



Underlying Concepts in the Evaluative Rationalities of School Teachers¹

Concepciones subyacentes a las racionalidades evaluativas de docentes escolares

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Abstract

In this paper, we analyze the concepts underlying the evaluative rationalities of teachers who work in school establishments. The research is of a qualitative-interpretive nature. Fifteen teachers participated, who had varying different years of work experience and were teaching different levels and subjects of the school curriculum. To collect the information, we conducted a group interview and a focus group. The data were systematized by means of content analysis with version 12 of the software NVivo. The main results reveal the prevalence of technological evaluative rationalities and cultural practice rationalities among the participating teachers. Based on these findings, we discuss the need to reflect on the implicit components that underlie evaluative rationalities and how these should be revealed and assumed in order to address new demands of assessment practice in different school contexts.

Keywords: assessment conceptions; evaluative rationalities; evaluative epistemological perspectives; learning assessment

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Resumen

En este artículo se analizan las concepciones subyacentes a las racionalidades evaluativas de docentes que desarrollan su ejercicio profesional en instituciones escolares. La investigación es de carácter cualitativo-interpretativo. Participaron 15 docentes con diferentes años de experiencia laboral y que realizan docencia en diversos niveles y disciplinas del currículum escolar. Para la recopilación de información, se realizó una entrevista grupal y un grupo focal. Los datos fueron sistematizados mediante un análisis de contenido con el programa NVivo, versión 12. Los principales resultados relevan la preeminencia de las racionalidades evaluativas tecnológica y de práctica cultural en los docentes participantes. A partir de estos hallazgos, se discute la necesidad de reflexionar sobre los componentes implícitos que subyacen a las racionalidades evaluativas y cómo estas deben ser develadas y asumidas para enfrentar las nuevas demandas de la práctica evaluativa en los diferentes contextos escolares.

Palabras clave: concepciones evaluativas; racionalidades evaluativas; perspectivas epistemológicas evaluativas; evaluación de los aprendizajes

Introduction

Since the 1990s, school assessment policy in Chile has established guidelines for educational institutions to conduct evaluative activities to consolidate certification processes and for the measurement of learning. These guidelines are based on an accountability perspective, in which the assurance of educational quality is limited to the results on standardized assessments (Auld et al., 2018; Smith, 2016). A first experience of regulation of this in school institutions was established in Decree N° 511, which created a series of administrative-educational provisions that involve a paradigmatic transition regarding the foundations, characteristics, and practices of assessment tasks (Ministerio de Educación, 2019). There was evidence of progress in school assessment policy between 1999 and 2018 with a triple focus of action: (a) the transition from certifying-technological assessment practice towards practice that emphasizes the assessment of the process and for learning; (b) the prevalence of formative evaluation, and (c) the importance of feedback as a connecting practice to strengthen the process and progress of learning in the classroom (Ministerio de Educación, 2019).

This school assessment policy, which attributes importance to the process and progress of students in the framework of assessment of learning contrasts with assessment systems based on centralized and standardized educational quality (Murillo & Román, 2010; Smith, 2016). The application of standardized assessments that establish incentives and penalties depending on the performances of school institutions cause difficulties, on the one hand, to include the requirements of the evaluative system for measuring school results for certification and ranking and, on the other, to integrate authentic and comprehensive assessment perspectives and practices to consolidate formative learning processes (Murillo & Román, 2009; Panadero & Algassab, 2019). These difficulties oblige school institutions to make decisions based on positivist-technological definitions of the measurement of the quality and equity of learning, pedagogical management, and teaching practices with respect to the development of curricular requirements. This situation limits transformative assessment actions that are oriented toward the basic principles of evaluative justice (Popham, 2013).

The definitions of national assessment policy thus include positivist-technological evaluative rationalities focused on the measurement of learning and another naturalist-cultural rationality based on authentic principles (Ríos et al., 2019). This theoretical positioning of the state is intended to influence the orientation of new assessment practices, aiming to reduce the gaps between demands for improvement in learning and the respective processes of acquisition, construction, and transmission of learning in schools.

This change in school assessment policy is demonstrated in the guidelines for the development of teachers' pedagogical and evaluative practices in the classroom (Ministerio de Educación, 2019). For example, the Framework for Good Teaching (Marco para la Buena Enseñanza) (Ministry of Education & CPEIP, 2018a) established specific requirements and guidelines in the preparation of teaching and learning for all students. In this respect, it states the importance of using assessment strategies that are consistent with curricular objectives to support and monitor the understanding and appropriation of content through the feedback process in the classroom. Likewise, with Decree 67/2018, the policy emphasizes a formative perspective of learning-oriented assessment and thus assigns a central role to teacher feedback as a practice that coordinates the process and progress of learning (Ministerio de Educación, 2019; Ministerio de Educación & CPEIP, 2018b). A demand therefore arises for pedagogical actions and formative assessment practices based on feedback as one of the main factors to improve teaching and learning processes in school education.

Nevertheless, there are problems and tensions regarding the new guidelines for the implementation of these updated assessment practices in the classroom. On the one hand, the research indicates that the most deficient area for teachers in the assessment of their professional performance is in the module on assessment for learning (Sun et al., 2011). Between 2018 and 2019, the average score obtained by teachers in the assessment module was 2.1 points on a scale of 1 to 4 (Ministerio de Educación, 2020). On the other hand, the results of the last National Diagnostic Evaluation (Ministerio de Educación & CPEIP, 2018b) confirm this trend and relate it to the poor training on assessment of future teachers currently studying teaching degrees (Gysling, 2017). In light of this evidence, it is suggested that there is a critical node in this area: the demand for formative assessment practices, the poor training of teachers on assessment for learning, and the difficulties of the current school assessment system that seeks to integrate standardization policies through measurements such as SIMCE¹ and PSU² with a formative perspective and aimed at learning (Ríos et al., 2020).

Research on conceptions and practices of assessment in school education at the national and international levels suggests that classroom assessment is summative, with little description of the learning process and mostly being a limited exercise to guide and reflect on learning achievement and difficulties (Meckes, 2018; Ravela, 2009; Fernández-Ruiz & Panadero, 2020). In terms of the conceptions, national studies show that teachers consider assessment to be an action to evaluate the process and conclusion of learning, with a division in its purpose depending on whether it has a summative or formative approach (Arancibia-Herrera et al., 2019; Meckes, 2018; Prieto, 2008; Prieto & Contreras, 2008).

With respect to assessment practices, the literature identifies three common problems in elementary and secondary education: (a) dichotomous questions with low cognitive demand, (b) assessment as a practice to justify grading, and (c) the absence of evaluative criteria to support the learning process (Black & Wiliam, 2018; Ruiz-Primo, 2011; Ravela et al., 2014). Similarly, the questions asked or activities carried out by elementary and secondary education teachers involve little or no problem-solving and are therefore focused on assessing the memorization of concepts and content (Ravela et al., 2014; Ruiz-Primo & Brookhart, 2018).

1. Translator's note: Education *Quality Measurement System (Sistema de Medición de la Calidad de la Educación)*.
2. Translator's note: University Selection Exam (*Prueba de Selección Universitaria*).

Considering this context of assessment, which is constructed and strained by these two perspectives that guide evaluation in school institutions, the need emerges to strengthen the technical and educational guidelines in this field and to consolidate a school assessment culture for learning that is linked to the appropriation of new evaluative approaches and which promotes the transformation and innovation of pedagogical practice. The need to connect learning-oriented assessment and authentic assessment practice requires more extensive knowledge of the subjective aspects that compose the evaluative rationalities or epistemological perspectives that sustain these classroom practices. This involves taking into account not only the complexities and new challenges that arise from school assessment policy, but also considering how teachers translate them from their theoretical-conceptual frameworks.

Accordingly, taking on the challenge of transforming practice and responding to the demands of the national assessment system—with its various strengths and limitations—entails further exploration of the values that teachers attribute to assessment: the conceptions, definitions, reasoning, objectives, and purposes that underpin their practices and which are essential for building learning in the classroom. In short, it is necessary to study the rationalities that underlie and guide teachers' conceptions and practices of assessment.

In order to reveal the complexities that this research intends to address, we present the main results on the conceptions that underpin the evaluative rationalities of teachers in the school environment. The objective is to examine them with respect to the rationalities or epistemological perspectives of assessment among school teachers.

Epistemological perspectives on assessment

Rationalities or epistemological perspectives on assessment are defined as the theoretical-conceptual frameworks that connect and support conceptions and practices of assessment (Ríos et al., 2019). As an object of knowledge, they are positioned at a structural level for the design of assessment policy, its protocols, and as guidelines for initial teacher training and, at the specific level, they are translated into regulations, practices, procedures, and instruments (Jiménez, 2019; Moreno-Olivos, 2016). Conceptions of assessment are thus regarded as a construct that integrates beliefs, ideas, and perceptions that affect assessment practice either implicitly or explicitly (Brown, 2011; Yates & Johnston, 2017), meanwhile, assessment practice entails the actions that constitute the development of evaluative experiences and activities in the classroom and which are influenced by teachers' conceptions of assessment (Brown, 2011).

Assessment practices are related to the positive or negative conceptions that teachers have about assessment (Brown, 2011; Yates & Johnston, 2017). Indeed, summative conceptions of assessment develop practices that are oriented toward the construction of objective tests for the certification and measurement of learning with a normative approach and associated with a positivist or technological epistemological perspective of assessment. Meanwhile, formative conceptions of assessment are connected to practices to support learning through the application of decentralized assessment agents (co-assessment, self-assessment, and peer assessment) with a focus on self-regulation and evaluative justice, and are therefore related to critical epistemological or sociocultural perspectives of classroom assessment (Black & Wiliam, 2018; Brown et al., 2012; Fernández-Ruiz & Panadero, 2020).

Considering these analytical frameworks, it can be argued that educational assessment has undergone profound conceptual and functional transformations that have been aimed at problematizing the processes of acquisition, transmission, and consolidation of learning (Ravela, 2006). This constitutes a central pillar of any school system that seeks to respond to the complexities of ensuring equitable learning processes and guaranteeing the achievement of performances that support the present and future development of students (Escudero, 2003; Ravela et al., 2014; Ravela, 2009).

There are diverse epistemological positions underlying the various conceptions of assessment with regard to how evaluative knowledge is understood and constructed. It is therefore important to be aware of the ideas and beliefs of teachers about assessment in order to analyze their implications for assessment practices and to progress towards the construction of a knowledge space that allows assessment activities to be strengthened as a central tenet for the improvement of classroom learning. Thus, scholars such as Escudero (2016), Guba and Lincoln (1989), Jiménez (2019), Leeuw and Donaldson (2015), and Moreno-Olivos (2014) have proposed the existence of three epistemological perspectives: Assessment as technology, as cultural practice, and as sociopolitical practice.

Assessment as technology

Assessment as technology entails the measurement of learning in relation to curricular objectives to determine students' levels of achievement according to classification, selection, and certification criteria (Moreno-Olivos, 2014). It uses psychometric methods for the application of quantitative inferential procedures to analyze learning outcomes as a technological-positivist type of knowledge, according to the principles established by an evaluative model inspired by Tylerian postulates (Alcaraz, 2015; Escudero, 2016; Ríos et al., 2019).

From this perspective, assessment is a mechanism of classification and hierarchization, the main instrument of which is the application of standardized tests to assess learning achievement with a normative-prescriptive approach. This allows consistent comparisons to be made between subjects with expected performances and the achievement of educational programs. Its nomothetic approach is thus related to an assessment practice *of* learning that assigns a fundamental value to the standardization, comparison, and measurement of learning processes (Moreno-Olivos, 2014; Jiménez, 2019).

According to the literature (Popham, 2013; Shepard, 1989, 2006; Stobart, 2010), criticism of this perspective is that it makes teachers' assessment practices technical-reproductive actions, since it is focused on the development of assessment experiences and activities that assume a linear approach to learning, which restricts the use of alternative or decentralized assessment agents. This is what Stiggins (1995) called *assessment illiteracy*, that is to say, the inability of teachers to transform their definitions of quality assessment, so they assume that parametric assessment designs are reliable and capable of delimiting metric projections of learning. This creates the illusion of guaranteeing the achievement, acquisition, and resolution of indicators of educational programs based on their linear logic (Alcaraz, 2015; Gipps & Stobart, 2003; Ravitch, 2011). In a nutshell, assessment as a technology subordinates the educational process to assessment metrics based on its certifying quality for learning, which promotes the design of pedagogical mechanisms in school institutions to respond to standardized requirements as a synonym of educational quality.

Assessment as cultural practice

Assessment as a cultural practice defines assessment as an interaction between educational agents. This perspective considers the participants as constructors of assessment; therefore, they are considered to be subjects and not objects of the assessment (Santos Guerra, 2003). It is assumed that subjects are rational and conscious, so assessment becomes an intersubjective space in which the reflexivity of the subjects is the basis for the development of evaluative judgments regarding the process of co-construction of learning (Moreno-Olivos, 2014). Assessment is therefore an analytical-reflexive and systematic process that depends on the interaction between subjects to develop meaning and significance in an assessment process aimed at learning (Leeuw & Donaldson, 2015; Moreno-Olivos, 2016; Ríos et al., 2019).

The reflective capacity posited by this perspective establishes two levels of action: the resignification of the curriculum and the intersubjective construction of assessment as a way to problematize assessment practice in the classroom (Moreno-Olivos, 2016; Leeuw & Donaldson, 2015). Indeed, assessment as a sociocultural practice is a symbolic-dialectical space that coordinates the teaching-learning process and is not a static-external specificity positioned and oriented towards completion of the curriculum (Grundy, 1991; House & Kenneth, 2011; Ríos & Herrera, 2020). Assessment is therefore related to the formation of judgments on the process and practices carried out by the subjects through learning experiences that promote co-participation and co-construction of meanings regarding the achievement of learning (Ahumada, 2005; Fetterman et al., 2015; Hounsell, 2011).

Finally, this perspective supports the idea that assessment is a cultural and social practice, focused on the issuance of judgments made by the subjects based on joint processes of deliberation and on how they attribute meanings to the evaluative praxis, both individually and collectively. These evaluative judgments are based on the experiences, conceptions, and socio-educational contexts of the agents, who make an effort to integrate them into the particular and social reality of the subject.

Assessment as sociopolitical practice

This perspective defines assessment as “a mechanism to exercise power, to select and classify individuals according to their merits” (Moreno-Olivos, 2014, p. 12). Assessment as a sociopolitical practice forms part of critical approaches to the educational phenomenon (Apple, 1982; Giroux, 1990).

Assessment is a political device that is thus disputed in the school. This is manifested in how limits are formed between subjects according to their position of power in the educational institution, which is demonstrated in forms and contents subordinated to mechanisms of selection, control, and reproduction. The school institution is conceived as a space of production, reproduction, and domination over meanings regarding the teaching and learning process (Bourdieu, 2005; House, 1997). The school institution therefore determines hegemonic knowledge, attributing cultural legitimacy to the reproduction of certain types of knowledge associated with dominant social groups.

According to this perspective, assessment is a sophisticated device to reproduce legitimized knowledge. This reproduction of social relationships takes place through the mechanical acquisition/transmission of curricular benchmarks, school culture, and the respective meanings about standards, values, and knowledge (Borjas, 2014; Carbajosa, 2011; Kincheloe, 2008). Assessment is therefore a field disputed between educational agents who strive to sum up the actions to negotiate meanings in the intersubjective processes that determine assessment practice (Apple, 2008; House, 1997).

From this perspective, the teacher as assessor is a crucial intellectual who analyzes, interprets, and questions the formative project with a constructive and formative interest. This is an interest in autonomy and freedom that emancipates subjects through critical awareness of knowledge. Through assessment practice as an equality-oriented device, the subjects create the necessary conditions for the transformation of the educational process based on organized and cooperative action. Assessment is therefore conceived as a democratic, participatory, and liberating process, which requires the conscious involvement of the student as a learning subject and demands fair assessment practice on the part of the teacher (Kemmis, 1988; Murillo & Hidalgo, 2018).

In order to develop assessment from a critical-democratic, participatory, and liberating perspective, its design and practice are carried out using assessment indicators and criteria that are co-constructed between the teacher and students to redistribute evaluative power in the classroom (Popham, 2013).

Methodology

Methodological approach

A qualitative-interpretative methodological approach was used to analyze the teachers' conceptions of assessment (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Flick et al., 2004). This is aimed at understanding the experiences of subjects in a specific phenomenon (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The interpretive approach is used because it emphasizes the understanding and interpretation of a specific social reality that develops into the meanings, beliefs, and motivations of the subjects that provide meaning to that reality (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Flick, 2009). This research is thus aimed at understanding the conceptions of school teachers regarding assessment.

Participants

The study participants are school teachers who were selected through non-probabilistic purposive sampling (Ballestín & Fàbregues, 2018). The teachers selected had previously answered the survey on assessment styles (Ahumada, 2003) included in the first stage of this research. A total of 54 teachers answered the survey and, based on the results obtained, a second stage was carried out to expand the information collected. The criteria to select the teachers for this second stage ensured there was representation of the total number of participants who responded to the survey. Fifteen teachers were chosen from two schools, one municipal and the other subsidized-private, both located in Santiago, Chile. Of the total number of teachers participating, 12 were women and three were men. Their ages ranged from 28 to 56, with work experience of between five and 30 years, and they taught at different levels and in different subjects of the school curriculum.

Application of data collection techniques and instruments

A group interview and a focus group were used to collect information (Flick, 2009; Fernández, 2001). Both of these knowledge production techniques make it possible to investigate the subjects' accounts according to their actions and experiences regarding a specific phenomenon (Kamberelis et al., 2018). The use of questions in these techniques enables an order of speaking and listening to be established to interpret the diversity of meanings and dimensions in the actions described by the subjects (Kvale, 2011). Therefore, use of the group interview and focus group allows the construction of knowledge in interaction with the interviewees to access the meanings and beliefs that constitute the phenomenon experienced. In this study, both techniques were used because of (a) the number of participants, (b) their representativeness to account for the diversity of perspectives on assessment, and (c) the logic of connection between the questions presents nuances depending on the number of participants to whom they are applied (Kvale, 2011).

Four teachers participated in the group interview, one woman and three men, all belonging to a municipal elementary school in the San Bernardo district. Eleven teachers took part in the focus group, seven women and four men, all teachers at a private-subsidized school in the La Cisterna district. All of the participants had previously answered the survey on assessment styles, which served as an input for the preparation of thematic guidelines for both techniques. Thus, in order to reveal the conceptions underlying teachers' evaluative rationalities, the following dimensions of assessment were considered: meanings, objectives, intentions, temporalities, utilities, instruments, agents, and practices.

The guidelines included 17 questions that were validated by three external experts using the matrix proposed by Escobar-Pérez and Cuervo-Martínez (2008). This matrix establishes four variables: sufficiency, clarity, coherence, and relevance, and sets out validation indicators on a scale of scores from 0 to 4 points. All questions obtained a high ranking according to the validation matrix that determines the relevance and coherence of the questions with their respective analytical dimensions.

Information analysis and interpretation strategy

The group interview lasted 70 minutes and the focus group lasted 56 minutes. The records of both were fully transcribed in order to systematically treat the information by using deductive content analysis (Mayring, 2014; Schreier, 2013). The analysis protocol included the following stages: (a) textual transcription of the material; (b) construction of a coding matrix, taking as a reference the guideline of questions applied in the discussion group and in the focus group according to the research categories and subcategories; (c) coding of the transcribed material into text units or fragments according to the subcategories; (d) interpretation of the text units according to the subcategories (questions), and (e) presentation of the results in a narrative text organized according to the subcategories.

The information produced was coded using version 12 of the NVivo qualitative analysis software. This allows the coding of content units and construction of hierarchically-structured databases according to the nodes (codes) previously defined by the researcher, based on the thematic guidelines in this case. The decision to use this tool was made because of the possibility of analyzing the information by means of the creation of codes, classification of information, construction of typologies, and by making comparisons (Bezeley & Jackson, 2013; Flick, 2009).

Results

The results are presented according to the techniques used and are analyzed considering the theoretical foundations of the epistemological perspectives underlying the teachers' conceptions of assessment.

Group interview

A common conception of assessment can be observed among the teachers who took part in the group interview. According to their responses, they understand assessment as a procedure that enables the collection of information on their students' learning. This information is used to make pedagogical decisions regarding the achievement of curricular objectives. This definition of classroom assessment is a technological rationale, since its understanding is connected to the design and application of standardized instruments to analyze learning from a nomothetic approach and thus establish whether the results achieved are as expected according to the design of the teaching. This conception of assessment is identified with the following statement:

[Assessment is] a collection of data [about] what the student answers, facing an assessment instrument. [Therefore, assessment] is a collection of data that is handled to improve pedagogical practices to see how much the student knows or does not know (teacher 1).

According to Shepard (2006), teachers position assessment as if it were a bureaucratic activity that is limited to collecting data on learning, oriented towards measuring what the student knows or does not know.

However, in the group interview, there is evidence of conceptions about assessment from a process approach, at the service of learning and with emphasis on formative assessment. Although there is a consensus that assessment makes it possible to collect data on learning, they also highlight its role in providing feedback on student performance and adapting the design of teaching. These definitions are therefore related to an evaluative rationality as a cultural practice.

Assessment is done at a moment in the student's learning to see how much content the student possesses and also to allow the teacher to modify their practices and strategies in that assessment. [Therefore] it is seen as the real image of the course, how they are learning on a daily basis and how I, as a teacher, can use this image to project myself for future classes (teacher 2).

The teachers highlight the changes that have progressively been established in the school regarding the role of assessment in the classroom. They point out that the internal assessment policy has encouraged the design and application of a diversity of evaluative instruments with a strong formative orientation. This can be observed when they point to the incorporation of observation procedures, such as the use of analytical rubrics and scales. The teachers explain that this change is for two reasons: to improve oral communication in students through highly complex assessment experiences in all subjects, such as the development of a dissertation each year, and the new assessment requirements established in decree 67/2018. Therefore, the diversification of assessment instruments has become a policy of the school institution to consolidate evaluation practices among teachers and improve learning in the classroom. This can be seen in the following assertions:

There are different forms of assessment; I, at least, try to apply several, starting with the simplest ones, such as checklists, assessment instruments with different challenges, single-choice questions, developmental questions, assessment scales, and rubrics. Also, here at school there are institutionalized instruments that all teachers have to use at least at some point during the school year; in other words, here at school we don't just use the test (teacher 1).

In this establishment, some processes associated with assessment have been institutionalized and this has given us good results that have formed a systematic process. [For example], these rubrics that we've implemented mean that there's an order for us in this respect, which is quite important and has become significant and valued (teacher 4).

This aspect of a positive view of assessment diversity is associated with an evaluative rationality as a cultural practice, since it highlights the importance of using strategies and techniques in the classroom for the development of learning as a fundamental part of the assessment design. This also demonstrates an overlap between the teachers' rationalities, which combine positivist definitions with evaluative principles as a cultural practice.

The overlap between evaluative rationalities is evident in the teachers' conceptions of the ways in which they integrate assessment actions in the classroom to analyze and interpret learning. The diversification of assessment instruments establishes dialogical evaluative logics oriented towards the development of new understandings and uses of assessment in the school. This allows teachers to deliberate and make pedagogical decisions to construct meanings regarding assessment and its role in supporting learning (Grundy, 1991; Popham, 2013). These conceptions are not in opposition to the importance of the assessment *of* learning from a summative approach and with emphasis on certification, since this is part of the assessment process, as the teachers state.

They say that they promote student participation in assessment processes through the application of self-assessment. This type of instrument is used systematically and is considered part of the assessment design through the creation of metacognitive questions. The teachers also state that co-assessment is less frequently used. Teachers who have applied self-assessment and co-assessment in their classes feel that students are demanding and critical regarding their learning.

Teachers often have self-assessment tools [to ask about] what they learned today [through] metacognitive questions (teacher 3).

There are teachers who use co-assessment. In this case, the children are even more demanding [of] themselves and their peers. They are more critical of themselves about their own work, their own tasks, and this also implies greater responsibility (teacher 4).

This suggests that students are considered subjects of assessment rather than objects (Moreno-Olivos, 2014; Ríos & Herrera, 2020).

The teachers' responses demonstrate an evaluative rationality as a technology in relation to the assessment design, which is progressively adjusted according to the learning units in order to make its implementation in the classroom more flexible. The teachers state that the assessment design is an input that allows learning goals to be established based on the curricular demands, which are adapted according to the learning processes of their students. This procedural information is collected thanks to formative instruments.

[The] teacher knows their students, so in this case, they also specifically take out the skills that the children have, in order to make the decision about what type of assessment they're going to take. Because each course is different and each teacher manages or is well aware, in this case, of the skills of each of the children (teacher 3).

When considering assessment of the process and final assessment, there's a process of adjustment that is seen from class by class (teacher 4).

These results show the overlap between technological assessment perspectives and cultural practice. Teachers make decisions according to the assessment process experienced class by class according to the development of learning achieved by the students. Therefore, they carry out actions as practical-reflective subjects to adjust the assessment design and practice from a formative approach. However, collection of data on learning from a summative approach is important for the future configuration of assessment tasks.

Finally, teachers see assessment as a way of imparting justice when they recognize comprehensive learning that involves attitudes and the development of values in students (House & Kenneth, 2011). These principles are identified as a professional challenge by teachers.

Assessment processes should not only be quantitative, but there's also a qualitative issue. We have to broaden the [evaluative] range, because, as I said before, it's difficult to assess values or those kinds of things (teacher 4).

When a child is faced with an area in which they're not proficient and they've made an effort, persevered [and] is a participative, responsible, polite, and respectful student, if you can't give them the grade, but at the time of the assessment, let's say, [you can] guide them so that the child has a moment of learning and can learn during the test, you impart justice. There are plenty of students who have lots of abilities, but they don't take advantage of them to improve their learning and they get a very low grade. So you don't apply the same criteria to the other student, because I believe that effort and perseverance should always be rewarded (teacher 2).

Considering these responses, assessment as justice is related to the assessments made by teachers according to the different learning achievements demonstrated by their students. This conception of fair assessment is closely linked to an evaluative rationality as a sociopolitical practice, since the assessment action is adapted for each student according to principles of equity (House, 1997; Murillo & Hidalgo, 2018).

To summarize, there is a coexistence of evaluative rationalities to guide classroom practice, as well as a shared conception of assessment among teachers who state that it is a medium that facilitates the collection of information to improve pedagogical decision-making. Similarly, there is an effort to diversify instrumental assessment practice, its orientation for learning, and to consider students as subjects of assessment. Lastly, it should be noted that most teachers see assessment as a way of imparting justice and evaluating the role of students as protagonists of their learning.

Focus group

The conception of assessment of the teachers in the focus group is consistent with an evaluative rationality as a technology. Assessment is therefore conceived as a procedure for measuring learning that allows relevant information to be collected to make an evaluative judgment and establish certain adjustments to classroom practice. Assessment is thus aimed at comparing and contrasting the results obtained by students with the curricular objectives established in the teaching design.

[Assessment] is a very technical thing and it has to be in perfect alignment with the learning objectives and with your pedagogical activities (teacher 1).

The teachers in the focus group also demonstrate conceptions of assessment based on a cyclical, process approach, with a focus on learning progress and adjustment of teaching. These definitions are consistent with an evaluative rationality as a cultural practice.

Assessment is a cyclical process in pedagogy, as participant 1 said, where one collects information, makes changes to pedagogical strategies, etc., looking for weak points, to strengthen them of course, and then reevaluates them, etc. It's a cyclical process (teacher 5).

In the dialogue, the teachers also emphasize the transformation of the assessment practice attempted by the school institution in the last six years. They point out that guidelines have been institutionalized for the diversification of the assessment instruments and agents used in the classroom. This finding indicates the incorporation of an evaluative rationality as a cultural practice influenced by the assessment policy of the school institution in order to advance in the development of assessment practices to serve learning (Ahumada, 2005; Moreno-Olivos, 2016; Popham, 2013).

Unfortunately, our educational system conditions us, because we have to prepare students for the SIMCE and PSU. There is no alternative way of assessing. It's a pencil and paper form, which statistically measures learning. So, clearly, we're still obliged to maintain certain guidelines, but we can make these evaluative variations, which also allow us to teach in another way; at the same time as we assess, we teach in another manner and we add value to the assessment, as the school has tried to do (teacher 5).

The teachers point out that formative assessment is used for the diversification of assessment instruments and agents, as well as for the adjustment of classroom teaching. This approach to assessment is encouraged by the school institution through the guidelines established in departmental meetings and in teachers' committees.

[The technical meetings are aimed at] how to construct the pencil and paper tests, which have to be calibrated, the type of questions, with a certain number of items. Superficial questions have to be [the] least. We have to ask questions that target higher thinking skills. We should have assessment diversity ... the issue of the rubrics started about six years ago and we all had a hard time at the beginning, there was a lot of trial and error, but I'd dare to say that now we're more or less experts (teacher 1).

This finding shows the coexistence of an institutional assessment policy based on an evaluative rationality as a technology and as a cultural practice that influences the assessment practices of teachers. This integration of evaluative rationalities enables the development of assessment *for and of* learning with pedagogical spaces that allow reflection and dialogue between teachers to improve assessment activities in the classroom (Moreno-Olivos, 2016).

The teachers state that student participation in assessment is achieved through the application of self-assessment and co-assessment. Each teacher is autonomous in terms of deciding when and how to guide these assessment agents in accordance with the learning objectives. However, the teachers acknowledge that the challenge is to incorporate self- and co-assessment as a systematic practice in the classroom.

The students tend to overestimate their grades, but, as the teacher says, it's also an exercise that has to be worked on. Because if you look them in the face and ask them: 'Would you really get a seven³? No teacher, I'm really more like a four' (teacher 7).

These results show that students are considered as participants in the assessment process, that is, as subjects who reflect on their school performance and who have the conditions to assess their learning autonomously and with the capability of making decisions about their formative process. This evidence shows conceptions of the rationality of assessment as a cultural practice (Panadero & Algassab, 2019; Santos Guerra, 2003).

Finally, teachers reflect on the identification that they plan based on a technological evaluative rationality and the analysis of learning outcomes has a somewhat cultural approach. They state that the assessment design is conceived as a way of responding to the demands of the educational system and, specifically, to the logic of accountability, while the analysis of the results depends on the students' learning process, their characteristics, and formative needs. Therefore, they express a position in which both evaluative rationalities coexist.

We have to respond to a system. For example, in May, each subject has to have at least two grades. [This] helps us to measure how we're doing and how the students are doing with their grades. But the parents will also come to ask about the results. So, we do plan, we do look at this daily assessment, class by class, what they're learning, how they're learning. But I also need to have the real result, and the result in numbers. How many children are passing, how many children are failing. Because, as has been said all the time, we're responding to a system, [in] which what matters is the grade, nothing else matters, because the child passes, based on what, based on the grade, the child is successful based on what? Based on the grade. If they only have fours⁴, lazy kid, they're no good at this, mediocre (teacher 7).

You also realize that the ideal is sometimes different from what's real. So, finally, the subject makes the situation more flexible, then they transform the ideal into what's real and natural, therefore, they reach a certain consensus between what's planned and what's real (teacher 2).

To summarize, the conception of assessment shared by the teachers in the focus group consists of understanding assessment as a form of measurement that collects relevant information on the learning achieved by students, from which they can make judgments and adjustments to their teaching. With respect to their practices, they mention the use of formative assessment as an instance to adjust the teaching-learning processes. At the same time, they emphasize that there is a diversity of assessment instruments that are chosen and constructed depending on their relevance and development for the achievement of learning. There is certain agreement among teachers

3. Translator's note: Seven is the highest grade in the Chilean school system. Four is the minimum pass grade.

4. This would mean that the student is only achieving the minimum pass grades.

regarding the idea that students are valid subjects to actively participate in evaluations through self-assessment and co-assessment agents. These findings show that there is coexistence between a technological evaluative rationality and assessment as a cultural practice.

Finally, in the opinion of teachers, the persistence of a technological rationality in assessment is a way of responding to the demands of the national assessment system considering its dimension of accountability.

Discussion

The results of this research reveal the juxtaposition of the conceptions of assessment among teachers. The coexistence between a technological evaluative rationality and assessment as a cultural practice is consistent with the findings of other studies (Arancibia-Herrera, et al., 2019; Ríos et al., 2020). There is agreement in the studies on the existence of a multidimensionality among teachers regarding how they conceive and implement assessment in the classroom and how they associate their practice with the improvement and achievement of learning (Gulikers et al., 2013; Wiliam, 2011).

These results are similar to findings on the conceptions of teachers from different disciplinary areas (Arancibia-Herrera et al., 2019). The teachers who participated in the group interview and in the focus group state that there is an integration of assessment categories related to the assessment of the process, its differentiation in practice in terms of the summative or formative perspective, the manner of responding to the curricular standard or criteria, and incorporating the learning needs of students. However, the evidence points to the persistent view of assessment as an isolated or particular aspect related to assessing the final learning performance (Prieto, 2008; Prieto & Contreras, 2008; Ríos et al., 2019).

The findings are also consistent with the research by Thomas and Madison (2010), who highlight the relevance of the students' role to participate in the process of building assessments to strengthen their training. The teachers in this study consider assessment fair and a cultural practice when self-assessment and co-assessment agents are applied as instances of autonomy and participation among students. Similarly, these results are consistent with the study by Martínez et al. (2014), in that the design and implementation of assessment is flexible and is intended to respond to the diversity of learning in the classroom.

The results also show that use of self-assessment and co-assessment is rare and when they are used, it is only done sporadically in the classroom, as indicated in the literature (Panadero & Brown, 2017). Although assessment decentralization practices contribute to processes for self-regulation of learning (Ríos et al., 2020; Panadero et al., 2017), they are only partially implemented in school education.

The aspects found in this research that differ from the specialized literature (Fernández-Ruíz & Panadero, 2020; Gulikers et al., 2013) are related to the role of educational institutions in reinforcing or collaborating with changes in teachers' conceptions and practices regarding assessment. For both groups, the school promotes instances of reflection and collaboration to encourage a process that allows a response to the formative challenge of assessment for learning and obtaining positive achievements regarding the demands of the educational system considering its standardized dimension. However, there are tensions about the role of school institutions in influencing teachers' conceptions and practices of assessment. As Fernández-Ruíz and Panadero (2020) state, there is a progressive transition from formative perspectives of assessment that are subordinated to practices of a certifying nature insofar as standardized assessment becomes relevant to measure learning achievement at the institutional level.

In short, it is argued that—in designing assessment—teachers display a technological evaluative rationality, since the emphasis of their conception is centered on assessment instruments as devices to measure learning and thus collect evidence to compare whether the results are related to the curricular objectives. Similarly, the evaluative rationality can be a cultural practice when teachers consider students to be active participants in the assessment process with an orientation towards formative decision-making (Hounsell, 2011; Moreno-Olivos, 2016; Ríos et al., 2020). They also consider assessment to be fair when they incorporate students as subjects who are able to participate critically in the assessment (Murillo & Hidalgo, 2018).

Conclusions

The results of this research show that teachers' conceptions of assessment mainly take the form of evaluative rationalities as a technology and cultural practice. Teachers' definitions of the meanings of classroom assessment demonstrate the persistence of dichotomous pairs that are classic in the field of assessment: summative/formative, for process or product, or *from or for* learning. However, the findings also show nuances regarding how these conceptions of assessment guide classroom practice. Although teachers define assessment as measurement, their conceptions are based on a technological rationality and they see assessment as a cyclical process for the intersubjective construction of learning, relating to a rationality as a cultural practice. Thus, the teachers participating in this study indicated that the coexistence of both rationalities is a way of addressing the demands of external and internal school assessment policy.

This combination of approaches to assessment in the conceptions underlying evaluative rationalities demonstrates the importance of internal factors related to school assessment cultures and to the new demands established by school assessment policy. Accordingly, the complexities that emerge in teachers' conceptions of assessment not only involve factors associated with their initial training, but also entail the role of school institutions and how assessment policies are implemented in educational communities.

Although the teachers state in their discourses that there is coexistence between summative and formative conceptions of assessment that constitute central aspects to differentiate the two evaluative rationalities, common concepts emerge that construct the meanings they have about assessment: assessment diversity, fair assessment, measurement and certification of learning, assessment of process, and decentralization of assessment. Teachers' conceptions of assessment not only have overlapping definitions and ideas about what type of assessment is appropriate to achieve learning, but they also show efforts towards integration and tensions that invite further reflection on how these conceptions affect assessment practices in the classroom. Indeed, it is essential to carry out research at the national level into the uses of self-assessment and co-assessment in the classroom, the assessment designs that guide teachers' practice, the formative experiences they develop to involve students in assessment, how they integrate both rationalities in practice, and the influence of school assessment cultures on teachers' conceptions of assessment and practices.

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