Contribution of the Educational Evaluation for the Democratic and Transformative Formation of the Student[1]

Contribución de la evaluación educativa para la formación democrática y transformadora de estudiantes

Contribuição da avaliação educacional para a formação democrática e transformadora de estudantes

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Abstract:

Purpose. In this article, educational evaluation is analyzed as a theoretical-practical field of knowledge for the democratic and transformative formation of students. **Discussion.** The discussion on educational evaluation focuses on criticism of positivist-technological approaches limited to the value complexity of learning processes. Likewise, they have relieved evaluation approaches for learning as a way to question and reinterpret positivist evaluative theory and practice. However, the debate has marginalized the role of evaluation in its ethical-political dimension for the construction of democratic subjects. The central argument argues that a transformative evaluation with a

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sociocultural and democratic approach enables the formation of participatory, committed, and reflective subjects. **Conclusions.** It concludes with the importance of re-signifying the evaluation as a practice not only concerned with the valuation of learning but also oriented to the formation of aspects in terms of values and attitudinal, ethical, and democratic aspects, in order to contribute to the construction of students aware of themselves, of others, and their role in society.

Keywords: Educational assessment; transformative assessment; formative assessment; assessment for learning.

Resumen:

Propósito. En este artículo se analiza la evaluación educativa como un campo de conocimiento teórico-práctico para la formación democrática y transformadora del estudiantado. **Discusión.** La discusión sobre la evaluación educativa se focaliza en la crítica a los enfoques positivistas-tecnológicos que limitan la complejidad valorativa de los procesos de aprendizaje. Asimismo, se han relevado enfoques de evaluación para los aprendizajes como una forma de cuestionar y reinterpretar la teoría y práctica evaluativa positivista. Sin embargo, el debate ha marginado el rol de la evaluación en su dimensión ética-política para la construcción de sujetos democráticos. El argumento central sostiene que una evaluación transformadora y con un enfoque sociocultural-democrático posibilita la formación de sujetos participativos, comprometidos y reflexivos. **Conclusiones.** Se concluye con la importancia de resignificar la evaluación como una práctica no solo preocupada por la valoración de los aprendizajes, sino que también orientada a la formación de aspectos valóricos, actitudinales, éticos y democráticos, con la finalidad de contribuir a la construcción de un estudiantado consciente de sí mismo, de las otras personas y de su rol en la sociedad.

Palabras claves: Evaluación educativa; evaluación transformadora; evaluación formativa; evaluación para los aprendizajes.

Resumo

Finalidade. Neste artigo, a avaliação educacional é analisada como um campo de conhecimento teórico-prático para a formação democrática e transformadora dos estudantes. **Discussão.** A discussão sobre avaliação educacional concentra-se na crítica de abordagens positivistas-tecnológicas limitadas à complexidade do valor dos processos de aprendizagem. Da mesma forma, foi revelado abordagens de avaliação da aprendizagem como uma maneira de questionar e reinterpretar a teoria e a prática avaliativas positivistas. No entanto, o debate marginalizou o papel da avaliação em sua dimensão ético-política para a construção de sujeitos democráticos. O argumento central afirma que uma avaliação transformadora e com uma abordagem sociocultural-democrática permite a formação de sujeitos participativos, comprometidos e reflexivos. **Conclusões.** É afirmada a importância de ressignificar a avaliação como prática, não apenas preocupada com o valor da aprendizagem, mas também orientada para a formação de valores, atitudes éticas e democráticas, a fim de contribuir para a construção de estudantes consciente de si mesmo, das demais pessoas e de seu papel na sociedade.

Palavras-chave: Avaliação educacional; avaliação transformadora; avaliação formativa; avaliação para aprendizagem.

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Introduction

Evaluative processes in education systems now face new challenges, which relate to comprehensive formation and the development of learning linked to the transformation experienced by society in the 21st century. This situation implies the need to adapt assessment rationale to assess student learning from a comprehensive and dynamic perspective based on formative approaches that enable constructing processes, procedures, and evaluative protocols oriented toward the formation of the subject (Ahumada, 2005).

One possible response to these challenges of the educational system comes from the evaluative policy that emphasizes the implementation of quality evaluation processes for strengthening teaching and learning (Murillo and Román, 2010). These initiatives not only seek to improve the performance of the student, they also urge that the different countries advance in the development of their respective educational systems with a triple focus of action: The formation of quality-oriented learning, equity and integration; School management and teaching practice and, finally, the appropriation of cross-cutting or life skills (Murillo and Román, 2010).

In this way, assessment for learning has been concerned with positioning and highlighting the role of the comprehensive education of students in school institutions. This leads to the need to deepen dialogues and reinterpretations on the role of evaluation in the development of democratic, diverse, and equitable societies that transcends its traditional Tylerian focus: a transformative formative evaluation for the construction of subjects that assume a critical-reflective and humanizing action in today's society (Borjas, 2014).

In this context, integral training in education must meet the demands of societies that demand higher levels of equality and inclusion and degrees of participation and restructuring of democratic institutions. Faced with this critical situation , the evaluation of learning assumes a primary role in readapting and redefining new educational challenges, with the aim of promoting the construction of subjects committed to social progress. This in practice means altering the traditional logic of evaluation to incorporate new evaluative practices in the classroom at their different educational levels. The foundation is to advance the construction of self-conscious subjects, their learning, and their actions in the social world (Fernandes, 2009). Thus, the school and the evaluation are challenged to contribute and cooperate in the formation of responsible subjects committed to democratic values for the consolidation of a diverse and plural citizen coexistence (Bonhomme et al., 2015).

In order to face these challenges, it is necessary to readjustment the evaluative practices with the aim of strengthening citizen training. As proposed by Delors (1996), one of the four pillars of education is oriented to learning to live together. Therefore, the school becomes a privileged space for the development of a reflexive pedagogical action that contributes to this path (Bonhomme et al., 2015).

For this reason, evaluation is essential to encourage the participation of the student with the purpose of promoting his autonomy and enabling the construction of social values for his reflection and acting in democracy. Perspectives such as authentic, formative, integral, socially just and equitable evaluation, transformative and evaluation as a commitment, are approaches that converge for the democratic and transforming formation of subjects in the educational system (Ahumada, 2005; Borjas, 2014; Fernandes, 2009; Gipps and Stobart, 2003; Murillo e Hidalgo, 2018; Popham, 2013; Stiggins, 2004).

Self-evaluation, co-evaluation, and peer evaluation are relevant strategies to promote the construction of the subject with a democratic and transformative approach to training. Self-assessment is conceived as a self-critical action by the subject to assess their own performance. Co-evaluation is an interpersonal assessment of performance involving teacher-students and students among themselves. Peer evaluation is the critical and reflective action among students, according to their individual and collective contributions on the performances achieved (Allal, 2020; Panadero et al., 2017).

The complexity of these processes not only responds to the need to objective instrumental procedures to ensure learning, but rather proposes a challenge on how decentralized evaluation practices are incorporated in the traditional classroom that foster other logics of participation, collaboration, and self-reflection. Decentralized evaluation allows for the redefinition of roles between teachers and students for the co-construction of learning in a democratic and participatory manner, since it becomes a space for negotiation of meanings, exchange of knowledge and promotion of dialog and discussion of formative processes (Ríos Muñoz and Herrera Araya, 2020). This implies an ethical requirement and responsibility of the subjects for the development of these evaluative forms (Murillo e Hidalgo, 2018).

These evaluative actions contribute to the ethical formation of the student, understood as an act of reflection, self-awareness, and awareness with other beings in a just context and social responsibility, oriented to the committed participation and based on their rights and duties, as an act of socio-historical formation, political and transcendental. In fact, a naturalistic-formative evaluative rationality , with a transformative perspective on evaluation and, from a democratic sociocultural approach , allow the construction of a decentralized evaluative culture because it allows the restructuring of conceptions, practices and positivist-technical foundations that are hegemonic in school institutions (Ahumada, 2005; López-Pastor and Pérez-Pueyo, 2017). In this way , a democratic evaluation is a humanist-transforming action that redefines the pedagogical practice and the role of the scholar in putting his focus on the democratic and participatory formation of subjects. It is transformative because it is positioned as an ethical-moral space that seeks to contribute by learning to live together with others.

To address these issues, the article is organized into five paragraphs. The first is concerned about problematizing education as a humanist-transforming process of the subject with a social

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perspective. The second describes the role of school actors in the context of a transformative evaluation. The third is to outline the characteristics and tensions of a transformative assessment and its relationship to the formation of the democratic and ethical subject. The fourth, positions the evaluation for learning as a space for co-construction of integral formation based on a formative-transforming evaluation. Finally, the conclusions are centered on the importance of evaluative practices that stress the role of values, attitudes, and awareness in the person's formative processes in pursuit of critical and reflective citizenship.

Education as a humanist-transforming process: Stresses for evaluation

Education is essentially political and ethical because it contributes to the comprehensive education of people. Society improves through education based on critical and pro-positive integration, of citizens' full rights and duties. No tool is more powerful than education to achieve this goal: the transformative education of the student body (Ríos Muñoz y Herrera Araya, 2020). McDonald (1976) states that a democratic assessment requires confidentiality, negotiation, and accessibility because it challenges several types of monopoly: problem-defining, issue-making, data-control, information-use (MacDonald, 1978) and, therefore, it enables redefining the role of subjects in these evaluation spaces.

The social function of assessment positions its work in the field of building complex learning for life. This implies the forms and modes of social interaction and the way in which the integration of diverse subjects involves rethinking school actions as socio-cultural actions of pedagogical transformation. It is not enough just to aim toward developing higher cognitive abilities. Conceptions, norms, and techniques of standard evaluative practice that do not assume processes of social diversity need to be questioned, along with the problems related to conflicts of cultural distribution in the school (House and Howe, 2001; Moreno-Olivos, 2010).

Education, and in particular evaluation, make political sense in its constitution as a space for training. This is explained both by its impact on the delimitation and definition of quality of educational institutions, as well as by its action in education of the subject (Jiménez Moreno, 2019). Tension lies in the search for their worth as a field of knowledge about the construction processes of the subject. Two types of tension are identified: on the one hand, as a political activity because of its role in educational systematization and accountability. On the other hand, as a cultural anchor for its formative-transforming practice of learning from a humanistic, comprehensive, and reflective perspective (Carbajosa, 2011).

Therefore, the social function of education in action integrated with assessment as a field of knowledge for the transformative construction of the subject is an ethical-moral activity (Moreno-Olivos, 2010), mediated by a cultural anchor, sustained in the interpretation of human action and, above all, contextualized in the sociocultural references in which it is inserted, either

of the school culture or of the educational and social system in general (Jiménez Moreno, 2019). Thus, evaluative action as an ethical and moral activity becomes the place of comprehensive pedagogical mediation as a democratic evaluation. It enables reformulating the role of the teacher as a critical and self-critical educator, and the student as an active and self-reflective subject for learning for life.

This good education, regardless of the socio-economic and cultural origins of the students, leads several questions about their delimitation and action in the formation of the subject. Are our schools responding to these challenges that society demands? And if so, how are these challenges incorporated and brought to life in the educational projects of each school institution? And thus, how is the faculty educating so that the student learns to live together by recognizing the other person? Finally, are students learning fundamental cultural anchors for their personal development and contribution to society?

The paradox is embedded in how to understand the value and judgment of evaluation in a delimitation of fair duty and moral responsibility. Thus, the problem is evident: the co-constructive exercise of an evaluation aimed at the ethical formation of the subject and, on the other, the complexity of its origin as an object of research and field of knowledge, understood as the search for neutrality anchored in the value of objectivity to account for learning in assessments of cognitive and comparative achievement with curricular referents and devices (Tristán López y Pedraza Corpus, 2017). In contrast, the path is to advance in integrating the school and evaluative phenomenon from intersubjective processes as a fundamental part of the evaluative and ethical performance of an evaluative practice that allows the exchange of meanings based on the negotiated and shared evaluative judgment, acknowledging the other being (Popham, 2013).

In short, the question is whether the evaluation is at the service of the full training of the student and at the service of a democratic society.

School Actors: Co-construction in the Evaluation Process

From a sociocultural perspective on evaluation, co-construction processes are enhanced by incorporating subject's participation in assessment dynamics. Teachers and students are fundamental to articulate spaces in which meanings and intersubjectivities are negotiated to advance in learning from the duty to be and, above all, from living together with other beings. Here, responsibility is shared: for teachers, for the vital development of teaching-learning in reflection and curriculum implementation and its pedagogical management in the classroom; for students, as active agents of their own learning that stress the teaching practice to deepen the criticism, self-criticism, and the conscious education of their tasks as individuals and collective subjects.

In this space, students can learn not only knowledge and skills, but also behaviors, values, and attitudes, which for their future social construction can contribute to their comprehensive, critical, committed, and active participation in society. From the ethical imperative and the principles of diversity and tolerance, pedagogical leadership aimed at collaborating in the student training process is an opportunity horizon to ensure good education. This enables holistic formation and positions assessment as an articulating action between the knowledge, attitudes and skills that make up life learning.

This interpretative framework is fundamental. Assuming that evaluation is a formative process involves challenging the unique roles of school agents in their work. Therefore, it is in its theoretical construction and explicit action that the possibilities of analyzing and reflecting on conscious assessment practice, based on the participative and challenging interaction between students and teachers (Rodríguez Migueles and Hernández Yulcerán, 2014; Román, 2011).

From the work of Dewey (1916/1998), there is an opportunity to learn and practice democratic coexistence. To do this, it is necessary for the teaching staff to become aware of the importance of pedagogical leadership in co-constructing learning spaces based on a democratic-participatory classroom climate. This is characterized by building cordial relations with their students, respecting them as subjects of the educational process in accordance with a design of the teaching that articulates the needs of the learning in alternative evaluative practices (Gipps and Stobart, 2003). These allow the social and cultural characteristics of the student body to be incorporated into the substantive basis of democratic diversity in the classroom (Fernandes, 2009).

The above leads us to the need to resign the meaning of the school as a space for co-construction of cross-sectional learning toward the formation of critical/self-critical subjects as a field of citizenship construction. Redefining school assessment culture as implicit and explicit practices as the basis of social construction in school, demands the creation of socio-democratic evaluative spaces that recognize and articulate from reflection on experience, argumentation, and dialog (Bonhomme et al., 2015). In other words, evaluation can contribute to the creation of participatory spaces in the light of decentralized actions to enrich the student role with a high degree of democratic discussion (Moreno-Olivos, 2010).

In this sense, it is imperative today that the teaching bodies educate, rather than transmit information, as a robust, relevant, and contextualized practice. This type education is based on thought and the meaning of teaching. It is based on rationale and emotion as a reflective source (Maturana, 2001) to resign the interactions of learning and, therefore, the same sense of evaluation.

Toward Transformative Evaluation

The presence of school objectives is essential to guide pedagogical practice. These reflect the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that students must attain as a product of their educational experience. However, by conscious or unconscious curricular decisions of different educational actors, these objectives are reduced to the teaching of knowledge and basic skills. This situation causes evaluation to be reduced to the act of psychometric measurement of learning, which leads to emphasize the application of more traditional assessments from a positivist-technical perspective of evaluative practice. In this scenario, the evaluation is assumed from the Tylerian conception . The essence of this rationality and practice is to measure the results of learning, according to the objectives with emphasis on reproductive knowledge and superficial thinking skills (Ríos Muñoz and Herrera Araya, 2020).

These actions are based on a basic principle: much evaluation, but without change (Moreno-Olivos, 2010). Measurement as an instrumental assessment action does not generate transformation, rather it feeds indicators of improvement as a compulsive act that points to the bureaucratization of learning, in a process of acquisition that does not question what is learned and why it is learned (Shepard, 2006; Stobart, 2010). Thus, multiple selection tests and questions are the main artifacts used to evaluate learning. This perspective impoverishes the political and ethical mission of education because it tends to value one kind of learning more than others, as if they were exclusionary. Above all, those who rightly contribute to the integral formation of the subject are invisible: values and attitudes for citizen education. This reduction in learning complexity puts the common good and social justice at risk (House, 1997; Shepard, 2006; Stobart, 2010).

In this way, it is important to consolidate evaluative practices that place the political-ethical dimension of their subject at the center. A perspective that highlights the person as a socio-historical subject; considered as the main person responsible for their own personal construction, of their selves, but also in relation to other people, based on the knowledge of their social world, with principles of respect and reflection (Maturana, 2001).

This requires assessment for learning, an essentially educational assessment, which contributes to generating curiosity and permanent motivation in the student, in school spaces, which allow them to live and practice, which will be their future behavior in society (Dewey, 1916/1998). This type of evaluation is constituted as a decentralized space to make visible the inequality generated by the assessment power concentrated in teachers. This asymmetry places the teaching staff at the top of the mountain and the student in the valley. Here, all the power that rests on those who educate, on their evaluative judgments , on the decisions they make based on evidence they collect is put into play.

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Thus, can the power of assessment be shared? Is the teaching staff willing to distribute this power? Or rephrased positively : are they willing to share power with their students? Could teachers and students to walk through valleys to get to the top altogether?

We must look for strategies to decentralize the act of educational assessment and, therefore, democratize this process of evaluating of learning processes (Stake, 2006). It is a political and ethical imperative to move toward greater symmetry, without losing the roles and functions of the pedagogical task. Consequently, moving toward wider participation of the student in the evaluation processes (Stake, 2006) implies, as has been proposed, the implementation of self-assessment, co-evaluation, and peer evaluation agents.

Transformative evaluation enhances the co-construction of active subjects that enables the development of an evaluative-formative atmosphere for the consolidation of a distribution of evaluative power and the critical participation of teachers and students in the classroom (Black and William, 1998; Fernandes, 2009; Stiggins, 2004). One possibility to realize this approach is to articulate transformative-alternative evaluation as a critical node of teaching-learning. Restructuring is sought based on the design and selection of authentic tasks that combine discipline and the cross-cutting nature of learning – for example, the socio-affective, value, and ethical dimension – its ethical-value transparency in terms of subjects and, consolidate feedback as a dynamic dialogical space that favors co-participation and co-responsibility (Black and William, 2018; Fernandes, 2009; Gipps and Stobart, 2003; Popham, 2013).

These principles of reciprocity lead to strengthening students' self-reflection and responsibility, which leads to greater autonomy and freedom. Thus, democratic communicative action is a means that not only allows consensus on these definitions, but also promotes mutual understanding among subjects. This is what the good assessment is about : to allow self-government and the construction of the subject in its particular social dimension; to move toward autonomy and freedom. Only from this foundation can a community be built together to account for the common good. To this end, a basic principle of articulation in school is assumed: the existence of an egalitarian dialog that favors this community construction (House, 1997; Santos Guerra, 2003).

Assessment for Learning

One tool that favors achieving these goals relates to the evaluative practice of the teaching staff. The concept of evaluation for learning has become relevant from this perspective, which emphasizes processes as a way to consolidate the progress of learning. This approach is naturalistic and applies observation-based evaluative instru ments. Its focus is to enhance student participation in their evaluation process by developing judgments about their performance, advances, and the conditions that favor or hinder their learning (Ahumada, 2005).

It also focuses on integrating the role of the students' attitudes during the teaching-learning process, transforming them into an evaluative subject and object (Escudero Escorza, 2003, 2016; Ríos Muñoz and Herrera Araya, 2020).

Evaluation for learning enables the consolidation of self-assessment instances supported by personal decision-making for improved learning. This self-evaluation activity makes them visible as self-constructing subjects. This student in the evaluative phenomenon makes them visible as a subject, empowers them as a school actor, generates the necessary introspection and reflection to learn to value themselves with regard to their learning, enables them to learn to recognize their strengths and weaknesses, to be abstracted as a subject by being the object of their own assessment (Santos Guerra, 2003). These are necessary conditions for their self-construction. Acquiring and practicing this power is, without a doubt, a valuable educational experience which, in part, will be the basis of their future citizen action.

With this evaluative perspective, the evaluative actions are constituted in spaces of student empowerment that invite the problematization of knowledge, the role of criticality and evaluative justice and the tensions involved in cooperation among subjects for a transformative evaluation. Therefore, principles, challenges, and opportunities for learning assessment with a transformative perspective that articulate subjectivation, symbolization, and re-signifying being a citizen (Popham, 2013). This valuation approach is supported by decentralized evaluation practices linked to peer co-evaluation and evaluation practices (López-Pastor and Pérez-Pueyo, 2017; Rodríguez Migueles and Hernández Yulcerán, 2014) and their role in our value judgments with regard to others (Popham, 2013).

Education has an ineludible challenge in forming students in the exercise of justice with other individuals. This school learning is later put into practice in the social fabric in which the student will participate as a citizen. In this context, the following questions arise: How fair are we, as teaching staff, with otherness? How can we contribute to a better democracy by recognizing differences with other educational actors?

In co-evaluation, the student learns to build a shared judgment on the performances achieved. During the educational process they collect evidence about their own performance. At the end of the activity, students are in a position to establish dialogs that favor the exchange of meanings with their peers and to build valuative judgments about collective action. In this evaluative activity, it is key for evaluative judgments to be based on the evidence observed, and not on preexisting judgments or prejudices of participating members (Murillo e Hidalgo, 2018; Stobart, 2010).

In terms of values, the construction of judgment assumes a fair perspective according to the evidence of learning. If there is no solid evidence, trial must be suspended. Thus, we can ask ourselves: Can we promote this type of evaluative practice in the classroom? How does it

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contribute to the decentralization of evaluative power? Does this evaluative practice favor the formation of values such as responsibility, honesty, and justice in the student?

The peer evaluation process is another educational opportunity for students to practice values and attitudes of responsibility, honesty, and justice in relation to their peers. Unlike co-evaluation, based on symmetry between students in interaction with the teaching person, peer evaluation is based on asymmetry, as the evaluator is positioned as a subject making value judgments over the peer, whose performance is assumed as an evaluated object (Santos Guerra, 2003; Spiller, 2012).

This heteronomy carries the responsibility of having the greatest amount of evidence to raise assessments of the assessed student work. Like self-evaluation and co-evaluation, this process displays all possibilities of practicing the values of responsibility, honesty, and justice. This knowledge in the future could be extrapolated to the citizen behavior of the student involved in these evaluative processes.

As a Conclusion: Tensions and Challenges for a Democratic and Transforming Formative Evaluation

Finally, assuming the central approaches of this work, it is postulated that education by definition is political and ethical. Its mission is to enable the student to learn. It cannot be focused only on knowledge and cognitive skills to develop the students' understanding of thinking. Instead, it is important to promote and implement curricular activities related to their values and attitudes.

Democratic and transformative assessment enables redefining and shifting the limits imposed by technological-positivist evaluative approaches. It reformulates the roles of teachers and students, creating a space for discussion and negotiation of meanings of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that nourish the formative process. In fact, the evaluative actions are constituted in spaces of decentralized evaluation oriented to the teaching and student empowerment in an equitable way, because it allows the problematization, it influences criticality and evaluative justice and stresses individual logic in the construction of learning and places them in logic of evaluative cooperation.

Evaluative action is an ethical-moral activity that is transformed into a pedagogical mediation that seeks the integration of democratic and transformative evaluation for the development of critical, self-critical, active, and self-reflective evaluative practices as a real horizon for the change of school evaluative culture. Therefore, the participation of the student in the evaluative processes seeks to develop autonomy and freedom of the subject. Thus, self-evaluation, co-evaluation, and peer evaluation can be fundamental strategies to promote values

and attitudes that allow the student to act ethically, with a view to their future participation, critical and pro-positive in the society to which he belongs.

This perspective invites us to become aware of the potential danger of evaluation on the subject and its contradictory effects on training. To address these evaluative challenges, it is urgent to restructure the logic of power and authority in the classroom and to promote formative learning processes from alternative ethical and moral principles to current ones. Provided with inclusive logic and, above all, from respect for diversity, progress must be made in a reflective approach whose purpose—as an evaluative act—is primarily formative and oriented to the development of ethical-moral components for the construction of critical subjects and committed to their community.

This leads us to raise the following questions about how to move on this path:

Are teaching bodies motivated to promote and accompany this type of evaluative practices? Is it possible that these evaluative practices contribute to generating an evaluative culture based on participation, collaboration, responsibility, honesty, and justice? Do these evaluative practices allow the development of ethics in the student?

Given these concerns and tensions, the challenge of an evaluation aimed at the democratic and transformative construction of the subject requires the construction of evaluative cultures that conceive and determine evaluative action as an ethical-moral act and formator of the subject. This is related to human action and is framed within the sociocultural contexts of the student. Moving forward in this process of awareness and self-awareness of the processes of learning from attitudes and values is the horizon of an evaluation that assists in the strengthening of education and social development.

Supplementary Material Declaration

This article provides the following as complementary material:

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