

Evaluation of Colombian educational quality: challenges and opportunities

Abstract

This reflection article shows the processes that are being developed in Colombia to contribute in a relevant way to the evaluation of educational quality in state schools. Specifically, the processes of management of the quality of education within the public educational institutions of the country are addressed. Subsequently, the mechanisms that reinforce the processes of institutional communication through entrepreneurship and the achievement of transformations that consequently generate an educational phenomenon expressed in the expected results of improving the system and the quality of education that boys and girls yearn to receive are indicated. Youth, as contemplated by the organizational and management policies promoted by the Ministry of National Education. Finally, some approaches to strengthening educational management and quality that could be significant in the Colombian context are presented.

Keywords: evaluation, educational quality, educational management

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Introduction

Educational evaluation in Latin America has not only given a significant place to the educational quality of educational establishments, but also, at a general level, they contribute to the improvement of educational quality indices in each of the countries that make up Latin America and the Caribbean.¹ However, there is still much to do and a very long way to go towards that great common goal of all nations, to educate by and for the world, from improving the quality of life, education and health of the world population as outlined in the Incheon Declaration: Education 2030 "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" Sustainable Development Goals 4 within the framework of the Education 2030 Action Agenda.² It is worth mentioning that Latin American countries have made enormous efforts through educational strategies so that educational quality involves all the architects in order to establish if its *raison d'être* is being carried out, complying with the fundamental right embodied in the constitutions of all Latin American countries to provide quality education, with methodologies consistent with contemporary demands.³⁻⁵ It is worth mentioning that the methodology implemented in this pedagogical reflection, firstly, allows an intrinsic look at the teaching processes and evaluation strategies in educational establishments, later, the documentary review was used, likewise, according to what was stated by Hernández Sampieri⁶ in his text *Research Methodology*, the qualitative approach focuses on understanding the phenomena, exploring them from the perspective of the participants in a natural environment and in relation to their context and to Through it, the relevance and effectiveness of actions aimed at improving quality indices from the evaluation processes within the educational system are analyzed.

Currently in Colombia, the educational reforms that are taking place in the institutions seek constant development at a social and professional level, which are summarized in the learning of the knowledge taught and basic skills, and the permanent evaluation of the same that respond to external demands.⁷ However, discussing the quality management processes of education within the educational institutions of the country is treading on forbidden ground, despite the fact that the current educational reforms grant Educational Institutions -IE- sufficient institutional autonomy to operate according to its own

policies, but without ignoring what the Ministry of National Education -MEN- clearly establishes in terms of management and organization in its institutional and quality management guidelines. Leaving practically in the head of the principals, the great responsibility of quality improvement through the formulation and execution of annual improvement plans. This fact, however, is also accompanied by the regional education secretariats, and even advised by the MEN in said processes, presentation of plans and proposals for quality improvement, institutional management, preparation of the human resources required for said policies to be fulfilled.

On the other hand, regarding the institutional organization, it is imperative to point out that despite the fact that many of the processes proposed in the management of educational institutions are reflected in the guidelines and manuals that the Ministry of National Education (MEN) constantly sends to its principal teachers; It is also necessary to recognize that lately the role of principals as guarantors of the EI administrative and operational process has been blurring, generating an environment of labor persecution that affects both teaching and administrative staff with disciplinary processes that not only wear down and limit the staff performance, but also seriously hinder the evolution of interpersonal relationships and the work environment, becoming an unpleasant atmosphere that is impossible to deal with and, therefore, make it impossible to improve the quality of education that the teacher offers to their students.⁸ Although it is true that this does not occur in all educational institutions, it is also fair to specify that this fact occurs in the majority of IE in the country without, to date, being able to demonstrate processes that mitigate this kind of psychological violence that teachers they receive daily and it is not only generated by the principals, but also by their students and now parents can add to it.

Likewise, it is also necessary to reinforce the processes of institutional communication and undertake and propose transformations that give direction to the phenomenon and derive the expected results of improvement of the educational system and the quality of education that students yearn to receive is of quality, as contemplated by the organizational and management policies promoted by the national education ministry.⁹⁻¹¹ It is therefore imperative to apply or introduce renewed strategies in the workplace that give the possibility of improving the communication process

within educational institutions, as many authors propose, among those who ensure that organizations do not remain unchanged forever. On the contrary, they are living organisms that undergo a learning and improvement process, which can be managed and directed.¹²

From this, improvements can be obtained as long as there is availability among the actors in the educational process; The principals of the educational centers must be more accessible to the suggestions for improvement that the work team proposes in such a way that the decisions are truly agreed upon so that decision-making is not unilateral. Indeed, it is then imperative to promote within the Educational Institutions, a scenario where transformations are undertaken in internal processes both in communication and in the training of teaching and management staff, leadership training organization, which results in authentic leadership, training that strengthens the management and quality of the educational system, its effectiveness and transparency, a place where organized processes come together where there are better educational opportunities, the development of basic and civic skills, and the consolidation of the educational system that contemplates all edges. However, it is opportune to point out that in Colombia it is evidently weakened by the implementation of so many programs reproduced from other countries and that are not focused on the Colombian context and therefore tend to fail; It is precisely necessary to strengthen the Colombian educational system with a public policy that effectively finances the educational sector and allows it to strengthen all programs that promote improvement and quality of education.¹³

In addition to the above-mentioned, it is imperative to make decisions that allow a unification of criteria in order to achieve the unification of the processes and that everyone speaks the same language in terms of institutional organization, the management of teaching staff and that all goals are always oriented towards continuous improvement, training and continuing education of teachers; that different scenarios are fostered where teaching-learning processes are strengthened and experiences or proposals are put into practice that can nurture the institution with quality.¹⁴ That the central government demonstrate the commitment to offer its teachers the necessary pedagogical updating and that it encompasses all teachers; instead of granting a few scholarships that ultimately generate gaps in the educational quality between the chosen teachers and those who did not have the opportunity. This will strengthen not only the teacher's sense of belonging, but will also allow him to feel supported by a ministry that thinks of him and the continuous improvement of the entire educational community. It is important to remember that an educational establishment must be conceived as a place where different teaching-learning processes and coexistence among all its actors are carried out. To strengthen these processes, it is therefore imperative that all those involved are willing to generate significant contributions in favor of continuous improvement.¹⁵

It is a big mistake if you try to manage an Educational Institution as a commercial company or other entity without giving it a personalized and dynamic approach, where the teaching staff, their commitment and valuable contribution to the development of an organizational process that considers the improvement of all,^{16,17} likewise, does not neglect a single detail and that also humanizes the process and does not separate it from the human part that every living being has and that obviously encourages them to give their best in their work performance seeking the achievement of common goals, all focused on materializing activities to improve the curriculum, the study plan and pedagogical, methodological and evaluative activities that relate, involve the different actors of the educational community and project it to the community in general.

It is evident that for everything to be consolidated, a renewed leadership is necessary;¹⁸ authentic and committed of the principal, teaching team, managers, administrators who mobilize and channel their work towards the achievement of institutional objectives. In constant communication, evaluation, process improvement, updating, training to discuss if what is being done is directed towards a common goal and that, consequently, allows goals to be achieved or if readjustments are required to make it possible to achieve success.¹⁶ The EIs that carry out these meticulously calculated and detailed administrative processes have a well-prepared and planned path, such as their Educational Project, which has been built and reconsidered by the entire educational community, with a clear and well-defined institutional horizon; following the guidelines of the MEN and putting into practice the better ways of managing educational institutions, with clearly established organizational models, collaborative work, taking advantage of the talent of its teachers, spaces for interaction and sharing significant experiences that allow the improvement of the teaching-learning process to be achieved.

In this same order of ideas, the communication process used in the institution is a key point in a successful organization since they are more flexible, adaptable, innovative, admired and serve as an example to other organizations, they maintain constant clear and timely communication that is managed in an assertive and precise way whose message and communication channels used are the most suitable and easy to use by all the staff. Actions to strengthen management and quality go hand in hand with quality assurance, which is a commitment of the central government to improve the educational management and quality system. That they are not biased by the lack of public policies that manage the education quality system, since it is evident that the application of standardized tests exists, their respective feedback and the constant proposal of Improvement of the Goals and the overcoming of the ISCE (Synthetic Index of the Quality of Education) as the main tool that allows evaluating the educational process of schools in Colombia.²⁰ In Addition to the above-mentioned, proposals and educational policies where science and technology are really taken into consideration and not only included within the curriculum as one more subject, but are supported by the technological resources and infrastructure necessary in this age, the information and communication that each day is more demanding and challenging.²¹⁻²⁵

Likewise, the voices of international experts who ensure the quality of education in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean are taken into account, such as the Latin American Laboratory for the Evaluation of the Quality of Education-LLECE-, body in charge of evaluating the quality of education, which from the Regional Office of Education for Latin America and the Caribbean (OREALC/UNESCO Santiago) seeks to improve the quality of education and to comply with the mandate of follow-up and monitoring of the commitments signed within the framework of the World Education Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goal No. 4 on Education for Latin America and the Caribbean. Promoting the strengthening of the team of 19 countries in permanent collaboration with the national educational evaluation system of Argentina and other Latin American countries for the improvement of learning, having as central axes promoting the development of national teams in the generation of their own systems in each region, improve information analysis capacities and improve the results of learning assessments and promote improvement processes and use the results obtained for pedagogical purposes in the design of educational public policies.

What clearly shows that there is a need to establish public policies that allow the monitoring of the quality of education in each of the countries aimed at transforming the information collected, in the same

way that decisions are made focused on the true quality of education. according to the educational challenges of the 21st century, starting with a key factor: defining how these monitoring and follow-up systems contribute to the achievement of the objectives of E2030 and its strategic approaches, supported by the pedagogical work of teachers and evaluating in the classroom the class specifically in what way all the actions carried out in the classroom are a positive influence for learning, discussing the curriculum, the teachers and the evaluation of learning, thus obtaining effective learning, learning results that define the cognitive and non-cognitive capacity that students have reached during the teaching-learning process in constant search for a comprehensive education. Public policies with the proper legal foundation and the necessary economic support to make them viable and sustainable in the long term.

However, the limitations that this process has are many if one starts from the fact of the current tendency to attribute characteristics perverse to the evaluation and the latent fear that is attributed to the evaluation, either due to ignorance of the subject or simple refusal to carry it out, as well as the context in which each one of the students develops and faces in their daily lives, the same current political reality of the Latin American countries that is not hidden; their corrupt systems and limited resources for education further delay the process of monitoring educational quality and therefore it is imperative to measure all countries with the same criteria so that minimum criteria are unified in terms of the allocation of resources for the allocation of GDP in education. In short, the many limitations and risks of assuming this challenge of improving the quality of education is a task still pending; However, it definitely requires taking the step from a utopian education to a real quality education for all; What should not be overlooked is that a good part of the path towards the search for quality improvement has already been traveled, perhaps mistakes have been made during this process, but ultimately a path has been traveled that serves as a reference towards the achievement of the objective; Therefore, it is necessary to call on educational leaders, both local and international governments, to provide real support and commitment at the summits and in the organizations that are responsible for such a task; in order to perceive that the concern for education is real and not just an appearance as it has been up to now.

An effective commitment is necessary for the governments of the Latin American countries regarding the increase in the budget for education and a clear definition that takes into account as central axes the training of teachers, the training of students in tests standards, the determined commitment and leadership of governments to improve the infrastructure and connectivity conditions of the regions, especially those that have not yet had the minimum conditions of basic sanitation. The invitation is for those who are immersed in the education sector to fight for quality education for all because if not now, then when? Based on what is stated in this reflection article, suggestions are presented below to put into practice within the IE in order to improve the evaluation of educational quality. In the first place, it is time to implement the entire arsenal that an educational institution and its Colombian community are equipped with to face the challenge of continuous improvement and achieve quality education with effective warmth: the intellect of our students must be the best tool to demonstrate that the intended objectives can be achieved. In the same way, it is required to discuss the fact that the results of the evaluations not only depend on the effort of the teacher and his work in the classroom, but also on the interest and self-effort of the students to obtain excellent results, on family support in their academic tasks and the socio-cultural context from which they come. Therefore, academic difficulties should not be conceived in terms of guilt but

in finding solutions that are feasible and achievable according to the degree of commitment of each of the actors involved (Lozano, 2010). What has been proposed leads to the design of increasingly complex strategies that must be adopted to generate the necessary changes in the academic quality of teachers. Since education is a very complex social service, it is related to decisions that must be diversified in such a way that they respond to the needs of the population but that adapt to the characteristics of the various teaching groups.²⁶⁻²⁸

Conclusion

In every evaluation, there is a normative sense that implicitly presupposes the achievement of results, but in education the results are very broad, they cover all facets of personality and refer to a whole series of needs and expectations such as individual and social, which can even become difficult to be compatible with each other. If this lack of consensus on what should be the results of education and its relative importance is added to the fact that in education process and product are elements of the same reality and cannot be separated, the impossibility of achieving a shared educational quality assessment system. It is undeniable that not all contexts, even within the same country, are the same. As mentioned in this reflection, evaluations have allowed progress in quality, however, it is not the only item to take into account when it is time to truly measure educational quality and if, on the contrary, they should be the guarantors of the creation and fulfillment of the public policies necessary for the educational institutions of Latin American countries to create educational goals in the short, medium and long term.

It is inevitable that if everyone bets on continuous improvement and serious commitment, it not only leads to academic improvement but also better achievements to be shown internationally and leave the name of education in the countries of the Americas high as other nations that bet on a quality education such as Singapore, Japan or Finland (UNESCO, 2017), where you are not only educated to be the most intellectual or the best but to have the best and highest qualities and characteristics of an upright, suitable and well-prepared human being to face the challenges that arise on a day-to-day basis and in this increasingly globalized and demanding society. The educational quality is characterized by a leadership focused on the pedagogical, as well as on the new professional skills of its exercise. Also, the organizational culture with a vision of the future, teamwork, constant openness to learning and innovation are pillars that mark its orientation towards the achievement of the objectives and purposes of education. Leadership in an evaluation of educational quality always recognizes the demands that the environment demands, articulates the educational project with national needs and opportunities, thus transforming education into a relevant instrument of social cohesion and mobility. This evaluation pays particular attention to the variables that interact in the achievement of the teaching-learning process in an integrated way, with a mainly macro vision of the educational result. The new technological context also forces education to reinterpret itself as a profession, so that it is up to it to strategically and indispensably assume the challenges in which it is involved.

Finally, family appears as an element to take into account for quality improvement of education, that is, taking into account the family as the subject's first learning scenario, their conformation and their influence on the characterization of their identity, this leads to the need between the interaction between the school and the family that is important in the proposals solving the needs of the community to which the students belong; for the above is it is necessary to establish close communication links, but also actions aimed at giving response to these solutions. It is very clear that, as the years go by,

new mandatory review factors appear for the consolidation of a holistic concept of evaluation of the educational quality. The path has begun and the actions are on the table, it is up to all school actors to comply, propose, review and carry to the success of each of the actions proposed in this reflection article.

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Conflicts of interest

The author declares there is no conflict of interest.

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