

From discourses to meanings: teachers' evaluative practices in the first grades of Elementary School

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Abstract

Discussions about learning evaluation have configured a classic topic and focus of study in a lot of research made in the educational context in recent decades. In this direction, several meanings of evaluation, and, commonly, evaluative practices emerge from these productions. Therefore, in order to contribute to the study of this theme, we aim to analyze the meanings of evaluation pervaded in teachers' evaluative practice in the first grades of Elementary School at Public Schools in Caruaru, Pernambuco, Brazil. Regarding the theoretical-methodological course, we conducted semi-structured interviews with the teachers, which were analyzed in the light of Discourse Analysis, as this approach allows us to comprehend the discursive polysemy inscribed in the multiplicity of meanings about learning evaluation. In the analysis of the discourses, we identified that their evaluative practices had a dialog with different evaluation meanings: at times, they come closer to a formative evaluation conception, at other times they distance themselves from this perspective, pointing to a hybrid evaluative practice movement.

Keywords: Learning evaluation, Evaluative practice, Meanings of evaluation.

Introduction

The discussion about learning evaluation has been a classic theme, a focus of study in a lot of research carried out in the educational context in recent decades.⁵ Although the evaluation *of/for* learning is a topic that is widely researched by the academic community (Villas Boas, 2008), it continues to be immersed in problematizations that tend to be complexed together with contemporary demands in the face of the constant challenges of curricular practice and pedagogical approach of teachers in the daily life of the classroom.

Thus, although it is a topic already investigated and explored by many researchers, the evaluation of learning, as accompanies social, political and educational changes, is associated with meanings that are not fixed, which leads us to seek to understand

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5 As in Perrenoud (1999), Méndez (2002), Silva (2010) and Marinho (2014).

them considering what has already been researched and discussed. These meanings are not stagnant in time, but they are constantly produced through a revisiting movement to the discourses historically linked, since what we say nowadays has its roots in sayings previously said, as Orlandi (2010) points out.

In this sense, in order to contribute to the deepening of the thematic in question, we aim to analyze the meanings of learning evaluation permeated in the evaluative practices of teachers of the initial grades of Elementary School in a municipal public school in the city of Caruaru-state of Pernambuco, Brazil. These meanings are understood here in their fluid and dynamic character, woven into a movement of remembrance and reformulation of discourses pronounced historically, culminating in this way with provisional syntheses.

In order to support our understanding and analyzes, we use a qualitative approach in which the Discourse Analysis (hereafter DA), from Orlandi's (2010) perspective, was one of the privileged approaches. The choice for this type of analysis is due to the fact that we understand that the DA allows to better perceive the discursive polysemy inscribed in the multiplicity of meanings about the learning evaluation. Thus, DA was an elementary tool in the comprehension of the meanings of evaluation circumscribed in the present time, as well as in the perception of its relations with other sayings previously said, since, as Marinho, Fernandes e Leite (2014, p. 153) point out, 'as a domain of the educational field, the evaluation brings with it marks and signs of historical time, representative of different visions of society, education and curriculum'.

Therefore, as an enunciative locus, we established as a field of study a public school in the municipality of Caruaru-state of Pernambuco (Brazil), and as subjects, the teachers working in the initial grades of Elementary School, more specifically in the classes of the 2nd grade (P1), 3rd grade (P2), 4th grade (P3), and 5th grade (P4) of the selected educational institution, which in the course of this study will be identified as P1, P2, P3 and P4. For data collection, we conducted semi-structured interviews with the teachers, which were analyzed in the light of the Discourse Analysis.

As far as our field of research is concerned, the school under investigation was organized in accordance with the General National Curricular Guidelines for Basic Education⁶, a document in which the dimensions of evaluation in the educational environment and the teaching modalities (i.e. series, cycle, module) are presented. In addition to these guidelines, this school was also founded on the general principles of the literacy cycle⁷ (1st, 2nd and 3rd grades), which, among other elements, defends the non-retention of students in the first and second grade classes of this schooling stage.

On that account, this work is structured in three sections: firstly, we outline our theoretical framework, which situates the approaches to which we subscribe for the reflexive exercise of our object of study. Secondly, mediated by the discourses of our subjects and by our theoretical-analytical perspective, we draw up our analyzes regarding the objective initially proposed. And, finally, we present our considerations in relation to the set of meanings elucidated by the subject teachers of this work.

6 Resolution CNE/CEB n. 4, July 13th, 2010 (Brasil, 2010).

7 Document entitled *Elementos conceituais e metodológicos para definição dos direitos de aprendizagem e desenvolvimento do Ciclo de Alfabetização (1º, 2º e 3º anos) do ensino fundamental* (Conceptual and methodological elements for the definition of learning rights and development of the literacy cycle (1st, 2nd and 3rd grades) of elementary education) (Brasília, 2012).

The discursive movement of the meanings of learning evaluation

The analysis of the discursive movement of learning evaluation and of evaluative practices does not make sense if it is not carried out in its historical dimension, that is, revisiting what has already been constructed about the evaluative phenomenon, since the discourses historically given sustain and validate the contemporary meanings (Orlandi, 2010).

Thus, over time, the meanings attributed to evaluation and evaluative practices have undergone profound transformations due to the 'evolution of education policies and the roles assigned to the curriculum and school education' (Marinho, Fernandes & Leite, 2014, p. 153). Hence, we notice that the evaluative movement 'has become more complex, not only at the conceptual level, but also in the practices that materialize it' (Marinho, Fernandes & Leite, 2014, p. 153).

In this perspective, discursive production in the field of evaluation has not been stagnant in history, but it has undergone conceptual and practical changes that has made possible new formative meanings, distanced from the prevailing selective and classificatory conception. Consequently, looking at the school context and the studies in the area, we gradually perceive a movement of change in the evaluation and in the evaluative practices developed in the everyday classroom, once their meanings have been displaced, passing from a strictly exclusionary and selective learning vision to a conception of evaluation as a formative device and, therefore, a potential tool for school success.

However, before going deeper into the discussions regarding the evaluative phenomenon, it is necessary to point out the meaning of evaluation to which we are linked. We discuss the learning evaluation as an element that is not in the margin of the teaching-learning process, but is an inseparable and integral element of the macro-educational context. Thereby we understand that the act of evaluation is not only intertwined in the student learning process, but it also constitutes an instrument of reflection of the pedagogical work, according to Zabala (1998) and Hoffmann (2001).

It is, therefore, in this articulation of the evaluation with the student formative process and the pedagogical work that we place our understanding about evaluative practice, seeking to perceive its relationship with the meanings of evaluation emerged within. This is so because we believe that in such practices underlie revealing meanings of understanding evaluation of the one who realizes it, such as: *evaluation as an instrument of measurement, of description, of formulation of judgments and formation* (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

When recognizing the fluidity and diversity of evaluative practice meanings, we understand it as the curricular movement that takes evaluation as a practice experienced in the everyday classroom, mobilized to effect the regulations of student learning and self-assessment of pedagogical practices, as Villas Boas (2013) advocates. These practices are part of the curricular movement, because they are developed in a constant dialog between curriculum-teaching-assessment-learning, and reveal the imbrication between curricular practices and evaluative practices.

In this direction, we understand the existence of a movement of articulation and interweaving between evaluation and curriculum. We also understand that the production of meanings for the learning evaluation cannot be distanced from the context of the curriculum in which it is inserted, since, as Marinho (2014, p. 54)

indicates, 'evaluation is understood as an integrated component of the curriculum, as part of the same system rather than separate systems'. This way, when talking about the meanings and the evaluative practice, it is essential to reflect on the curricular processes in which such practices emerge.

We perceive, then, that the meanings of evaluation emerged in the evaluative practices of teachers have underlying conceptions of education, curriculum and knowledge, since, as Méndez (2002, p. 29) points out, the latter constitutes the main 'theoretical reference which gives overall meaning to the process of carrying out the evaluation'. For that reason, conceptions of knowledge are one of the pillars in the construction of meanings of evaluation, considering that teachers have multiple understandings about it, consequently, we recognize the polysemy of meanings attributed to evaluative practice.

However, it is pertinent to make explicit that in its historical beginnings, learning evaluation had not epistemologically organized this imbrication between knowledge – 'as a dynamic historical and social construction' (Méndez, 2002, p. 32) - and evaluation. We affirm this, since, in its first generation, the evaluative practices were deeply characterized as a *measurement instrument* (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) of a knowledge 'basically constituted by facts, by empirical data, as something external and alien to the subject' (Méndez, 2002, p. 30). In this context, knowledge was considered as finished product, as something given; and evaluation was configured as a *device of measurement and description* (second generation) of the previously established teaching-learning objectives.

It is in this scenario that we visualize an evaluation circumscribed to measure, description and *formulation of value judgment* (third generation), in which the teacher was seen merely as a responsible technician in attributing value judgment to students' learnings. Thus, predictability, objectivity and standardization were hallmarks of the three generations of evaluation described by Guba and Lincoln (1989), which strongly reflected an instrumental and rational-technical view of knowledge.

This technicist presence in the learning evaluation, which, consequently, implied related meanings, mainly to the standardization not only of the students, but also of the teaching-learning process and of the teaching practice itself, is perceived in the course of the pedagogical ideas conveyed in recent decades (Saviani, 2007), pointing to the multiplicity of meanings that throughout history have been added around the conception not only of evaluation, but also of education, curriculum and society.

However, through the epistemological transformations in conceptions of education, knowledge and curriculum, the meanings of evaluation began to deepen, assuming 'a pedagogical function, since it directly affects the teaching-learning process with the purpose of improving students' learning more than classifying them', according to Marinho, Fernandes and Leite (2014, p. 154). From the epistemological re-significations of such conceptions, we can observe a greater flexibility of the evaluation processes for negotiation, construction and experience of *evaluative practices of alternative formative character*, as Guba and Lincoln (1989) indicate when describing the fourth generation of evaluation.

It is in this movement of re-signification of meanings and evaluative practices that a meaning of evaluation is established which is more focused on the processes of education of the school subjects, and thus a meaning of evaluation directed to the development of teachers and students emerges, which is an elementary part of

a teaching-learning process whereby conceptions of education, knowledge, curriculum and evaluation all join forces for the effectiveness of the education of the school subjects. This meaning has been called *Formative Evaluation* and invites us to see the evaluative phenomenon not as an instrument of segregation of the subjects, but as a potential tool for school success.

As Scriven (1967) points out, the sense of formative evaluation considers learning not as a finished product to be valued summatively at the end of a period of time. On the contrary, such sense proves to be the fluid learning process progressively built up in the course of the formative experiences. In this context, learning is woven procedurally, anchored in the experience of a daily evaluation that considers formative principles and contributes, therefore, to a greater knowledge and regulation of the variables that present and interfere in the teaching-learning process, resulting in the reduction of the possibilities of school failure at the end of a cycle of studies.

In this scenario of displacement of the meanings of evaluation, we see the discursive movement of evaluation that 'has been deepened over time and implied new roles for teachers in their realization' (Marinho, 2014, p. 155). From this point of view of formative evaluation, the discursive position of the teacher is changed, since he/she passes from the holder of the power of evaluation to the subject that shares this power with the previously segregated individuals of the evaluation process, that is, the students.

In the context of assigning new roles to the evaluative practice of teachers, the enunciative place they occupy is one of the elements that contribute to the construction of meanings for evaluation, since, as Orlandi (2010) affirms, the subject occupies a place, a discursive position that influences the production of meanings of his/her saying. For this reason, we understand that the meanings teachers give to the evaluation show traces of the experiences they have had, both as teachers and former students of basic education, bearing in mind, as Villas Boas (2006, p. 15) indicates, that:

Teachers learn to evaluate as they graduate. This process is long: it covers all of his/her school career, as students, from kindergarten to university. It continues from the moment they begin to act as teachers and, sometimes, develops in courses specially destined to their education. All the situations that they witness and experience, as students, at the various levels of the schooling process, are part of their teachers' constitution and can be very striking.

Accordingly, we understand that 'the senses are not in the words themselves. They fall short and beyond', according to Orlandi (2010, p. 42), and we see that they bear the marks of the experiences of enunciative subjects, but they are not limited to them. In the case of the meanings of evaluation, these are constructed in a movement of dialog and ruptures with the evaluative trajectory of the subjects. That is why we currently have possibilities of experiencing evaluative practices that do not reflect the measurement, but which are woven into a formative course, as highlighted by Villas Boas (2013).

Hence, we emphasize that, although we recognize the existence of new⁸ meanings and formative evaluative cultures, these are due to changes in the conceptions of

8 We take here by new meanings of evaluation the ones that walk against the classificatory and excluding models of evaluation. Thus, these new meanings arise in order to deconstruct the supremacy of a selective evaluation that historically has been to the disservice of the formative student and teacher process.

society, education and education policies. We also understand that, with this establishment of new meanings, there is a need to meet the social demands, more specifically the process of democratization of education. This is what has been happening in the case of the education system in some Brazilian states, with the implementation of the learning cycles proposal (Mainardes, 2007; Fernandes, 2009; Oliveira-Mendes, 2015).

Thus, understanding that there is no way to perceive discourses far from their historical and social determinants, we comprehend that the emergence and attribution of formative meanings for the learning evaluation has not occurred naturally or disinterestedly, since we perceive, through the data that we present in this work, that the meanings of evaluation emerged in the discourses and in the evaluative practices of the teachers are not isolated in history, but they arise in a network of meanings in constant historical production over time. This way, drawing from Orlandi (2010, p. 33), we understand that:

For my words to make sense, they must already make sense. And this is the effect of the interdiscourse: it is necessary that what was said by a specific subject, in a particular moment, fades into memory so that, passing into 'anonymity', it can make sense in 'my' words.

That is to say that discourses around evaluation reveal remnants of their discursive memory, and are still guided by effects of seemingly forgotten and erased meanings in history, such as *evaluation as measure, description and formulation of value judgment*.

On that account, in terms of the formal and what 'can be said' in the academic/school environment, It cannot be denied the existence of a movement in defense of a more democratic and formative evaluation. However, in everyday life, eradicating exclusionary practices still presents itself as a challenge to education, since in many school contexts we still perceive the insistence on the experience of such practices. A study carried out by Villar (2009) is an elucidator of this tension between the said and the experienced, since it was verified by this author that 'the evaluative practice, even with some advances, still presents itself very much attached to the old conceptions of an authoritarian evaluation, arbitrary and excluding, which results in a great loss to students' development' (p. 241).

We understand that, when we visualize this dissociation of meanings, that is, what is thought and defended in the literature and the configuration of the selective evaluative practice developed in the classroom, it is necessary to take a look at the context of influence in which the school is placed, considering this macro space often ends up exerting some control under the evaluation practices. As an example, we point out the existence of some normative evaluation guidelines elaborated by states and municipalities⁹ that, from their construction process until their arrival on the school floor, are made of an imposed and vertical nature that, sometimes, ends up dictating forms of the evaluative practices. However, although we recognize the influence of the macro context under the evaluative practices, we understand that in everyday life of the classroom, teachers develop practices that deviate from the prescriptions imposed by normative texts of evaluation. Thus, they mobilize

9 See Villar's study (2009) that focuses on researching the impacts of evaluation policies, especially the cycle policy of the educational network of the city of Recife (Pernambuco – Brazil), under evaluative practices carried out by teachers of this network.

tactics, arts of making (Certeau, 2014) to re-signify the strategies imposed by the macro evaluative system.

When we recognize the complexity of the evaluative phenomenon, as well as its inseparability with the teaching process, we reaffirm the need for investigations that are concerned with analyzing the meanings of evaluation that emerge in the teachers' practices, considering that the reflection about them may 'contribute to the construction and development of an evaluation culture committed to everybody's learning' (Marinho, Fernandes & Leite, 2014, p. 163). It is from this perspective that we hope the reflections carried out here may contribute to/towards the construction of fair evaluative practices concerned with the education of the school subjects.

Results and discussion

In the discursive analysis developed here, we have tried to construct a network of meanings that allow the comprehension of the discourses given by the participating teachers, since we understand that they can offer indications about the meanings of evaluation permeated in the evaluative practices of these teachers. This way, our investigations were guided by five meanings of evaluation that emerged in the teachers' discourses, namely: *Formative evaluation*, *Classificatory evaluation*, *Continuous and diversified evaluation*, *Evaluation for decision making* and *Tactical evaluation*.¹⁰ Before we enter into the discussion of the meanings of evaluation emerged in the teachers' discourses, it is necessary to point out what we mean here by *discourse* and *meaning*, given that such concepts will serve as the basis for the analyzes developed.

We understand discourse as the course of the word, that is, as word in movement, producing meanings for the subjects (Orlandi, 2010). Therefore, through the recurrence of statements present in the teachers' discourse, we sought to design a network of elements that would signal and enable us to perceive the meanings of evaluation that underlie the evaluative practices of teachers, meanings that, as already affirmed, 'are not in the words themselves. They fall short and beyond them' (Orlandi, 2010, p. 42). Hence, the meanings are not only in words, because they are not limited to linguistic aspects, but they are constituted in a network of relations with other extralinguistic elements, such as: history, society, ideologies and subject subjectivities.

Specifically, with regard to the teachers' discourses, at the first moment, our analyzes pointed to the existence of a strong interrelationship between policies and evaluative practices, but not in a linear way, but with displacements that indicated that, even with a plurality of evaluative policies, they are incorporated and re-signified in different ways by the teachers in the everyday classroom.

Such pointing of the recognition and experience of the movement between evaluative practices and the macro context of evaluative policies is consistent with our understanding that, despite the interrelationship between the contexts of influence of evaluative policies and the micro evaluative practices developed in the classroom, such policies 'are not simply implemented within this arena but they are subject to interpretation and then recreated', as Mainardes (2006, p. 53) points out. This is what we have attested in the discourses that follow:

10 Although our subjects name/define some of these perspectives as synonymous (diagnostic, formative, diversified), in our analysis, we recognize the specificities of these meanings.

[...] unfortunately what I see is that the *student is weighed by the grade*, but I try not to follow that logic because I believe that the *grade does not say everything the student knows or does not know* (P3).

[...] unfortunately we evaluate by grade in the 3rd grade of school, don't we? *I do not like to do this, to evaluate it by grade, to stick to a grade, I don't*. I dislike it! But I do that, because that's the bureaucratic part. It is so that they ask, 'Teacher, what's my grade?', And I do not like to say, *because the evaluation is not to determine what the student is* (P2).

In the reports described above, we perceive the movement of distance between the prescriptions of the evaluation system and the practical evaluation carried out in the school, as sometimes the relation between these contexts does not occur in a harmonious way, given the specificities of appropriation of these spaces. Thus, the policy with a more prescriptive/official tone and the classroom as a multifaceted space produce tensions and constant re-significations, thus revealing a meaning of *Tactical evaluation*, that is, astute evaluation that circumvents the limits of what is prescribed in the official system.

In this conflict between the prescribed and the experienced, we visualize the struggle for the meaning of what is to be learning evaluation. Regarding the teachers, we realized that their understanding of the evaluative phenomenon varied, as referenced to the teachers (P4 and P3), since they pointed to the learning evaluation in a *Formative meaning*, that is, as a process that contributes to the development of the learner. In the case of P3, the teacher even announced the importance of a variety of evaluative instruments (evaluate in several ways), according to the following statements:

[...] evaluation is the *process that allows me to understand the development of the student* (P4).

[...] the evaluation process is not only descriptive in a test, it is not! It happens in many ways. I evaluate here constantly and through the tasks, through the proposals, I *check what they have achieved* (P3).

These discourses indicate that in the daily development of the evaluative practice, the referred teachers understand learning evaluation as a device for regulating student learning, as Silva (2010) advocates. That is, in these discourses, a meaning of *Formative evaluation* emerges that is characterized as a set of mobilized strategies to offer information about the specificities of the students' development and make it possible to plan teaching actions that contribute to the effectiveness of the ongoing learning.

In contrast, the discourse of P1 approaches a meaning of *Classification evaluation*, that is, evaluation as an instrument for measuring the students' learning: 'evaluation is what we usually do ... it is to measure the indexes of correctness and errors' (P1). The discourses were, therefore, marked by a plurality of understandings and practices about evaluation.

Through these findings, we bring to the discussion the understanding of Méndez (2002) in defending the need for the evaluation to be articulated with knowledge. However, to this author, knowledge cannot be measured, given that it is a historical and dynamic construction. Hence, it seems to us that, far from being a responsible professional in measuring students' knowledge, the teacher has the role of

understanding and interpreting the different ways in which the students appropriate this knowledge and construct it.

These discourses impel us to cast a reflective look at the trajectory of the evaluative practices, those that teachers once brought, in their statements, remnants of a historical context, in which the evaluation had as its main function the measurement of the students' learning. We verified, then, that in the educational field 'the use of evaluation as a measure has a long history', as Depresbiteris (1989, p. 5) emphasizes, and that 'every discourse is born in another (its raw material) and points to another (its future discourse). Therefore, in reality, it is never about a discourse, but a continuum' (Orlandi, 2012, p. 22). This means that the practices and meanings of evaluation are woven into a movement of tension between the historically spoken and done, and the new that presents itself as a possibility of change.

In addition to the teachers' understanding of evaluation, there is another particularity in their discourses that deserves attention. It is the understanding of P2 regarding the contributions of evaluation to the development of self-assessment of the teaching practice, as can be seen in the following statement:

Evaluation is how the teacher perceives what he or she is leaving behind, and where the children need to improve [...]. I think it serves to check our performance more than student's learning, doesn't it? (P2).

The discourse of this teacher leads us to reflect on the role of evaluation in the teaching-learning process, since for a long time evaluation has been seen solely as an instrument aimed at verifying student development. Today, through changes in conceptions of education, curriculum and teaching, evaluation is also seen as an elementary and enhancing tool of teaching practice, since, through it, the teacher is encouraged to carry out a self-assessment that enables to assess the scope, limitations, and challenges of the work. It is in this perspective that Silva (2010, 81) indicates that 'every teacher should evaluate his/her work, collect the information from it to reflect and reorient his/her practice'.

In this evaluative movement, the teacher's displacement of the discursive position (Orlandi, 2010) is noticed, as he/she in the role of evaluator of the actions of the students becomes the evaluated subject since he/she now has the task of performing a self-critical exercise of his/her practices. Thus, the transformations that evaluation has undergone over time have led the teacher to assume a dual discursive position, that is, a subject that evaluates the other (student) and subject that self-assess. However, we argue that these discursive positions are not experienced in a fragmented way, but there is an imbrication between them.

As previously mentioned, mediated by Ball's (2001) policy cycle, we understand that the context of influence of evaluation has repercussions in the context of the evaluative practice, and the inverse movement is also possible. It is mainly in this opposite way, protagonism of the context of practice, that we visualize the movement of resignification of the evaluative political discourses thought in the macro scope. We see, then, that 'no discourse term is impassible to multiple readings and no discourse has a single interpretation' (Burity, 1997, p. 12).

There was a recurrent diversity of instruments and evaluative procedures used by these teachers, such as: (extra) class activities, reading moments, dictation, observation of previous knowledge, use of anecdotes and research activities. This set

of elements is revealing of the recontextualizing character of the evaluative practices carried out by these teachers, considering that the demands arising from the context of influence do not make it impossible for teachers to make use of various evaluative tools and tactics.

An example of this recontextualisation of evaluative policies and practices is the realization of reading moments with the students of the 5th grade who were not yet literate, carried out by P4. Let us see what the teacher pointed out:

I evaluate this issue ... does the student have the grade? He/She does! [...]. But this does not prevent the teacher from doing this evaluation every day. So it is continuous and procedural. It is a process, for example: we are doing a reading project, so in this evaluation I am already doing this part: those who still can't read, those who are developing. And all this I write down. Then I make a comparison of these readings with the tests. Anyway ... it's a set of things. (P4).

Although the evaluative system in which this teacher is positioned indicates that the evaluation should only be carried out through tests and exams, the learning needs of the students of this teacher encouraged her to seek differentiated evaluative tactics to assess these students. Thus, the large number of students still not literate in the 5th grade revealed to the teacher that the tests requested by the evaluative system were not enough to offer her information regarding the development of the students' reading and writing skills. This didactic alternative agrees with the one advocated by Melchior (1994) when he affirms that in the teaching-learning process the evaluative tools need to be articulated and consistent with the teaching objectives that are intended to be achieved.

Thus, in the light of Perrenoud's (1999) reflections, we understand that, although the teacher develops the same teaching practice for all students, they have heterogeneous modes of knowledge construction and also diversified difficulties. Therefore, 'no overall adjustment corresponds to the measure of the diversity of needs' (Perrenoud, 1999, p. 121), as the students are particular in their capacities, needs and difficulties, which requires the breaking of the egalitarian and standardizing logic of the students. The author emphasizes that

[...] the important thing is not to administer to all patients the same tests, the same analyzes, the same exams. It is to establish a correct diagnosis for each one, to identify a pathology and, if possible, its causes. [...]. Like medical diagnosis, formative evaluation requires differentiated investments. (Perrenoud, 1999, p. 123).

It seems, then, that 'a formative evaluation in the true sense of the word does not result without an individualized regulation of the learning' (Perrenoud, 1999, p. 177). However, this individual intervention of the teacher does not detract from the relevance of the collective moments of decision making, since the evaluative procedures and the interventions in teaching made by the teachers constantly took place dialogically with the students.

Specifically, the discourses of the teachers P2 and P1 portrayed a meaning of *Evaluation for decision making*, since the information coming from the evaluative practices contributed to the decisions regarding the didactic demands. They have stated:

[...] if he is not able to learn, I will first analyze what is happening to him. So I call him and I talk, I analyze if the problem is the parents [...] I take some time

to analyze why he cannot keep up. So I'm going to analyze whether it's the way I'm teaching or whether it's an affective or an emotional issue (P2).

[...] with those who do not develop, I will seek the causes. Because ... what are the causes that are hindering their learning? (P1).

In the discourses mentioned, we have showed that the situations (in this case, the learning difficulties of the students) emerged in the daily routine of the classroom led these teachers to the realization of an investigative evaluative practice of student learning. This investigation is developed in conjunction with decision-making, since such practices are inseparable.

In view of the discussion undertaken here, we perceive that the meanings of evaluation constructed by the teachers understand evaluation as a tool for education and regulation of student learning. It is, therefore, a meaning that is linked to a dialogical movement between teaching, curriculum and evaluation, which breaks the practice of measurement carried out in the past, but at the same time, carries traces of it.

Final considerations

This work sought to analyze the meanings of evaluation permeated in the evaluative practices of teachers in the initial grades of Elementary Education. The data from this study has pointed out that the evaluative practices developed by the teachers approached a meaning of formative evaluation, due to factors such as: the development of a procedural and continuous evaluation, the realization of a self-assessment exercise, the mobilization of several formal and informal instruments, as well as the different treatment of information obtained in the evaluation process, such as re-directing teaching, more individualized monitoring of students' learning difficulties and the flexibility of planning. These factors were present in the meanings triggered during the use of semi-structured interviews and, therefore, led us to perceive the formative character present in the evaluative practices of these teachers.

However, we understand that the evaluative practice is not static, it is movement, so we recognize the oscillations present in them, because in these same practices we observed the intersection with other evaluation perspectives, such as an evaluation for measurement and classification.

The approximation of a practice of measuring student learning leads us to also perceive the presence of a positivist meaning of evaluation in the practices of these teachers, due to the fact that they see knowledge as a manipulable, precise and finished object, removing the dynamic, historical and social character that is proper to it.

Thus, the movement of the evaluative practices of these teachers indicates that sometimes they approached a formative perspective of evaluation, sometimes they distanced themselves, reflecting aspects of the positivist vision in their practices. However, we point out that these oscillations were probably due to a series of challenges that these professionals faced in the daily process of evaluation and that sometimes made it difficult to experience the formative meanings that they attributed to the evaluation. Thus, it seems to us that the dynamics of the daily life of the classroom has entailed a distance between the thought and the stated and what, in fact, has been materialized on the school environment.

In summary, we emphasize that, through the teachers' discourses, we were able to identify some elements that have contributed to the distance between the model of formative evaluation thought by them and the evaluative practice developed in the classroom. Thus, factors such as the imposition of policies of evaluation that do not meet the students' reality, the rigidity of the curricular time for the formal evaluation, the lack of resources and structure in the school and the social context of the students lead us to perceive the complexity of materialization of the meanings of evaluation in which the teachers were affiliated. These challenges point to the need for further studies to enable us to investigate how these can be overcome in the search for a fairer, more democratic evaluation that is at the service of the educational processes.

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