

THE EVALUATION PROGRAMS IN THE RECENT GOVERNMENT AGENDA IN ARGENTINA. DISCOURSES, ACTIONS AND INSTITUTIONALITIES OF THE POLICIES ORIENTED TO THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION DURING THE MANAGEMENT OF CAMBIEMOS (2015-2019)

PROGRAMAS DE AVALIAÇÃO DA AGENDA DO GOVERNO NA RECENTE ARGENTINA: DISCURSOS, AÇÕES E INSTITUCIONALIDADES DE POLÍTICAS VOLTADAS À MELHORIA DA QUALIDADE EDUCACIONAL DURANTE A GESTÃO DE CAMBIEMOS (2015-2019)

LOS PROGRAMAS DE EVALUACIÓN EN LA AGENDA DE GOBIERNO EN LA ARGENTINA RECIENTE. DISCURSOS, ACCIONES E INSTITUCIONALIDADES DE LAS POLÍTICAS ORIENTADAS A LA MEJORA DE LA CALIDAD EDUCATIVA DURANTE LA GESTIÓN DE CAMBIEMOS (2015-2019)

Lucrecia RODRIGO¹
Inés RODRÍGUEZ MOYANO²

ABSTRACT: This article analyzes the orientation of educational evaluation policies at the national level within the framework of conservative restoration in Argentina. Based on a qualitative study, the paper analyzes the institutional frameworks of the evaluation programs and the interventions developed during the years 2015-2019 as well as the views of the different actors responsible for their design and implementation. The findings suggest a process of re-evaluation of the measurement of learning through standardized tests as a privileged management tool, which differs from the limited importance that these devices had during the previous period, within the framework of broader policies aimed at ensuring equality and inclusion.

KEYWORDS: Evaluation. Educational quality. Conservative restoration. Argentina.

RESUMO: *Este artigo analisa a orientação das políticas de avaliação educacional a nível nacional, no âmbito da restauração conservadora na Argentina. Com base em um estudo qualitativo, o trabalho analisa os marcos institucionais dos programas de avaliação e as intervenções desenvolvidas durante os anos 2015-2019, bem como as opiniões dos diferentes atores responsáveis pela sua concepção e implementação. Os resultados sugerem um processo de reavaliação da medição da aprendizagem através de testes padronizados como ferramenta privilegiada de gestão, o que difere da importância limitada que estes dispositivos tiveram no*

¹ University of Buenos Aires (UBA) and National University of Patagonia Austral (UNPA), Buenos Aires – Argentina. Professor and Researcher. Pedagogical Coordinator of the National Evaluation Directorate of the Education Secretariat of the Argentine Ministry of Education. PhD in Sociology of Education from Universidad Complutense de Madrid. ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-2115-2081>. E-mail: lucrecia.rodrigo@gmail.com

² University of Buenos Aires (UBA), Buenos Aires – Argentina. Adjunct Professor and Researcher. Director of Evaluation of the Provincial Directorate of Evaluation and Research in the Directorate-General for Culture and Education of the Government of the Province of Buenos Aires. Sociologist and Master's in Research in Social Sciences (UBA). ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-2538-682X>. E-mail: inesmoyano@gmail.com

período anterior, no âmbito de políticas mais amplas que visam garantir a igualdade e a inclusão.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Avaliação. Qualidade educacional. Restauração conservadora. Argentina.*

RESUMEN: *Este artículo analiza la orientación de las políticas de evaluación educativa a nivel nacional en el marco de la restauración conservadora en Argentina. A partir de un estudio de corte cualitativo, el trabajo analiza los marcos institucionales de los programas de evaluación y las intervenciones desarrolladas durante los años 2015-2019 así como las miradas de los distintos actores responsables de su diseño e implementación. Los hallazgos sugieren un proceso de revalorización de la medición de los aprendizajes a través de pruebas estandarizadas como herramienta privilegiada de gestión que se distingue de la limitada gravitación que tuvieron estos dispositivos durante el periodo precedente, en el marco de políticas más amplias tendientes a garantizar la igualdad e inclusión.*

PALABRAS CLAVES: *Evaluación. Calidad educativa. Restauración conservadora. Argentina.*

Introduction

From the 1990s onwards, the evaluation of quality, in terms of the effectiveness of the educational system, became a topic on the agenda in Argentina and part of a broader trend, unfolded at the global and regional level. The Federal Education Law (LFE no. 24,195) of 1993 provided that the Ministry of Education, in coordination with the provincial jurisdictions, would permanently assess the quality of education. Under this new legal framework, the National Educational Quality Assessment System was created in 1995 and the National Assessment Objectives (ONE) began to be applied (NARODOWSKY *et al.*, 2002; GVIRTZ *et al.*, 2006)³. During these years, the country also started to integrate global and regional evaluation experiences, in line with the recommendations of international organizations such as the World Bank. The data collected by these tests were considered privileged indicators of teachers' performance, establishing a causal relation between the teachers who teach and the students who learn and placing, also, under suspicion the suitability of the teachers and their formation. (FEENEY; DIKER, 1998).

³ The ONE were applied in the 24 jurisdictions in the country between the years 1993 and 2016. Their census or sample character varied between the many educational administrations, the same happening with the times that passed between one application and the other. In general, assessments were applied in the last years of each level and in the areas of Mathematics, Language, Social Sciences and Natural Sciences.

The arrival of the new century meant, for the region, the promotion of speeches that linked the quality of education with the perspective of rights. In Argentina, under the “Kirchnerist” governments (2003-2007; 2007-2015), “inclusion with quality” became one of the main axes of educational policy at the time (BREER; GALLI, 2016)⁴. Regarding this conversion, the official discourse considered school inclusion as an act of social justice and quality as the result of integrated actions, aimed at guaranteeing the material conditions of education and the improvement of teaching and learning processes (FELDFEBER; GLUZ, 2019). As a result of this broader and more complex way of understanding quality, the evaluation moved away from more reductionist interpretations that limited it to measuring performance and accountability, to approach visions that highlighted formative and less technical aspects, as expressed in the National Education Law (LEN no. 26,060) of 2006, still in force⁵. Under this norm, the evaluation policies extended their perspective not only to the results but also to the context and the conditions in which the teaching and learning processes took place (PASCUAL; ALBERGUCCI, 2016). Therefore, from this moment on, the implementation of alternative investigations and evaluations to carry out institutional diagnoses will be encouraged⁶.

This more complex and integral way of conceiving the evaluation, followed accompanied by the traditional ONE, which, to a large extent, failed to broaden their senses and remained limited to the measurement of learning through standardized and large-scale tests. Something similar happened with the OECD PISA tests⁷, which, in addition to internal discrepancies about the agreement, or not, to participate, the country continued to integrate although it showed little interest in its data (RODRIGO, 2016; 2019). However, the truth is that within the framework of LEN, and during the three “Kirchnerist” governments, the meanings adopted by the evaluations sought to expand in parallel with the redefinition of the notion of

⁴ The Peronist “Kirchnerist” managements involved the governments of Néstor Kirchner (2003-2007) and Cristina Fernández de Kirchner (2007-2011 e 2011-2015).

⁵ LEN establishes universal and mandatory access at the secondary level and has positioned the State as responsible for this process. Defined a new regulatory framework for assessment, which was conceived as one of the instruments designed to achieve equality and quality, extending its gaze not only to the results of the tests, but also to the context and production conditions of teaching and learning.

⁶ As an example, in 2013, the Argentine Secondary Schools Improvement Index (IMESA) was created, proposed as a synthetic and alternative measure to inform about the functioning of schools. This index matched: the time it took students to finish the level, the egress rate and the test results of the last ONE. It only worked for a short time and as a pilot experiment.

⁷ The International Student Assessment Program (PISA) is a study organized by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) worldwide that measures the performance of 15-year-olds in three areas of knowledge: mathematics, science and reading comprehension.

quality, a process that, as we will show in this article, will return to being restricted from the government of “Alianza Cambiemos” in 2015⁸.

The arrival of President Mauricio Macri in power inaugurated a new historical situation for the country. An economic adjustment and the progressive dismantling of social policies with important repercussions in the school field was quickly carried out (GLUZ, 2019; FELDFEBER; GLUZ, 2019). Regarding the dismantling of social policies, evaluation has become one of the central and transversal axes that articulated the educational policy of the time. Hence the interest of this article in analyzing the direction of changes in the educational policy agenda in the context of conservative restoration in Argentina, as well as the institutionalities and proposals developed in the period 2015-2019. From then on, new management programs and instruments were designed, which resumed the valuation of evaluation as a privileged device to inform and improve the mentioned educational quality that, to a large extent, had marked the course of educational policy in the 1990s.

The article is organized in three parts: initially we will analyze the institutional architecture and the normative frameworks of the emerging institutionality in the evaluation area at national level. Second, we will focus on guiding the actions taken by the so-called Department of Dependent Assessment of the Ministry of Education of the Nation. Finally, we will present some reflections on the way in which these new guidelines convey or block the processes of expanding the right to education in Argentina.

The analysis presented here is based on preliminary results of an ongoing investigation that aims to analyze educational policies in recent Argentina (2003 to the present), identifying changes and continuities in policy agendas, guidelines and interventions by governments from different perspectives, and considering the senses about the right to education in a federal country⁹. This article centrally recovers the point of view of the actors responsible for the design and implementation of evaluation policies at national level, as well as the regulations and documents on the lines of action developed during this period by the Secretariat for Educational Evaluation¹⁰.

⁸ The government of “Alianza Cambiemos” (a national political coalition) won the presidential election with Mauricio Macri in December 2015.

⁹ UBACyT Project “Public policies and the right to education in 21st century Argentina. Analysis of the trajectories of educational policies in a federative country” belongs to the Institute for Research in Educational Sciences at the University of Buenos Aires.

¹⁰ The fieldwork was carried out in 2019 involving the application of semi-structured interviews with maximum political authorities in the area and members of the pedagogical teams at the national level..

The Educational Evaluation Secretariat: the new institutional architecture

Considering the lack of political consensus, the attempt by the Ministry of Education and Sports of the Nation to create an autonomous educational assessment body failed. On the other hand, in 2016, the executive branch launched the Secretariat for Educational Evaluation (SEEN) through National Decree no. 552¹¹. It is worth mentioning that the failed initiative to create an Educational Quality and Equity Assessment Institute (IECEE) resumes an old dispute present in the 1990s between two institutional strategies, when the evaluation was installed on the political agenda, forcing the generation of new bureaucratic spaces in the Ministry. The dispute over positions regarding the understanding of an evaluation unit took place between a position that defended the maintenance of the area within the Ministry, and another that defended the importance of creating an autonomous entity, formed by a president from a technical-professional perspective elected by open background and definite mandate contest, in addition to a directory made up of representatives from different education organizations.

Nevertheless, the proposal to create a decentralized agency of the National Ministry was carried out only for a short period of time in Argentina. The brief history of the assessment area in the last quarter of a century shows important changes in the institutional dimension of educational assessment. As the specialized literature points out, this dimension has implications for the evaluation function, mainly in the ability to design and implement medium and long-term plans, and in the ability to sustain decisions and evaluation criteria in different political contexts. It is also necessary to mention that there is an impact of these institutional formats on the credibility and legitimacy of evaluation activities, as well as the technical and operational sustainability of such activities (FERRER; FISZBEIN, 2015). Thus, to return to its origins as a Directorate associated with the Planning Secretariat, it quickly became a decentralized agency for a brief period (1999-2001) with the name of Institute for the Development of Educational Quality (IDECE) (Decree no. 165 / 01). After this period, it became a National Directorate for Information and Evaluation of Educational Quality (DiNIECE) (Decree no. 357/02) from 2002 to 2015¹², when, with the arrival of the government of “Alianza Cambiemos”, is forced to the sector an unusual relevance to the arguments of adjusting, with more rigor, the established by LEN.

¹¹ On the parliamentary debates on the project to create the Educational Quality and Equity Assessment Institute (IECEE), see Rodriguez *et al.* (2018).

¹² Although it remained for a long period of time, during the Kirchnerist governments (2003-2015), this direction underwent revisions in its political and technical criteria.

The creation of the Educational Evaluation Secretariat meant giving a high level of hierarchy to the area within the Ministry of Education. Although in the official speech consulted there were no clear arguments about the justification for the creation of this new institutionality, the need to strengthen the effectiveness of those areas dedicated to the evaluation and information of the system was highlighted, for which it was considered to give rise to a new agency with exclusive powers over evaluation. The institutionality created supposed new hierarchies and functions in the area that were crystallized in an organization chart that reflects the priorities and orientations of the political agenda in question. The direction is in charge of an Evaluation Secretary and has two directorates (the National Directorate for Educational Quality and Equity and the Learning Evaluation Directorate) and three coordinators (Information Coordination; Federal Implementation Coordination and Methodological Coordination).

A direct antecedent of this institutional model is linked to the experience of the city of Buenos Aires - governed since 2005 by representatives of the ruling party at the national level¹³ - which, since the 1980s, has been developing its own robust evaluation system and which, as of 2014, created the current Educational Quality and Equity Assessment Unit (Law no. 5049/14). As undersecretary, it is a decentralized entity within the scope of the Buenos Aires Ministry of Education that replaces the former General Directorate for Educational Quality Assessment, enjoying high levels of autonomy to manage national policies and create its own assessment profiles.

The creation of SEEN implied a strong process of restructuring the area in which two relevant trends are observed: on the one hand, a process of emptying the sector's personal resources through the dismissal of hired workers with solid training and experience who, as indicated by management technicians, had an impact on the weakening of the pedagogical area since it overloaded the few permanent plant teams that remained¹⁴. In particular, this dynamic was expressed in the new evaluation devices, in which items from the social area of the secondary level were reduced to the sub-area of citizenship. This is an international trend where the social sciences are losing weight in relation to the areas considered key in standardized assessments such as reading comprehension, mathematics and science. But along with the shrinking process of the team of directly hired professionals, there is a certain deepening of the

¹³ The city of Buenos Aires is currently governed by Rodríguez Larreta who, under the same political perspective as his predecessor Mauricio Macri, has remained at the head of the government since 2015.

¹⁴ According to data revealed by the interviews conducted, SEEN had 58 members, 12 of whom belong to the permanent staff.

outsourcing of functions that, historically, corresponded to the national State through new external hiring of NGOs to prepare and process the data, as well as to prepare the reports of the tests. These agreements defined, in general, by the national executive power highlighted the intensification of the commercialization processes that have been going through the Argentine educational system for decades (FELDFEBER *et al.*, 2018; CASTELLANI, 2019). As the specialized literature has pointed out, this type of evaluation program translates and expresses the management modes of the private sector linked to the New Public Management paradigm (FALABELLA, 2015; VERGER; NORMAND, 2015).

Evaluation management programs, actions and devices

The new institutionality created, reflects the priorities and guidelines of the political agenda of the time, in which notable changes are identified in the assessment devices and tools, as well as the place dedicated to the dissemination of data to achieve the proposed objectives of improving “quality” and educational “equity”.

The assessment programs were promoted under the so-called National Assessment System for Educational Quality and Equity, approved by the resolution of the Federal Education Council (CFE) in 2016 (Res. 280/16). As can be seen, the hierarchical concepts, through SEEN's objectives, recover some terms that have been quite controversial in the face of educational debates raised within the focused and compensatory policies of the 1990s, such as the concept of “equity”. These policies were founded on the principle of equity, conceived under the principle of 'not giving the same to those who are not equal', and became a strategy to combat poverty during this period (FELDFEBER; GLUZ, 2011).

SEEN's new management instrument was committed by all jurisdictions (States), and proposed to apply the tests based on the objective of obtaining “representative” and “quality” information. Hence the centrality that the issue of transmitting the evaluation results acquired in the official discourse to build “transparent”, “relevant” and “objective” information. Such discursive emphasis on the importance of data includes, to a certain extent, what some actors consulted consider as “debts” of the previous administration in this matter. Let us remember that the ONE were not implemented over time with rigorous systematics, but also that the reports were published within a timeframe that some actors considered premature. In this way, already in public speeches during the 2015 electoral campaign, the criticisms raised to the educational policies promoted in the “Kircherist” administrations for the supposed low quality measured by the bad results in the national and international tests, the complaint about technical

errors and implementation of evaluation operations, thereby questioning the reliable visibility of the results (RODRÍGUEZ *et al.*, 2018).

The national assessment system was organized into four areas and intervention. The first, linked to the design and application of national, regional and international evaluation programs; in this line, the traditional ONE was replaced by the “Aprender” tests, as we will analyze in the continuation of this article. The second was associated with institutional self-assessment processes at the levels of compulsory education. The third was related to the evaluation of programs and projects by government agencies. Finally, the fourth concerns the strengthening of federal evaluation capacities. In fact, it was within the scope of this regulation that the Jurisdictional Evaluation Universities were created in each of the jurisdictional governments (UJE), which, as a whole, gave rise to the Federal Evaluation Network for Educational Quality and Equity (REFCEE). Through these teams, the national government provided the provinces with training and opportunities for capacitation and working together with the leaders of the UJE, who not only addressed issues related to the implementation of national territory assessment devices, but also associated with strengthening jurisdictional capabilities for reading data as a necessary tool for decision-making in educational policies at different levels of management.

Likewise, together with this new institutional framework, the National Strategic Plan 2016-2021 “Argentina Teaches and Learns” (Res. CFE No. 285/2016) is approved, whose objective was: “to reach together a country with quality education centered on learning, providing all children, youth and adults with socially significant knowledge, skills and abilities for their integral development, under conditions of equality and respect for diversity”¹⁵. In line with the purposes of federalizing education issues, the plan proposed the organization of a work agenda between the national government and the provincials for the development of an integral, inclusive and quality educational policy. About this last notion, it ended up being directed towards the learning achieved by the students. In fact, the objective of the plan was to achieve “quality education centered on learning, which offers all children, adolescents, young people and adults the socially significant knowledge and the capacities for their integral development under conditions of equality and respect for diversity”¹⁶ (PLANO ESTRAGÉTICO

¹⁵ “lograr entre todos/as un país con una educación de calidad centrada en los aprendizajes, que le brinde a todos/as los/as niños/as, jóvenes y adultos los saberes socialmente significativos, las habilidades y capacidades para su desarrollo integral, en condiciones de igualdad y respeto por la diversidad”.

¹⁶ “una educación de calidad centrada en los aprendizajes, que brinde a la totalidad de los/as niños/as, adolescentes, jóvenes y adultos/as los saberes socialmente significativos y las capacidades para su desarrollo integral en condiciones de igualdad y respeto por la diversidad”.

NACIONAL, 2016, p. 3). The level of learning, knowledge and skills achieved by students becomes synonymous with the quality of education. The evaluation and the use of information appear, therefore, as one of the privileged means for the improvement of teaching and learning. It is maintained that knowledge is a fundamental tool for planning and decision-making at all levels of management, from national and provincial to school level. In summary, the information provided by the tests, although “timely” and “reliable”, would allow monitoring educational actions and anticipating problems and difficulties in their implementation, in line with the recommendations that, worldwide, support and disseminate international organizations such as World Bank and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (JAKOBI; MARTENS, 2007; VERGER; BONAL, 2011).

Under this logic, the strengthening and generation of new processes for collecting, systematizing, disseminating and using information became objectives of the educational policy of the time. It was necessary, on the one hand, to improve the existing data collection processes such as the Annual Survey¹⁷ (*Relevamiento Anual*) and, on the other, to generate new mechanisms for assessing not only learning but also educational policies and projects. In this perspective, together with the “Aprender” tests, a comprehensive policy for the dissemination, use and use of school data in provincial and national administrations is implemented.

The “Aprender” tests are presented as a privileged instrument of SEEN and have been designed to revitalize the evaluation. An important aspect to note is that through the application of these tests, it was proposed to obtain periodic information that would offer possibilities to analyze and make decisions about student performances at the primary and secondary levels¹⁸. Initially, it was decided that the modality of application would be annual and census, both for students in the sixth year of primary education and for those in the fifth year of secondary education; the areas set to be assessed were mathematics, languages, natural and social sciences. Along with the tests, the program applies complementary questionnaires that reveal opinions of students, teachers and principals about the context and conditions in which school learning develops. As of 2018, the tests are no longer applied annually at both levels, with each year evaluating only one particular educational cycle. Although the national government argued that the reasons for such a decision were political and technical, justifying its decision on the grounds of the lack of time required for processing the data, certainly the economic reasons

¹⁷ From 1996, the Federal system of continuous Educational Statistics began to be implemented, which, through the Annual Survey, gathers information on enrollments, teachers and establishments in the Argentine educational system.

¹⁸ The Argentine education system is divided into three phases: primary education, secondary education and higher education.

were decisive, even though they have not been officially recognized, and were manifested by the cuts suffered in the sector during the last annual budgets of the “*Cambiamos*” management. (UNIPE OBSERVATORY, 2019)

In fact, according to the technical officials of the Ministry of Education, SEEN tended to federalize national tests, promoting greater participation by representatives of the jurisdictions to elaborate and supervise the validity of the items of the tests (even from the “Aprender” test most are closed-response items for which they are corrected using an optical reader). In 2017, SEEN launched calls for tenders to select specialists from the educational community: it sought the selection of teachers responsible for building the items for the future application of the “Aprender” assessment, in addition to the selection of critical readers to participate in the validation of the items in the device structure. In order to coordinate the efforts of the different levels of government, as well as to strengthen and improve the assessment tool, contemplating the federal-regional participation in its construction, finally two federal-regional Collegiate Bodies were formed: the Collegiate responsible for elaborating the items, and the Collegiate made up of expert critical readers. Although it is interesting to note that, during the previous administration, the jurisdictions also participated in these processes, it can be considered that, through this strategy, their intervention is institutionalized and, with this, a broader panorama is constructed on what to evaluate in the as the tests are built from the Priority Learning Centers (NAP), prepared by the Ministry of Education of the Nation and the Jurisdictional Curriculum Projects. In this same position, it is maintained that the construction of this more federal vision, when thinking about the evaluation, was a positive achievement of the new secretariat, although it is also noted that, at times, the lack of preparation of those who compose the Collegiate Agencies responsible for elaboration of the Items and the specialized critical readers prevent the smooth operation of the operations. This deficiency was exposed at meetings at the national level, as reported by the interviewed sources, also revealing the strategies that jurisdictions sometimes resorted to “extracting” the records of experts.

Along with the “Aprender” program, there was also progress in the design of evaluation proposals for the teacher education system, a plan unprecedented in the history of our country. These are strategies that have gained momentum not only at the national level, but also at the regional level, inserted in a political scenario of suspicion and distrust in relation to the work of teachers and their schools, as evidenced by international organizations such as the World Bank (2014) or the “*Enseña por Argentina Program*” (FRIEDRICH, 2014). On the other hand, they tend to establish associations between the level of teachers' performance and economic incentives, questioning and putting at risk the stability that historically distinguishes the work

of teachers in the countries of the region (ROCKWELL, 2015; 2018; FELDFEBER, 2016). Thus, in 2017, the “*Enseñar*” operation was implemented, which consisted of a diagnostic evaluation for students of teacher education institutions for compulsory education. In particular, students of the last year who performed teaching practices in the so-called “*Profesorados de ensino educación*” and subjects of the basic cycle of “*Educación secundaria*” (mathematics, language/literature and literature, history, geography, biology, physics, chemistry and English). The tests examined skills in written communication (reading and writing) and pedagogical criteria (teaching planning, implementation of teaching strategies and learning assessment).

Even though this device has not been consolidated - both the “*Enseñar*” evaluations and the first editions of the “*Aprender*” evaluation were resisted by teaching union organizations from the most different provinces and student centers concerned by the political use of their results - it was observed influence on "the teaching community, which was questioned when publicly sharing the blame for the scarce results achieved, excluding from this discussion the technical aspects of the criteria that guided the construction and format of the measuring instrument"¹⁹ (OBSERVATORIO UNIPE, 2019, p. 3). In effect, this situation allowed around 60% to 70% of enrollments to be assessed, reaching 50% in some provinces (Neuquén, CABA and Santa Cruz, for example). Despite this situation, the conclusions of the reports functioned as tools of political pressure at the national level in the context of important political conflicts between the national government and the educational community.

At the center of the process of revitalizing the “evaluation culture” carried out by SEEN, the dissemination of results and information has become a fundamental issue. The “*Sistema Abierto de Consulta Saber*” was launched, aimed at providing education “users” with access to online processing of assessment databases. Through its publications, the platform was presented as a privileged and "transparent" instance to access statistical information. Along with the interest in disseminating the results, the intention to publish reports by school as a mechanism for improving quality reappears, especially in the speeches of different authorities and politicians.²⁰ It is worth mentioning that, in Argentina, this is a highly sensitive and controversial topic, as it is in tension with the prohibition on publishing the data obtained by

¹⁹ “la comunidad docente se vio interpelada a la hora de repartir públicamente las culpas de los magros resultados alcanzados, pero es excluida de la discusión técnica sobre los criterios que rigen la construcción y el diseño del instrumento de medición” Citação conforme o original.

²⁰ Indeed, President Mauricio Macri himself referred to this theme at the opening of the Legislative Assembly in March 2018 “We must be able to know where the school is going and where our children are going. Today it is forbidden by law to publish the results by schools and this is meaningless. That is why I ask that in this legislative year we can advance and refine this rule”(CLARÍN, 2018). Available: https://www.clarin.com/sociedad/macri-pidio-ranking-escuelas-desatopolemica_0_BJVXhM8_G.html. Access: 15 Sep. 2019.

the institutions in the income tests, as established in article 97 of the LEN which deals with the publication of data on educational investigations or assessments, and the national law on the statistical system (no. 17,622). To a large extent, these publications are related to the intention to advance the development of performance rankings between schools, under the discourse of granting greater freedom to families to choose the type of education and encourage competition between centers. The political and media use that supposes the publication of the results, has been an issue that, once analyzed, has highlighted its influence on the representations and valuations that the actors involved (families, teachers, directors, employees) make of the system and of themselves (RODRIGO, 2016; 2019).

One of the greatest achievements of the management, indicated by the consulted employees, was precisely that the information produced by SEEN reaches all the actors of the system. Thus, reports were prepared for different stakeholders, while a great effort was made to communicate and publish the databases. According to the evaluations of the area, it was a complex process under construction, based on a mechanism for reporting to schools that, year after year, was gaining depth and complexity. To this end, the national government gave schools institutions so-called "material kits" that included videos, technical documents and instrumental guides to guide the reading of information. In this sense, it is noteworthy that, although the first reports refer strictly to students' performance in language and mathematics, the latter produced a more complex and contextual view of the data that would allow schools to broaden their understanding of the school climate from their institutional perspectives.

Finally, international and regional evaluation programs, promoted by the International Organizations, played a key role in the improvement plan and in the evaluation system. In this sense, we highlight the PISA, OECD tests and the evaluations of UNESCO's Latin American Educational Quality Assessment Laboratory, which were considered during the referred management as privileged parameters for reporting quality at an international level. In this sense, it is interesting to note that PISA started to integrate the objectives of the proposed educational plans (as is the case of the so-called "*Plan Educativo Mestr@*" and its respective goals, oriented towards quality and evaluation), as well as the promotion so that jurisdictions participate as annexed regions²¹.

²¹ In the city of Buenos Aires, the cases of the provinces of Buenos Aires and Córdoba stand out, among the jurisdictions with the highest number of enrollments in the country that integrate PISA tests with their own samples.

Final considerations

As part of the objectives proposed in this article, we analyze the orientation of educational evaluation policies at the national level in the context of conservative restoration in Argentina. The investigation revealed a process of revaluing the measurement of learning through standardized tests as privileged management tools. This fact undoubtedly goes back to the process of expanding the meanings adopted by the evaluation, initiated in the three “Kirchnerist” governments, associated with the construction of comprehensive actions that aimed to guarantee the supposed material conditions of education and to improve the teaching and learning processes.

In this sense, the way in which the new institutional assessment architecture was adopted by the government “*Cambios*”, and the high level of hierarchy it occupies in the Ministry of National Education, reflect the priorities and guidelines of the political agenda where remarkable changes in the devices and assessment tools are identified, as well as in the place occupied by the dissemination of data to achieve the objective of improving "quality" and "equity". In this scenario, a whole series of management instruments was designed that stood out for valuing evaluation as the privileged device for informing and improving the educational “quality” that, in large part, defined the meaning of the educational policy of the 1990s. From technocratic and instrumental logic, quality is reduced to the application of standardized tests, reaffirming the culture of accountability and reducing education to its most measurable and quantifiable aspects. In this sense, recent research has highlighted the relevance of the data from the “Aprender” tests as a fundamental input in the construction of specific public policies; in particular, in relation to the delimitation of schools and beneficiaries of state programs aimed at intervention on socio-educational inequalities. Thus, it is clear that meritocratic and individualizing criteria, inherent to this type of evidence, participate in restoring the boundaries of state intervention between different social groups and in ways of conceiving the right to education in policies that acquire characteristics of a focused type. (GLUZ, 2019) In addition, it is alleged that their data lead to informed decision-making, even though they constitute a snapshot of complex school realities. In this sense, it is necessary to investigate the ways in which schools are affected by evaluation policies and practices and how they are resized as central modes of teaching regulation. This view becomes fundamental both with regard to the production of knowledge on the subject, as well as the design of policies and more local work in institutions where assessment is a constant practice that runs through school life and defines an important aspect of institutional life.

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