and instruments. Thus defined, a pedagogical knowledge linked to the positivist technological dimension is deduced, insofar as it involves a utilitarian conception of the styles and rhythms of learning, performance being the only or the most valuable of the indicators of success (Castro, Correa, and Lira, 2014, p.177).



In addition to positioning the evaluation as a verification of a process that allows knowledge of whether the proposed learning objectives have been achieved or not, according to a rating scale (Castro, Correa and Lira, 2014, p.178). This scale represents a requirement for preschool educators because the evaluation strategies, criteria and indicators must be consistent with the purposes and experiences offered to girls and boys.

Contrary to this, the educational evaluation from the critical/reflective dimension is projected towards the other elements of the curriculum, a situation that is not evident in the previous description about pedagogical knowledge. These elements refer to nutritional pedagogical interactions, challenging educational environments, formation of links, networks or strategic alliances, which strengthen the participation of communities and families. In addition, other types of evaluative contexts, such as curricular evaluation and educational projects, para-evaluation and meta-evaluation (Santos, 1988), to name a few.

By way of conclusion

As mentioned, this document contributes to reflection on the role of educational evaluation in initial teacher training for early childhood. In this brief tour, two evaluative trends were visualized. One of traditional orientation, whose summative purpose or linear logic seeks to control, select and compare. On the other hand, the second tendency seeks deliberation and feedback from a critical/reflective perspective, understanding evaluation as comprehension, as it adopts a formative, flexible, dynamic and spiral character.

Seen in this way, teacher training frames pedagogical and evaluative practices within a traditional field that attempts to control, classify, certify, accredit or verify the levels of achievement of learning.

Notwithstanding the previous, it is positive to note that public policies in education have made important efforts to re-signify pedagogical and evaluative practices during initial teacher training. Both aspects require understanding the richness and complexity of contexts for learning through competencies in the area of pedagogical reflection. Which allow us to think about the paradigmatic position that these political guidelines support, so that there is coherence between their theoretical approaches and what actually happens in practice.

Finally, it is necessary to reflect on educational evaluation from a comprehensive approach, since it implies a challenge for early childhood teacher training institutions, as well as a call to improve the quality of education for girls and boys .



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