

Teacher's work and External Assessment Policies in Colombia and Brazil*

Trabajo docente y políticas de evaluación externa en Colombia y Brasil

Trabalho docente e políticas de avaliação externa na Colômbia e o Brasil

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Abstract

This article aims to critically research and analyze the extent to which external assessment policies implemented in Colombia and Brazil influence teaching configuration. Based on this interest, we refer to teachers' perceptions of the materialization of these policies in both realities, adopting a *comparative historical research* (CHR) perspective within the theoretical-methodological matrix of *historical-dialectical materialism* (HDM). Thus, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a total of 30 teachers working in different areas of six public schools in Colombia and Brazil. The results showed that educational policies developed and disseminated by multilateral organizations at the service of capital, such as the World Bank (WB), mediate in configuring both countries' educational policies through a *managerial* ideology, progressively contributing to the precariousness of teaching.

Keywords

educational policy; quality of education; educational indicators; education assessment; teacher responsibility

Palabras clave

política educacional; calidad de la educación; indicadores educativos; evaluación de la educación; responsabilidad del docente

Resumen

El presente artículo tiene como objetivo investigar y analizar críticamente en qué medida las políticas de evaluación externa implementadas en Colombia y Brasil influyen en la configuración del trabajo docente. A partir de este interés, nos referimos a las percepciones docentes sobre la materialización de estas políticas en ambas realidades, desde la perspectiva de los *estudios históricos comparados* en el ámbito de la matriz teórico-metodológica del *materialismo histórico-dialéctico*. En ese sentido, se realizaron entrevistas semidirigidas a un total de 30 docentes que actuaban en diferentes áreas de seis escuelas públicas de Colombia y Brasil. Los resultados evidenciaron que las políticas educacionales gestadas y diseminadas por organismos multilaterales al servicio del capital, como el Banco Mundial, median en la configuración de las políticas educativas de ambos países por intermedio de la ideología gestocrática, hecho que contribuye progresivamente a la precarización del trabajo docente.

Resumo

Este artigo visa pesquisar e analisar criticamente em que medida as políticas de avaliação externa implementadas na Colômbia e no Brasil influem na configuração do trabalho docente. A partir disso, abordamos as percepções dos professores sobre a materialização dessas políticas nas duas realidades, desde a perspectiva dos estudos históricos comparados no âmbito da matriz teórico-metodológica do materialismo histórico-dialético. Nesse sentido, realizamos entrevistas semiestruturadas a 30 docentes que trabalhavam em diversas áreas de seis escolas públicas da Colômbia e o Brasil. Os resultados evidenciam que as políticas educacionais criadas e disseminadas por organismos multilaterais ao serviço do capital, como o Banco Mundial, influem na configuração das políticas educacionais dos dois países por meio da ideologia gestocrática, o que contribui progressivamente para a precarização do trabalho docente.

Palavras-chave

política educacional; qualidade da educação; indicadores educacionais; avaliação da educação; responsabilidade do professor

Introduction

Comparative studies have shown that social representations of school assessment seem to disregard borders. For example, in Remolina's (2012) research, conceptions of authority, power, control, understanding, and improvement of learning were common elements found in the educational reality of France and Portugal.

On the one hand, this shows the importance of comparative studies in abstracting common phenomena determinations by analyzing generalities and specificities of particular contexts. On the other hand, it is striking that such similarities are evidenced in such dissimilar realities, while revealing the emotional impact produced by this educational practice on school subjects, including teachers. That said, it is worth asking, why this kind of similarities? Are they the tangible demonstration of a school homogenization dynamics at a global scale?

On the other hand, for De Freitas (2012), a process of precariousness in teacher training has been developing in recent years. A pragmatic vision is taking root in teaching training agencies, restricting the dynamics to methodologies' practical aspects. Such is the case of the non-governmental organization, Teach for America, which in the United States of America trains teachers in five weeks (Ravitch, 2011).

In addition, assessment processes are increasingly individualizing teachers (De Freitas, 2012). A policy that, in the author's opinion, subjects the teacher to every type of public *responsibility* and public exposure, which ends up undermining the motivational basis of their professional practice.

At the same time, it is not a minor issue that, for international organizations such as the WB, teaching is intimately linked with educational quality. In their study financed by the WB, Bruns and Luque (2014) determined that the low quality of teachers in Latin America and the Caribbean emerges as an important limitation. Their poor knowledge of contents and the ineffectiveness of their educational practices are factors that, according to the authors, compromise the profession's quality and, consequently, educational quality. The foregoing makes it necessary to conduct in-depth reflections and research on assessment policies and their possible effects on the configuration and organization of teaching.

Thus, problematizing the object of study viewed from a Colombian education context, I deem the Peace Agreements between the Colombian Government and the FARC-EP guerrilla as a tipping point for the country's educational policy. Proof of this was the goal set by former President Juan

Manuel Santos of transforming Colombia into the most educated nation in Latin America and the Caribbean (Sistema informativo del Gobierno, 2014); an unconventional government objective.

Based on this context, it is possible to observe that three elements assume centrality in the Colombian educational agenda: educational quality, external assessments, and awards for educational productivity.

Therefore, in March 2015, the Ministry of National Education (MEN) makes public the new assessment system inspired by the Brazilian model of the State of Minas Gerais (Malaver, 2015). In this sense, the aim is to measure the quality of national education through a quantitative indicator that uses the results obtained by students in corresponding national external tests. This is the case of the synthetic education quality index (ISCE), an idea based on the Brazilian basic education development index (IDEB) (Icfes, 2016).

Now, the third element is key to the Colombian educational agenda, and in turn, is related to this research: incentives for educational productivity. As it occurred in Brazil, specifically in the State of Minas Gerais, the Colombian Government announced the payment of special bonuses to teachers demonstrating positive performances as a function of the results obtained by their students in external tests (Sánchez, 2015).

Based on what was observed, the ISCE appears as an articulator between wages and teaching performance; this evidences a new political guideline in the Colombian school system.

Thus, it was relevant to conduct a comparative study between both countries given the influence of the Brazilian assessment policies on the educational programs implemented in Colombia, in terms of assessment, quality indicators, and incentives for educational productivity.

Given the possibility of conducting a study in such unique realities as the Colombian and Brazilian school context, this research delves into the political and ideological principles underpinning external assessments; analyzes their effects on the organization of teaching in both scenarios; and highlights their idiosyncrasies, similarities, and regularities.

Hence, inquiring into the ideologies underlying external assessment policies was a key exercise to understand the new dynamics influencing teachers' working conditions.

In this sense, two research pillars were proposed: the centrality of external assessments in configuring Brazilian and Colombian educational policies, as well as the ideology underlying the structuring of said policies.

Consequently, this research's guiding question was: how do external assessment policies implemented in Colombia and Brazil influence teachers' working conditions in both countries?

Epistemological Assumptions

For this research, three epistemological assumptions were adopted: *HDM*, *CHR* (Franco, 2000; Ciavatta, 2009), and *concrete totality* (Kosík, 1995).

Thus, the seven phases of *HDM* proposed by Dussel (2012) were implemented: 1) what is actually concrete (existing); 2) chaotic totality; 3) abstract determinations; 4) constructed totality (concrete); 5) explanatory categories; 6) historical concrete totality explained, and finally; 7) known reality.

Consequently, considering traditional comparative research distance themselves from epistemological assumptions, this research assumed the *CHR* approach (Franco, 2000; Ciavatta, 2009). This approach, in addition to being consistent with the *HDM* epistemological perspective, also enabled reading two different realities in parallel. A view that allowed establishing comparisons between both countries based on broader historical processes (understanding history as a process) and favored rebuilding said comparative vision as part of a complex reality susceptible to transformation (history as a method) (Franco, 2000).

Regarding our third epistemological assumption, we assume the tridimensionality of concrete totality. First, as an answer to the problem of what is real; second, as a methodological requirement, and finally; as an epistemic postulate. Thus, all facts can be deemed as knowledge of reality when understood as structural parts of a dialectical whole, in which or of which any fact whatsoever (classes of facts, set of facts) can be rationally understood (Kosík, 1995). Thus, it would be possible to overcome the epistemological limitation of the concept of reality as a general set of all facts. Therefore, for this research, the critical analysis of teacher perceptions could account for the reality of teachers and their working conditions.

Therefore, this study is defined based on approximations, gaps, and contradictions in teacher perceptions about external assessment policies, their reading, and their ideologies. Therefore, it was necessary to indicate how such approximations and gaps were construed.

This interpretative analysis was guided by Lefebvre's (2006) theory of representations. The representation is a phenomenon of consciousness (individual and collective) or a thing or set of things. In the first case, the phenomenon of consciousness accompanies a word(s) or object(s) within

a specific society and language. In the second case, as a thing(s), it embodies relationships whether to contain or hide them.

The effectiveness of representations, according to Lefebvre (2006), lies in the fact that these are neither false or true, but rather false and true at the same time. In other words, “true as answers to *actual* problems and false as dissimulators of *actual* purposes” (p. 68). Thus, they become the intermediate path between instinct and ideology.

Since this research is defined based on teacher perceptions, it is important to define how to construe the teaching discourse.

For Lefebvre (2006), just as with the representations, language is neither true or false. One of its main functions is dissimulating. Consequently, for the author, the *message* and *the truth* are born from the discourse as a struggle for power and, similarly, linguistics is not enough to explain the meaning of the discourse since it intervenes in other elements that produce its meaning, such as values and accepted social rules.

Therefore, values and rules established in capitalist society were considered herein. In other words, the representations and ideologies were construed as a function of the ruling class, without disregarding the opposing resistance force of those who produce them. Thus, such phenomenal manifestations were accepted as products of the class struggle. However, what concept of ideology did we intend to assume?

In the first place, we consider the dominant ideas of an era, indeed, they are the ideas of the ruling class (Marx & Engels, 2014). Therefore, this allows us to accept that, as Lefebvre (1975) asserted, ideologies are a class-conscious strategy, through which reality’s contradictions are intended to be dissimulated and concealed, showing it incompletely.

It should be added that, in this research, the path of ideas was taken to reach the human being; from consciousness to being (in other words, to practical, everyday reality), to critique ideas through human actions and reality (Lefebvre, 1958). In other words, a critique of external assessment policies was performed by analyzing the working conditions of the Colombian and Brazilian in-service teachers.

Methodological Procedures

Based on previous theoretical-methodological foundations, three procedural stages were defined: institutional selection and teachers, semi-structured interview and, finally, qualitative data analysis.

During the *first stage*, of *selecting educational institutions and teachers*, in Brazil, the following public schools were chosen in the city of Uber-

lândia (Minas Gerais): *Escola Estadual Bueno Brandão, Escola Municipal Mario Godoy, Escola Estadual Lourdes Carvalho*. In the case of Colombia, we worked with the following public schools: *Colegio Facundo Navas Mantilla* in Girón, *Instituto Integrado San Bernardo* in Floridablanca, and *Escuela Normal Superior* in Bucaramanga.

Regarding the teachers, in Brazil, 13 teachers (7 women and 6 male teachers) were interviewed, who taught ninth year of primary school or third year of secondary school. In Colombia, 17 teachers were interviewed (7 women and 10 male teachers), who taught ninth or eleventh grade. The chosen professionals were responsible for areas such as Portuguese, Spanish, philosophy, mathematics, physical education, history or natural sciences.

During the *second stage, semi-structured interviews* were carried out using a questionnaire with context and other open-ended questions related to the central research areas. In Brazil, the interviews were conducted during the first semester of 2015, whereas in Colombia, during the second semester of that same year. Thus, we intended to inquire into the personal perception of external assessments (objectives and alignment with educational quality) and their possible ideological aspects (influence of these assessments on teaching, on promoting competitiveness, and its emotional repercussions).

During the *third stage, corresponding to the critical analysis* of empirical data, it is worth mentioning the use of the *Atlas.ti software* (2015). Given the *deductive-inductive* procedure adopted, with the aid of said computer tool, *a priori* categories were located to subsequently add new categories (*a posteriori*); the latter also referred to as *conceptual explanatory categories*. Through the latter, we intended to integrate and understand in a *constructed conceptual totality* those more general *abstract determinations*, through contradictions, gaps, and approximations found in the teaching discourse.

Consequently, of this *constructed conceptual totality*, which offers meaning to the simple and abstract determinations of the teaching discourse, four *conceptual categories* emerged: 1) *use and circulation of school products*; 2) *market logic* of education and external assessment policies; 3) *capitalization of the school's day-to-day* and, finally; 4) *teaching*. The latter, the central theme of this article, whose results analysis appears in the section "Working conditions within an external assessment policy context" of this article.

Finally, consistent with the adopted methodological postulates, the ideas on education, assessment, and teaching will be synthesized in light of the *wb* since, based on the theoretical Marx's and Engels's (2014) tenets,

I consider this entity as a representative of the ruling powers at the time, which explains its predominant role in the gestation and dissemination of educational and evaluative policies as a body at the service of the interests of capital (Remolina, 2017).

Education, Assessment, and Teaching Practice in light of Multilateral Organizations

For the WB (2016), education is essential to drive development, beyond being one of the most effective instruments in the fight against poverty and in favor of improving health; but, it is also vital to achieve gender equality, peace, and stability.

According to the bank, despite considerable and systematic progress in terms of income and poverty reduction, the educational potential is still not effectively exploited, given the excessively low levels of learning. Therefore, to end poverty by the end of 2030, the main objective is delivering to the entire child population a quality education that helps them acquire necessary skills in the labor world (WB, 2016).

Therefore, among other aspects, this multilateral organization's support to developing countries revolves around: teaching basic skills; increasing efficiency and transparency; overcoming the great gap between the development of competencies, higher education, and the labor market, and increasing the new financing mechanism based on results (WB, 2016).

Thus, among the WB's (2014) key issues for *educational economy*, two important topics emerge: *school management* and educational quality.

Regarding the first matter, the WB (2014) defines *school management* as the decentralization of degrees of authority at the school level. In this sense, *responsibility* and decision-making on the school's operational matters are transferred to the school's management, teachers, families, students, and the community in general.

Among the activities susceptible to transfer of authority are: recruitment and removal of teachers and other school officials, curricular development, teacher performance and student learning supervision and assessment. Thus, according to the WB, increasing the *responsibility* of the school's management, teachers, families, and students is one of the main reasons for *school management* with an important impact on educational improvement.

Hence, schools and teachers must be accountable to families and society for the results obtained within the framework of national indicators, as well as tests and learning assessments (WB, 1996). In addition, it is

necessary to consider that the family's supervision of teaching performance is greater when it is directly responsible for paying for the education and thus commit a justified payment (Hillman & Jenkner, 2004).

However, for the neoliberal theorist Hayek (2006), *responsibility* is an individual attribute that, related to the principle of freedom, aims to achieve greater *efficiency* and *effectiveness*, with which society would expect to be *remunerated* in accordance with the value of resources and services rendered to a highly valued elite, in our case, the professional teacher.

In this sense, it would be understood (at the same time that I assume) *responsibility* as an instrument of *school management*, whose purpose is to improve educational quality through logics of greater *efficiency* and *effectiveness*. Thus, educational quality is linked to students' knowledge and cognitive skills (wb, 2014). This is why for the wb, it is necessary to implement rigorous assessments to document the causal relationships between educational reforms and learning outcomes.

Following this argument, the wb considers that teaching is directly related to the quality of education. In a study funded by said entity, with the participation of more than 15,000 teachers from seven countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, Bruns & Luque (2014) extracted evidence of assessment and recent educational practices regarding teaching policy reforms.

Among the main conclusions, the authors considered that training high quality female and male teachers requires recruitment, development, and personal-professional motivation. Thus, a wage structure linked to performance assessment should generate the necessary incentives for in-service teachers and, in basic education, make teaching more attractive for professionals from other academic sectors.

Summarizing, according to the wb, *educational quality* is directly related to the results in external tests (knowledge, cognitive skills). Its improvement is possible through *school management* and its mechanism of *responsibility* that, based on *efficiency* and *effectiveness* logics, is aligned to teaching through the supervision of performance, generating wage and motivational incentives.

Working Conditions within an External Assessment Policy Context

Understanding that the educational policies implemented in Colombia and Brazil are aligned to the use of quality indicators, contributes to promoting *school management*, *responsibility*, and payment for performance logics,

which have in the *wb*, one of its main bodies of gestation and dissemination (Remolina, 2017). This section critically analyzed teacher perception regarding these concepts.

As a result, the discussion began with the subject of wage and motivational incentives, clarifying that said topic was not considered during the interviews' design stage; however, it was a matter that gained relevance throughout the interviews.

In Colombia, two interviewees referred to wage, whereas in Brazil, five teachers commented on it. Thus, wage dissatisfaction was directly related to external assessment tests, as one of the Colombian female teachers mentions:

[...] the *pressure* that is being exerted *to obtain excellent scores*, [...] more with [teachers] newly appointed. [These teachers] are assessed annually, [...] they have to aim for a result. So, what happens with these people? [School executives] say: "Well, you are assigned to eleventh grade, mathematics, you have to raise the quality." [...] Then, it may be that [...] it brings benefits for [the students], but not because the Government encourages it, in other words, in the sense that "here, we will give you some extra hours; here we will improve the school's infrastructure; here, we will give you didactic games, computers", no; it is because [the teachers] *endeavoring to keep their score from dropping, of guaranteeing their wage*, then, *they dedicate [part] of their time, of their economy to bringing resources*; Of course, that will result in [students] obtaining improved knowledge; but, then, it is also [at] the *expense of [the working population], of [the teachers]*. (Spanish Teacher at *Escuela Normal Superior*, personal interview, August 19, 2015)

For one of the Brazilian teachers, the money invested in preparing and implementing external assessments is a waste of resources that could be used to improve a teacher's wage conditions.

They [governments] spend millions, if not billions, on external assessments, they set up a whole gigantic structure of teachers, technicians, [...] to be able to conduct that kind of assessments; [...] they do not end up solving the problem, because *the problem lies there in the teacher who is underpaid*, [...] the wage does not enable them to have a decent living. (Portuguese Teacher at *Escola Municipal Mario Godoy*, personal interview, May 29, 2015 [own translation from Portuguese])

When analyzing these statements in light of the policies implemented by countries with high performances, according to the study by Bruns and Luque (2014), financed by the *wb*, there is a clear contradiction between what is suggested and what is actually evidenced. Teaching is not per-

ceived, at its basic and intermediate levels, as an attractive profession for teaching staff.

In addition, in the case of Minas Gerais, teachers' low wage performances contrast with other professionals having the same level of education (Alves & De Rezende Pinto, 2011), another contradiction was recorded in the following statement by one of their teachers :

[What kind of emotions and feelings generate the results of external tests?] Among these feelings, what can I do with *so much precariousness* placed on me? With a *wage as low as the one we have*, [...] in the case of Minas Gerais, [...] *in general, the educator of secondary education is the most underpaid university professional in Brazil*. There is no other university professional who earns as little as we do. [...] *Our wage is precarious* [...]. (Philosophy Professor at *Escola Estadual Bueno Brandão*, personal interview, May 21, 2015, [own translation from Portuguese]).

The foregoing is contrary to what is recommended by Bruns and Luque (2014), who suggest "that financial incentives for teaching must reach a level of parity with other professions to attract [the most talented staff]" (p.43).

Regarding the idea of *responsibility*, expressions of *guilt* and *fear* were alluded to. Ten Colombian teachers and all Brazilian teachers manifested thus. Below, the most relevant sections of said manifestations.

[...] then, [external assessments] make us feel *terrified* [...] when they talk to us about the test [...] But, I think *everything points toward the [teachers]*, [...] then, one says, *they point* [at the teacher] as [...] the one *responsible*, but they do not remember that there is a core family [...]. Therefore, what is [the family's] role? [...] At this time, everything points toward the [teachers] [...]. (Biology Teacher at *Colegio Facundo Navas Mantilla*, personal interview, July 9, 2015).

Dissatisfaction, frustration, sometimes incompetence, not realizable. I speak for myself, I do my work with dedication, with fondness, with love, I try to get the most I possibly can out of my clientele and many times, I fail; and when the negative result arrives, because I already went through *intervention*, twice already, both in the State school and in the municipal school, I was quite frustrated, it is a very unpleasant feeling [voice quavers] that we are not doing a good job [...] (Portuguese Teacher at *Escola Municipal Mario Godoy*, personal interview, May 29, 2015, [own translation from Portuguese]).

Consequently, in both realities, the school's day-to-day is permeated by several feelings and concerns regarding educational work. Therefore, it

is possible that representations and ideologies are constructed in daily life through social praxis, the critical analysis of the emotions and feelings of that day-to-day could reveal some ideological manifestations. Understanding said day-to-day, impregnated with emotions and feelings, would also, in turn, comprise an ideological critique (Kosík, 1995; Lefebvre, 1972, 2006).

Terror, frustration, and fear were emotions expressed by teachers from both countries and, as such, are essential attributes of a *terrorist society* (Lefebvre, 1972). The latter, according to the author, is based on persuasion (ideology) and coercion (laws, rules, decrees), but also uses sophisticated, apparently harmless means such as *self-repression*, to the point that each individual becomes a *terrorist* themselves, exercising a power, even if it is fleeting.

Thus, the author continues arguing, this *self-repression* enroots itself within organized everyday life and makes *repression* useless because it emerges as an expression of freedom because of its apparent spontaneous nature. Consequently, contradictions are softened, even eliminated.

In this sense, I consider external assessments appear as forms of terror, intrinsic to an over-repressive society based on the threat of what is written. Legally, they are established in the school environment and there, they are shown as an exclusively rational and organizational practice.

They also arise as a sophisticated mechanism of coercion, since their results are enrooted within teaching conscience as *self-repression*. This is evident when in the discourse of the interviewed teachers, self-questionings arise such as “what should I do?”, “what needs to be done?”, “as if we were a little incompetent”; self-imposed coercions, whose story even causes the voice to quaver, as evidenced in the statements of a Brazilian female teacher.

As a result, the teacher seems to become a terrorist themselves by *incorporating/representing* the State’s power at the school. Thus, paraphrasing Lefebvre (2006), school’s everyday life represents an organization and a discipline of absence, where what is political and its *representations* seem to be the only presence, merely being a simulation, a *supreme absence*.

So, given that ideological forms unite intimidation with persuasive force (Lefebvre, 1972), I dare to indicate that in the discourse of teachers, intimidating expressions would be the camouflage of some ideological manifestations, and vice versa; in other words, ideologies as dissimulators of coercion. Thus, related to school results, the feeling of *guilt* would end up being a form of *self-repression*.

Consequently, it is possible to infer there is a *culpable responsibility* (*accountability*) directed from outside of the consciousness to within the

teachers. Such a form of *self-censorship* is internalized using as its pillar external test results, which, in turn, are linked to the quantifiable idea of educational quality. In addition, if *responsibility (accountability)* is linked to the instrumental resource of *school management*, it is possible to assert that its control functions are made effective through *self-repression*.

Ultimately, *accountability* is a technical-instrumental rationality of an over-repressive society, which under the aegis of neoliberalism and given its adherence to management logics, would constitute an ideological manifestation which is herein referred to as the *ideology of managecracy*. Phenomenal form that would act at the same time in two senses: inducing forms of intimidation and associating *self-repression* with school performance.

Thus, in this research paper, I propose the concept of *managecratic ideology*, phenomenal manifestation that despite announcing in its discourse the desire to exercise democratic management, in reality, ends up promoting a strong alienated reproduction of management under the dictates of the technical-instrumental rationality. It, ultimately, bases the business logic on the quantitative criteria of efficiency and effectiveness.

In this context, considering that quantifying what is qualitative is one of the *representations* on which capitalism is founded (Lefebvre, 2006), educational quality is reduced to a numerical representation that allows homogenizing and reducing the educational problem to an expression that is easy to observe, manipulate, and transfer.

Therefore, *managecracy* is a conscientious strategy, as ideological, through which socioeconomic contradictions are excluded from the school environment when submitting the complex educational reality to the mere quantification of its results in benefit and agreement of the current system of production and consumption. Thus, it is possible to explain the idea of a globalized education, obsessed with obtaining and improving the referred to quality indexes.

On the other hand, *concern* was another noteworthy element. Related to external tests, it arises as a state of mind mentioned by teachers from both countries. For example, for one of the teachers interviewed in Colombia, “among the managers, [external assessments] *always generate concern* because [...] most of them likely respect the tests” (Philosophy Teacher at *Colegio Facundo Navas Mantilla*, personal interview, July 9, 2015).

In the case of Brazil, there is *concern* regarding the possibility of a pedagogical intervention by the Ministry of Education’s personnel: “[...] when the average drops, we get concerned because we know there will be an intervention” (Biology Teacher, *Escola Estadual Lourdes Carvalho*, personal interview, June 10, 2015, [own translation from Portuguese]).

This feeling is another attribute of Lefebvre's (1972) so-called *terrorist society* since persuasion is used together with coercion (*ideology of managecracy*). But, also, it can be conceived as a characteristic feature of the process of *fetishizing* school relationships, considering Kosík's (1995) and Popkewitz's (1992) critical analyses.

On the one hand, Kosík (1995) argues that *concern* is anticipation; it disregards the present and enters a future that does not exist yet. The temporal dimension and the existence of the individual are revealed in *concern* as future and temporality. Both *fetishized*. Thus, according to this critical thinker, expressions such as "live the future" or "to anticipate" mean a denial of life because the subject as a *concern* does not live in the present, denies what exists and anticipates what is non-existent, reducing their life to nullity, to inauthenticity.

On the other hand, Popkewitz (1992) considers an assessment as a matter regarding the past. Epistemologically, according to the American professor, assessments include interpretations of what happened, since they do not allow providing a direct plan of the present or the future.

Based on this, it is possible to infer that, when acting as a function of a *concern* generated by external assessments, the teachers and school, in general, would be denying what exists (the school's reality), anticipating what is non-existent, and operating with what ceased to exist (results of external assessments). As a result, school life is reduced to nullity and inauthenticity.

Hence, it is possible to assert that *concern* and its temporality are aspects derived and *reified* from a *fetishized* evaluative praxis. Individuals, in general, and teachers, in particular, are compelled to deny the present time to alternately situate themselves there which does not exist and which ceased to exist, being forced to disregard the school's reality to reduce it to the temporal fraction of solving a test.

In short, Figure 1 shows the discussion posited herein. Teaching is related to the *ideology of managecracy* through its *accountability* mechanism, whose influence on labor conditions is materialized in feelings of guilt, terror, and frustration. Similarly, *payment for performance* is a mediator between *teaching* and *educational quality*, given that wage incentives tend to regulate teachers' work as a function of the latter, and the latter, in turn, is defined in terms of quantitative *indicators* within the *managerial* ideology. Because of the latter, the indicators are presented as mediations between *educational quality* and *managecracy*, as can be seen in the figure. Also, it can be seen that *external assessments* are the relational center between *teaching*, *educational quality*, and *managecracy*. This is because *assessment* and *quality* are directly linked, while teaching is aimed

at obtaining results in such types of tests under the *managerial logic* of efficiency and effectiveness.

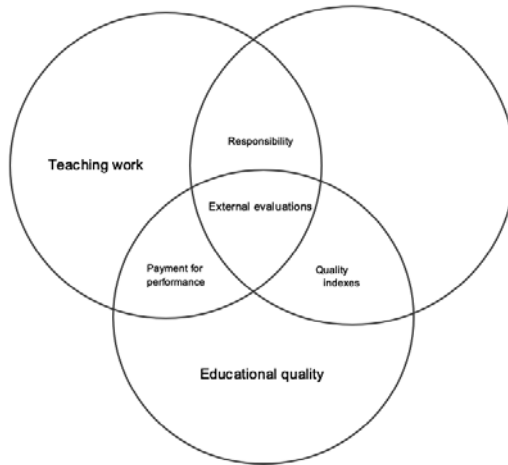


Figure 1

Relational diagram between teaching work, gestocracy and educational quality. Source: self-made.

Discussion and Conclusions

The objective of this research was to investigate and critically analyze how external assessment policies implemented in Colombia and Brazil influence the working conditions of teachers in both countries. Based on this interest, we refer to teachers' perceptions on the materialization of these policies in both realities, adopting the CHR perspective within the theoretical-methodological matrix of HDM. In this sense, semi-structured interviews were conducted with female and male teachers working in different areas of six public schools in Colombia and Brazil.

Thus, the category of *teaching*, among others, emerged from the *constructed concrete totality*, constituting the central theme of this article.

Among the most noteworthy results, it was possible to evidence that international organizations at the service of capital, such as the WB, when mediating in the configuration of Colombian and Brazilian educational policies, influence teachers' working conditions. Such influence is circumscribed by the ideological context generated around two key issues: *educational quality* and *school management*.

The first of these is directly related to the results on external tests. Thus, improving *educational quality* is considered possible through *school*

management and its *accountability* mechanism that, based on greater efficiency and effectiveness logics, is aligned to teaching by surveilling and controlling performance.

Thus, regarding the teaching career, the *wB* considers it necessary to implement a wage structure that, linked to teacher performance assessment, generates not only economic but also motivational incentives. With these, the aim it is to make teaching, at its basic and secondary levels, an attractive profession for the most outstanding professionals from diverse academic and productive spheres.

However, professional teachers' experience in both countries contradicts the educational postulates advocated by the *wB* that, materialized in evaluative policies, end up influencing teachers' material (wages) and immaterial (representations and ideologies) conditions.

On the one hand, in both realities, through discourse analysis, it was possible to evidence that there are no wage or motivational incentives in favor of the teacher. On the contrary, the comments made showed a strong dissatisfaction regarding the policy regulating the educational profession in both school systems.

Therefore, it is unclear that teaching in basic and secondary education can be an attractive professional career for highly qualified personnel from other academic and productive sectors of Colombian and Brazilian society.

In addition, it is obvious that the lack of wage and motivational incentives has deep impacts on teachers' working conditions, mainly when adding to this contradiction the *accountability* for the results on external assessment tests. Ultimately, it would not only deal with professional consequences, but also with the violation of the right of male and female teachers to a decent living.

On the other hand, two statements by Lefebvre (2006) were essential to the ideological analysis of the external assessment policies of both school systems. First, recognize that *representations* are the intermediate path between instinct and ideology and, second, the fact that quantifying what is qualitative is the basilar *representation* of the current model of capitalist production.

It is possible to assert that the *managecratic* ideology, manifested in the discourse of the teachers interviewed from both countries, promotes the alienated reproduction of management under the dictates of a technical-instrumental logic of efficiency and business efficiency, using to that end the proper dilemma of democratic participation.

Such an ideological manifestation dissimulates the socio-economic contradictions of the educational systems, subjecting the school's complex reality to the mere quantification of its results, in other words, ultimately converting what is qualitative into quantitative.

Thus, *responsibility* is located as a mechanism of intermediation between *managecratic ideology* and *teaching*. Such form of coercion finds in external assessments its main instrument of *self-repression* through which Colombian and Brazilian teachers are controlled within the logic of a *terrorist society* proposed by Lefebvre (2006).

In other words, external assessments emerge as sophisticated forms of *repression* and *self-repression*. Another conscientious strategy of *managecracy*, whose objective is to suppress teachers' labor contradictions so that the teacher is exclusively responsible for their own working conditions and the only culprit of the educational crisis.

That being said, just as *guilt* is a clear sign of intermediation exercised by *accountability*, *concern* is another element that emerges from this mediation between *teaching* and *managecratic* ideology. In addition to being an attribute of the so-called *terrorist society*, it also reveals the *fetishized* nature of external assessments. Which is why this type of tests confront teachers with their educational reality within a relationship of denial, where the temporary fraction of solving a test is the only thing present. Therefore, school life is reduced to nullity and inauthenticity.

On the other hand, since quantifying what is qualitative is the fundamental *representation* of capitalism (Lefebvre, 2006), it could equally be asserted that an education based on quality indicators is a basilar representation of a capitalist education that is not only oriented toward ideologically reproducing a system of production and consumption, but also, contributing to a gradual process of precariousness of teaching.

Finally, it is worth opening the debate on educational work and educational purposes. So, if it is possible to recognize the transformative potential of the teacher of basic and secondary education at the individual and social level, given their intellectual work with the most vulnerable population of society in a public school context, then, is it likely that this type of evaluative policies intend to contain such a possibility of change by making teachers' working conditions precarious? Therefore, in the new scenario proposed by external assessment policies, it is necessary and urgent to open the debate regarding the true purposes of education and the evaluative practice.

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