

## Personal and Social Development Indicators: The illusion of assessing schools' quality

### Indicadores de Desarrollo Personal y Social: La ilusión de la evaluación integral de la calidad

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#### Background

After decades of progressive implementation of standardized assessments in the school system, discussions have been polarized by questions about their collateral effects and effectiveness in measuring "educational quality". An attempt has been made to develop assessments contributing to a comprehensive view of quality. In Chile, one of the key instruments to fulfill this desire is the monitoring of "Indicators of Personal and Social Development" (which legislation denominated as "Other Indicators of Educational Quality"): a set of scores providing information on aspects related to social and personal development of students complementing data provided by SIMCE results and Chilean Learning Standards.

#### Aims

The purpose of this study was to find out, on the one hand, how was conceived the creation of SPDIs in the search for a "broad" vision of quality, and, on the other hand, to analyze how these instruments -and their results- contribute to a comprehensive assessment of quality.

#### Method & procedures

This study is based on documentary analysis, to that we first selected Chilean public texts referring to the SPDI (or "Other Quality Indicators"). In order to understand the historical background of this evaluation, we compiled official documents related to the national school evaluation system from 1981, (the military dictatorship period in which the School Performance Evaluation Test (PER, a predecessor of SIMCE) was designed, until 2020, as this research project ends this year. To examine international organizations' discourse, we reviewed reports from the main agencies cited in government documents: World Bank, IDB, OECD, PREAL, UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF, and we also compiled national studies on the IDPS. Finally, we reviewed relevant information on this subject published in Chilean written press: *El Mercurio* and *La Tercera*, from 1973 to 2020.

#### Results & discussion

The National Test of Verbal and Mathematical Skills (1967), and then the School Performance Evaluation Program (PER) in 1982, were the first standardized tests to evaluate student learning in the Chilean school system. Both sought to contribute to the school system with "scientific" evaluative information to guide public policies and pedagogical decisions. The embryonic interest expressed in the PER for an evaluation that transcended the merely cognitive was reflected in the first years of application of the SIMCE, by incorporating a series of indicators called "estimators of educational quality", which included socio-affective variables and others of "school efficiency" (such as retention and timely graduation). During the 1990s, other dimensions were contemplated with oscillation, among them, "development of creativity" (1995-1996), "learning strategies" (1993-1995) and "attitudes towards the environment" (1993-1996). However, they were subsequently lost over time so that at the end of the decade, the measurement of socio-affective variables

was abandoned and only learning results were considered, while the first accountability policy associated with state incentives was created through the creation of the National System for the Evaluation of Teaching Performance (SNED). From our analysis we identify some methodological and validity inconsistencies in relation to the dimensions assessed. In this sense, we problematize the limitations of the IDPS within the framework of accountability with high consequences and absence of technical evidence to support the implementation of this policy. We also raise questions about the discursive use of the IDPS by the Agency in communicating perceptions captured through surveys, as if they represented an external and objective measurement of a phenomenon, even disseminating unproven causalities by linking the improvement of the IDPS with SIMCE results, attributing it to a change of paradigm in evaluative terms, although in fact, schools continue to be judged and made responsible primarily for learning achievements measured via SIMCE, an aspect that contravenes the stated purpose of evaluating processes, not results.

## Conclusion

Based on our findings, we argue that the idea of a balanced and comprehensive evaluation - represented in the IDPS- is rather an illusion, as well as a discursive strategy, whose limits are circumscribed to an unavoidable standardized and census evaluation model with high consequences, which, in its current design, makes impossible to transit towards a new educational paradigm. This inevitably requires transforming the current evaluation paradigm and moving towards a formative, professionalizing and participatory evaluation.

**Keywords:** accountability, Chile, comprehensive assessment, personal and social development indicators, quality in education, school evaluation

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