

Reflections on aspects of teacher evaluation in Ecuador

Edgar Isch L.¹

Photo: EFE

For many years the National Teachers' Union (UNE) has demanded that there be comprehensive education evaluation systems in Ecuador. They challenged governments to present their proposals and contrast them with what had been achieved. Of course, governments never wanted to bring to light their demagoguery and inconsistencies. Not even in the projects with external debt did they use comprehensive evaluations that demonstrated an improvement in education. At the end of the World Bank's EB/PRODEC project, it was pointed out: *Unfortunately, to date there is no comprehensive evaluation that allows us to understand and assess in a complete manner the main achievements and difficulties that this model's implementation has had. Previous missions recommended carrying out such an evaluation.*¹ And, the *Redes Amigas (School Networks)*

Ecuadorian University Professor. Member of IDEA Education Research network.

1. Implementation Completion Report, ICR. Number 9. February 2000.

of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) recognizes a minimal difference in learning outcomes among public schools in a situation of poverty.²

However, UNE and many other sectors continued to make this demand and succeeded in having a clear policy included in the Ten-Year Education Plan 2006-2015. The Sixth policy proposes: *Improvement in the quality and equity of education and implementation of a national system of education evaluation and accountability*. The Plan was approved through the use of a Popular Consultation (Plebiscite) and its full application was expected during the Rafael Correa administration, which in fact did not occur.³ Nor were follow-up annual reports presented, nor was an evaluation of the application of the Plan conducted before starting a new one, which, in contrast to the first, did not include social participation.

Once more, the topic was proposed for inclusion in the new Ecuadorian Constitution (2008), which in Article 346, mandates that: *There will be a public institution, with autonomy, for comprehensive internal and external evaluation, that promotes quality in education*. A majority of the popular vote approved the Constitution, but this and many other articles that referred to the right to education have not been adequately implemented.

However, despite what these two pieces of legislation suggest, the government decided to launch a teacher evaluation in 2008. It conducted it despite the different proposals from the teachers' union, united under the banner of "Education for Emancipation," and it did it without the existence of an autonomous institute to carry it out. This is when a new campaign was started to claim that the crisis in education that neoliberals had created was the responsibility of the teachers who had resisted this international policy. That is why the evaluation was focused on teachers and other aspects or actors in the education system were not considered, as should happen in an evaluation such as the name "com-2. PUCE-CELA (2004). Interim Evaluation of the Autonomous Rural School Networks Program. Final report. Quito, April 2004. Page 41

3. Vargas, S. (2016). The lost decade in education. Accessed at: <http://es.idea-network.ca/investigaciones/la-decada-perdida-en-educacion>

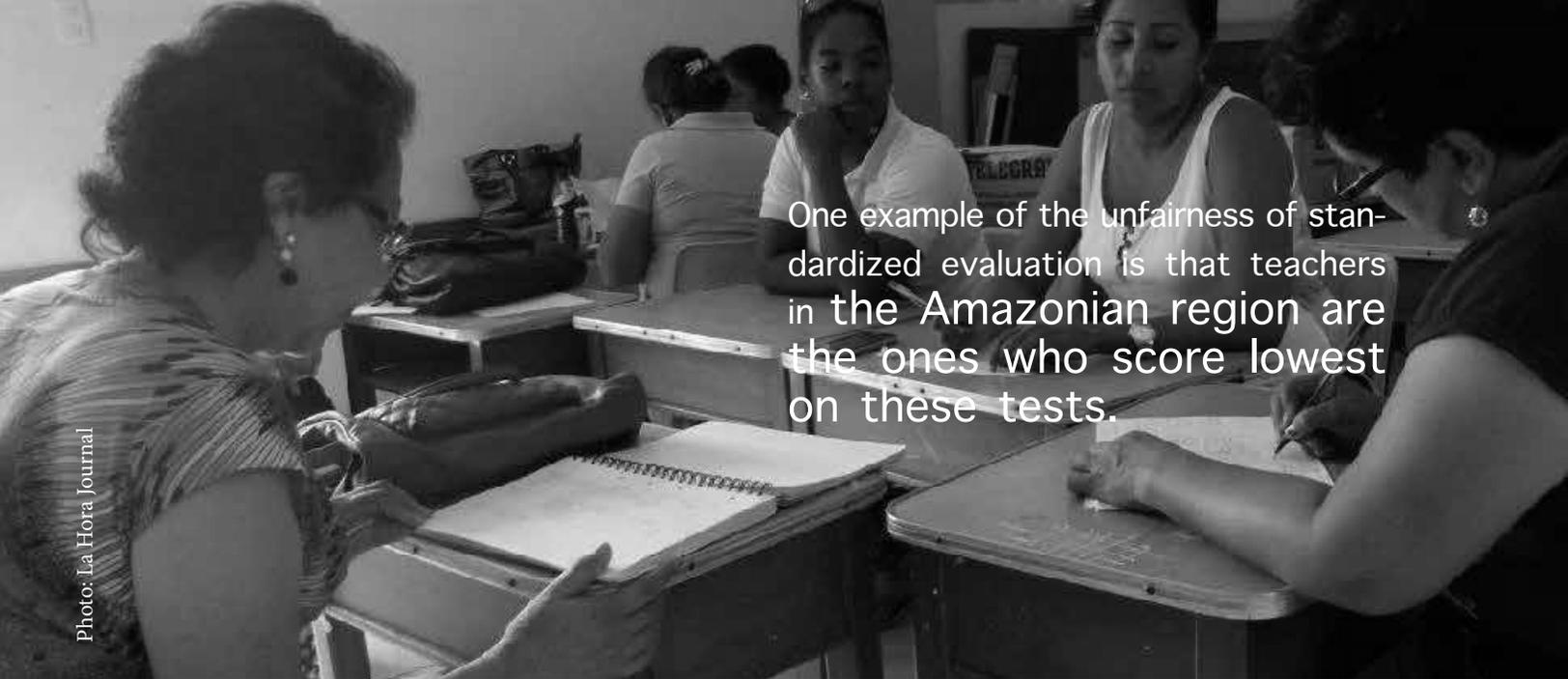
prehensive" suggests, as proposed in the Constitution.

The process was denounced at the technical level for being too partial and standardized in such a diverse country. It was based on a true/false or multiple-choice exam. The process had a punitive character and penalized teachers. In November 2008, a pilot was started (after a test run that was not analysed, and which predicted that 97% of teachers' candidates would fail – obviously after this result, the exam should have been re-evaluated but that was not done). The pilot results were used to newly attack teachers and public education, above all because only 1,569 teachers of the more than 120,000 in the country showed up to take the exam.

The teachers' resistance was expressed in 2009 in a national strike with strong support. But the government also continued in its determination to apply sanctions and to carry out training processes of dubious success (see the table that follows later). From that year on, dialogue with teachers was halted, and finally, in August of this year (2016), the legal dissolution of the National Teachers Union was declared, in violation of International Labour Organization agreements and of due process.

In 2009, for the first mandatory evaluation that was carried out in the Costa region 4,855 educators showed up, of a total of 7,512 called to participate. The government initiated administrative procedures to dismiss those who did not attend. In 2010, the evaluation continued in the Sierra region, keeping the regulation that those who got insufficient scores would need to be trained for a year before being able to opt for a second evaluation. If at this second evaluation they once again obtained an insufficient score, they would be dismissed.

In November 2012 the Intercultural Education Law (LOEI) was approved which led to the formation of the National Institute of Education Evaluation (INEVAL) which should be the body in charge before any process of system evaluation is begun. The INEVAL, however, does not propose to evaluate state policies and apparatus. In their 2015 report, they state that the components of the education system that will be evaluated are: students' learning and academic outcomes, education profes-



One example of the unfairness of standardized evaluation is that teachers in the Amazonian region are the ones who score lowest on these tests.

nals’ performance, and the administration of education establishments. Are these the only components of the education system? Of course not, and this demonstrates that the comprehensive nature of the evaluation such as the Constitution mandates is not being fulfilled.

One way to observe the injustice of standardized evaluation is by analyzing what happened in the Amazon region where the highest percentage of teachers with low results can be found. While in Quito, the capital, the percentage of teachers that failed was just 2.6%, in the Amazon the percentage was between 6 and 21% (Zamora 6.1%; Sucumbíos 14.8%; Napo 13.1%; Pastaza 17.8%; Orellana 17.4%; Morona Santiago 20.9%)⁴. It is logical to assume that this affects the results of the public university entrance exams established by this government (previously, there was free entry and mechanisms were defined by each university).

An interesting fact reported by the government daily newspaper, *The Telegraph* (April 21, 2014) in a story on the website, www.lapoliticaonline.com, reveals that *both the Buenos Aires chief of government, Mauricio Macri, and the governor of the province of Buenos Aires, Daniel Scioli, are using the Ecuadorian education model as a guide with the objective of improving standards in the*

4. Ministry of Education (June 27, 2016). The Minister of Education broadens the results of teacher evaluation and clarifies current themes. <https://educacion.gob.ec/ministro-de-educacion-amplia-resultados-de-evaluacion-docente-y-aclara-temas-coyunturales/>

sector in this city. Macri is very interested in replicating the teacher evaluation system implemented by the Correa administration in Ecuador. If the model of the so-called “Citizen Revolution” is agreeable to openly neoliberal characters, we need not say more.

Along with evaluation, teacher training has been very broadly applied. The Ministry of Education reported that up to 2015, 33.4 million hours of training had been delivered to teachers on disciplinary issues, development of technologies, tools and pedagogy⁵. Such a high quantity of training should be reflected in teachers’ evaluations, but as we can see in the following table, the results do not show a substantial change in trends. An additional fact is that since the beginning, the results were not as bad as those announced by the private sector and their allies in government. On the contrary, the percentage that achieved high scores did not relate to the handing out of incentives that had been announced.

Results of Teacher Evaluation

YEAR	EXCELLENT	VERY GOOD	GOOD	INSUFFICIENT
2012	0.1%	24.2%	73%	2.7%
2014	2%	12%	32%	54%
2016	0.5%	24.9%	65.3%	5.5%

Source: Ministry of Education Reports.

5. Information collected in: Teachers Network (2015).

When presenting this data, the Minister concluded that *the educators that obtained between 600 and 700 points (65.3%) in the following two years should enter professional development programs of 330 hours in their specialty field.*⁶ This is different than what Article 10 of the Law stipulates, which is that all teachers should be continuously trained.

As we see, the supposed relationship between evaluation, training, and educational improvement has not been demonstrated. The evaluation also doesn't consider teachers' working conditions and denies that their performance has something to do with the policies decided from within the seat of power.

Among the continuous changes to official policies, this past March 2016 the Minister for this branch presented the "new" model of evaluation of teacher performance, "Ser Maestro" (*Being a Teacher*), that would be applied to public sector teachers and begin on April 19, 2016. In addition, it was explained that this would be the first teachers' evaluation that INEVAL would carry out and this would be taken into account for legal purposes. *This would be the first evaluation, and prior evaluations would not be considered, that is to say, we are starting from zero*, the Director of INEVAL stressed.⁷

This setback seems fitting given the discrediting of these processes, the political weakening of the government and the growing demands of teachers and other social actors. Effectively, "for legal purposes" none of what was carried out by the government before the existence of an autonomous institute is valid. Unfortunately the autonomy of the INEVAL has yet to be observed. Under these conditions, not much can be expected of the changes implemented.

6. Ministry of Education (June 13, 2016). <http://educacion.gob.ec/el-ministerio-de-educacion-y-el-instituto-nacional-de-evaluacion-educativa-presentaron-los-avances-del-proceso-de-evaluacion-ser-maestro-regimen-sierra-y-amazonia/>

7. Ministry of Education (March 9, 2016). The Ministry of Education shared the new model of evaluation of teacher performance "Ser Maestro" (*Being a Teacher*). At: <https://educacion.gob.ec/el-ministro-de-educacion-socializo-el-nuevo-modelo-evaluacion-de-desempeno-docente-ser-maestro/>

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