

The tyranny of teacher evaluation in Honduras

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Summary

In accordance with the Fundamental Education Law, admission to the public system is done by competition, while permanent positions and job security are achieved through a combination of internal and external evaluations. The regulations of the competition and evaluations confuse certification with academic level and quantitative techniques with qualitative ones. They are not transparent in their implementation and they serve to maintain the existing policy for the assignment of positions, resulting in an educational system that on the one hand has too many older teachers and on the other is dependent on political compromise with no respect for professionalization.

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Introduction

Article 125 of the 2012 law of the National Pension Institute for Teachers (INPREMA) defines educators who at the time of the law's approval were incorporated into the public system and paying dues to INPREMA as 'pre-existing'. The non pre-existing teachers must enter the governmental system through an entrance competition, according to the Fundamental Education Law (LFE) of 2012 and the Teaching Statute (1997). Nevertheless, the contest regulations are not workable, as they confuse degrees with academic levels and include subjective elements, such as psychometric exams and a semi-structured interview, into an assessment that is framed as quantitative.

In view of the confusion referred to in terms of Contest Regulations (Republic of Honduras, 2014) and the difficulty for the twelve citizens (2 parents, 3 teachers, 4 representatives of civil society, and 3 representatives of the Secretary of Education) who spent more than 500 hours (assuming an average of around

30 minutes for each teacher evaluated) in elaborating a series of open questions and using them to interview and quantitatively and objectively evaluate the more than 1,000 teachers who took this assessment, it was decided that semi-structured interviews via computer, without any specific guidelines, would be a better mechanism. This begs the question – what answers are appropriate via computer? How would these responses be quantified?

To date there have been two external evaluations and one internal evaluation, all failed and non-binding. Consequently, no teacher has been able to earn permanent status through these evaluations. To do so, the teacher must obtain a grade of 80% in 2 external evaluations over the course of two different years and permanent status is lost with three unsatisfactory evaluations, without any regard for the academic specialization in which they obtained their degrees.

Tragicomedy of the Non Pre-Existing Teacher in Honduras

According to the National Pedagogical University Francisco Morazan (UPNFM) (2018) between 2014-2018 there were 19,439 graduates in education, of which 9,755 specialized in different areas of Primary Education, a private project of UPNFM. Meanwhile, the government system of education has not created new openings for teachers in the last few years nor has it replaced teachers, resulting therefore in an existing surplus of teachers.

The assessment of teachers in Honduras can be divided into three levels:

- Entrance Evaluation
- Internal Evaluation
- External Evaluation

Articles 15 and 18 of the Evaluation Regulations of the Fundamental Education Law establish the criteria for internal and external evaluations (See Table 1).

Cuadro . Evaluación Interna y Externa.

EVALUACION INTERNA		EVALUACION EXTERNA	
Autoevaluación	20	Informe evaluación interna	10
Entrevista al docente evaluado	15	Portafolio	20
Reporte del inmediato superior	5	Reporte inmediato superior	10
Educandos	15	Entrevista docente	10
Portafolio de desempeño docente	30	Evaluación educandos	5
Padres y madres	5	Evaluación pares	10
Evaluación por pares	10	Evaluación familias	5
		Prueba de conocimientos	30
TOTAL	100%		100%

Fuente: Elaboración propia, con datos del Reglamento de Carrera Docente (2014).

For its part, the competition to obtain a spot in the government system, conforming to Articles 22 and 26 of the Regulation of the Teaching Profession, requires a written aptitude and basic competency test, an interview and an assessment of background (professional merits). From these exam results, a descending list is created with those who obtained a grade above 75% (Article 24). The selection committee then revises and assesses, through a ranking committee, the background of the professionals included on the list and assigns a grade according to the regulations of the National Selection Committee and a second descending list is created of those obtained at least a grade of 75% (Article 59).

The selection committee then proceeds with semi-structured interviews and they draft a third list with those who have an aggregate mark of at least 75% (Article 61). This means that a qualitative technique is being used as a quantitative one. Those who aspire to a leadership position in teaching or more technical pedagogy must undergo psychometric exams with a grade assigned according to the regulations set by the selection committees and a fourth list is obtained.

From the process that has been described so far we can see how really impossible and costly this competi-



tion was, as well as lacking in transparency. This is one of the reasons why in 2018 it was cancelled, and the last competition took place in December 2017 (Diario Tiempo, March 3 2018).

The internal evaluation, according to Article 51 of the Regulation of Teacher Evaluation, should occur annually while the external evaluation must be taken every three years at all levels of teaching (primary, elementary, and/or secondary). The teacher who enters the public system is a temporary worker until they achieve a minimum score of 80% on the two consecutive evaluations, thus achieving permanent status. Nevertheless, if they receive an unsatisfactory result in the evaluation (less than 70%) three times, they must leave the system (Article 77 of the Regulation of the Teaching Profession and Article 39 of the Regulation of Teacher Evaluations).

The language of Article 36 of the Regulation of the National Board and the Departmental Boards and the Selection Contest is practically incomprehensible, confusing diplomas or degrees with academic substance

and making it impossible to apply Chapter IX of the same regulation (evaluation of merits for the competition), which is not explicit enough.

The external evaluation of teachers currently working includes an evaluation by their students and the parents/family members (see Table 1). This means, for example, that a teacher who teaches first grade must be evaluated by both their students (the results are debatable) and their parents.

By the same token, the degree they obtain through the UPNFM is not respected once they enter the public system. For example if the number of students per class in high schools is less than 40, the departmental leadership can “reorient” (a euphemism for transferring) any teacher (generally to an elementary school) and give them responsibilities that do not respect their academic background. They will then be evaluated on whatever content is assigned to them (this, according to Diaz (2018), marks the beginning of pedagogical ‘black-outs’ in the Secretary of Education).

Thus, a physical education teacher could very well

be transferred to an elementary school where they must teach two or three new courses and be evaluated, for example, in mathematics with obvious results.

Finally, internal teachers' evaluations include a report from their most immediate supervisor who in turn will refer to their students' quantifiable academic performance by looking at the midterm test results that are a part of the academic calendar in Honduras and the PISA exams, the latter called "a pedagogical beauty pageant" by Pablo Gentile (Díaz 2018).

Conclusion

The evaluations to enter the public education system, to gain permanent work and to remain in the system have been badly designed and are impractical - since 2014 not one teacher has been hired on a permanent basis. Meanwhile, the UPNFM has graduated more than 19,000 teachers destined for unemployment or temporary employment. If they manage to weather these ups and downs it will be thanks to friendship and/or political activism with whatever party is currently in power.

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