

Portraits of the evaluation of higher education:
presentation of cases from Brazil, Portugal and England

Retratos da avaliação da educação superior:
apresentação dos casos de Brasil, Portugal e Inglaterra

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Resumo: A globalização da ideia e dos processos de avaliação dos sistemas educacionais tem possibilitado, a emergência do debate sobre a relação entre homogeneidade dos modelos universais abstratos e a heterogeneidade das experiências com a avaliação em cada contexto nacional. Neste sentido, esta relação é tomada como princípio orientador deste artigo: os cenários da avaliação do ensino superior no Brasil, em Portugal e na Inglaterra são aqui escopos para uma análise comparativa com o objetivo central de caracterizá-los e situá-los no contexto mais amplo ou global da regulação estatal e supranacional. O Sistema Nacional de Avaliação da Educação Superior (SINAES) no Brasil, o Sistema Português de Avaliação e Acreditação (coordenado pela Agência de Avaliação e Acreditação do Ensino Superior, A3ES, uma fundação de direito privado), bem como o recente Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) do Reino Unido servem de corpus para este estudo. As principais conclusões do estudo giram em torno do estreitamento das relações entre educação e economia no âmbito do ensino superior, o qual expressa-se nas concepções, regulamentação, critérios e nos usos políticos e sociais dos sistemas de avaliação deste nível de ensino nos países analisados.

Palavras-chave: Avaliação; Ensino Superior; Análise comparada.

Abstract: The globalization of the idea and evaluation processes of educational systems lead to the emergence of the debate about the relation between the homogeneity of the abstract universal models and the heterogeneity of the experiences with the evaluation in each national context. Therefore, such relationship is taken as the guiding principle of this article: the scenarios of the assessment of higher education in Brazil, Portugal and England are here scopes for a comparative analysis with the central purpose of characterizing and situating them in the broader or global context of state and supranational regulation. The National System of Evaluation of Higher Education (SINAES) in Brazil, the Portuguese Evaluation and Accreditation System (coordinated by the Agency for Evaluation and Accreditation of Higher Education, A3ES, a private law foundation), as well as the recent Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) from the United Kingdom serve as corpus for this study. The main conclusions of the study revolve around the narrowing of the relations between education and economics in higher education, expressed in the conceptions, regulations, criteria and the political and social uses of the evaluation systems of this level of education in the countries analyzed.

Keywords: Evaluation; Higher Education; Comparative Analysis.

Introduction

During the twentieth century, increasing transformations occurred as a result of the intensification of the relationship between knowledge and wealth. Just have a look at producers of knowledge and observe how much their fields of practice were transformed by contemporary arrangements. In the twentieth-first century, higher education expansion on a world scale – through

enlargement of vacancies, creation of new courses and emergence of new institutions (FREITAS, 2010; PEREIRA et al., 2015) – has diversified higher education (HE) institutions at least in two different directions: a broad and continuous professional training oriented to labor market demands, and a more restricted training of knowledge-producing agents who return to higher education institutions as belonging to their staff in most cases. The relationship between education and economic development is expressed more clearly in higher education than in basic or elementary school in both directions, given the pressure level of economic transformation on the professional training from different knowledge fields, including arts, humanities and, social sciences (GILLIES, 2017), with a strong pragmatic and instrumental appeal (FRANKHAM, 2016). Due to the character of current economic and political transformations, higher education reforms tend to commodify and subordinate academic work to the competitiveness imperatives, so ideas such as performativity, employability and the knowledge economy, for example, are gaining space in this context (FRANKHAM, 2016; ROBERTSON e KEELING, 2008).

The same transformations that pressured arrangements in higher education systems also aimed at the emergence and development of systems for the evaluation of that level of education. The process of evaluating and accrediting institutional policies in higher education, which begins in the 1980s, has significantly changed the scope and amplitude of the social agents involved, strategies and control mechanisms of the results of practices with an emphasis on strengthening the presence of private entities, from companies to international organizations (AFONSO, 2013).

In this sense, the recent globalization of conceptions and processes of educational systems evaluation has enabled the emergence of the debate about the relation between the homogeneity of abstractly universal models and the heterogeneity of experiences with evaluation in each national context, among other discussions. In any case, the meaning of evaluation of higher education as a “transnational and worldwide phenomenon” (KOSMÜTZKY, 2016, p. 208) allows the development of comparative analyses like this study, while it does not weaken the need to consider national realities. Therefore, this debate is the guiding thread of this text: higher education assessment scenarios in Brazil, Portugal, and England constitute scopes for a comparative analysis whose central purpose is to characterize and situate them in the broader or global context of state and supranational regulation. The National System of Evaluation of Higher Education (SINAES) of Brazil, the Portuguese Evaluation and Accreditation System (coordinated by the Agency for Evaluation and Accreditation of Higher Education, a private law foundation) and the recent UK Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) constitute the corpus for this study, in the direction of documentary analysis, their official results and dialogue with the specialized literature. The choice to explore Brazil, Portugal and England was prompted by the differences between these countries regarding both the models adopted for evaluation of teaching-learning and the relevance attributed to the relationship between education and economics within HE. In addition, public access to official documents and authors’ experience in the three countries analyzed here were considered. Thus, the selection of countries was adopted as a methodological strategy (KOSMÜTZKY, 2016) that also took into account the fact that Brazil Portugal and England are located on continents where higher education assessment is a recent process (SCHWARTZMAN, 1992). Such factor confirms the relevance of targeting its evaluation systems both individually and in comparison.

Therefore, the critical comparative perspective that guides this work considers particularities of the higher education evaluation systems in Brazil, Portugal, and England, presupposing that such systems should be considered from their relational, dialectical and co-constitutive nature since they all fit into globally articulated educational policy movements (DALE e ROBERTSON, 2012).

Objectively, the comparative approach considered approximations and distances between Brazil, Portugal, and England with regard to four aspects: institutional framework for the evaluation of education, global aim of the evaluation, type of information considered for evaluation of teaching and effects of teaching assessment. For that, official documents from these countries were consulted for the construction and analysis of the data. The understanding that “Comparison is, above all, about problematising, rather than taking for granted” (ROBERTSON e DALE, 2017, p. 873) guided the combination between the description of each national reality and the articulated analysis of them.

The paper is organized as follows: first, the text brings a brief contextualization of the recent realities of higher education in each studied country, aiming to understand these scenarios and the emergence of the evaluation of that level of education; in the second moment are presented the portraits of the respective evaluation system of the Brazilian, Portuguese and English cases, whose analytical constructions took into account aspects such as principles, involved organs, objectives, results and so on. Finally, the comparative exercise is privileged based on a dialogue between the realities in question.

Higher education in Brazil, Portugal, and England: brief situational outline and emergency context of the evaluation

At the international level, higher education has been marked since the 1960s by a trend towards massification that involves the expansion of the number of students, teachers, and institutions, as well as the respective diversification of academic functions and institutional arrangements. This trend is inseparable from the dissemination of the Human Capital Theory and the acceptance that education and higher education in particular are a crucial element in promoting the development of countries, as has been seen by the main international organizations and governments since the end of the Second World War. According to Afonso (2015, pp. 274, own translation): "Regardless of the theoretical-conceptual discussions that it raises, knowledge is considered the main productive force and this fact reinforces the economic function of the school and the university".

The international trend of higher education expansion is justified by its contribution to the development of each country. Phenomena like flexibilization of work, financialization of the economy and increased competitiveness become observable in Brazil, Portugal, and England, even though assuming specific configurations according to contingencies of the structuring of higher education systems within these territories. In Brazil, concerns about expansion of the higher education system emerged in the context of a military dictatorship (between 1964 and 1985), whose justifications were the modernization and rationalization of the State and economy, and the formation of specialized cadres to occupy careers of work created from the import substitution policy. In Portugal, the expansion of higher education is particularly significant as a result of the political change of 1974 and in a context of political democratization in which the promotion of equality of opportunity among social groups in access to the education system emerges as a strategic orientation inherent to the bet in the sector educational. In England, the expansion of higher education is a national bet that began

shortly after the Second World War, coupled with the effort to rebuild the economy and society that had been profoundly and negatively affected by the war.

Investments in expansion of national education systems reached new heights in the following decades. The massification of higher education, which corresponds to a coverage rate between 16% and 50% of the age group between 18 and 24 years, as established by Trow (2010), was achieved by some countries. More broadly, it was reached by a convergence of factors. The main ones are the struggles for universalization of access to the higher education system, undertaken by social movements as well as families and young people interested in obtaining HE diplomas and certificates, and the expansion of the training of a workforce capable of performing more complex and productive tasks.

The mass movement was accompanied by transformations in the economic field that pushed national education systems to adapt. In contemporary capitalism, the approach between the political, economic, cultural and educational spheres has been privileged, and here we are especially interested in the massification of education and higher education in a governance internationally marked by the historical globalization and neoliberalism processes, through the supremacy of the so-called "Knowledge Society" (BINDÉ, 2007). In Brazil, these approaches emerged from the scenario of re-democratization and have been deepened with what Antunes (2005) called "neoliberal desertification" experienced in the country in the 1990s. As regards higher education and its massification, that movement represented a re-reading of the conservative modernization and privatization that once marked the dictatorial period (MARTINS, 2009). On the other hand, Portugal and England are historically close in this case because of the changes brought about by the alignment initiatives of countries currently called the European Union and, more precisely, since the end of the 1980s with the discussion about the preponderant role of education and consequently of the Bologna Process (BIANCHETTI, 2015).

Thus, the evolution of participation in higher education over the years is reflected in the number of HE graduates in each of these three countries at the present, which shows the differentiated rhythms of the expansion trend. According to data from the OECD (2016), the percentage of graduates among adults (25-64 years) is around 15% in Brazil, 23% in Portugal and 44% in the United Kingdom, making the latter clearly above average figure recorded by OECD.

Although higher education expansion has assumed distinct configurations in each of the three countries, it is verified that such expansion is accompanied by the emergence of systems for evaluating the quality of education in each country. The relationship between expansion and evaluation is relevant for the three countries we are studying, since the emphasis on evaluation in Europe and Brazil was mainly due to the massification of the respective educational systems: in the first case, from the massification, urgently adjust education to the demands of a changing labor market (NEAVE, 1988); in the second case, it was a question of designing in education policy the need to evaluate a system whose eminence and necessary expansion could not happen without a revision of the "quality standards" (DIAS, HORCHUELA e MARCHELLI, 2006).

In this sense, from the socio-historical point of view, it is necessary to reflect on the emergency contexts of the need to evaluate education and more particularly higher education. Schwartzman (1992) points out that in the 1990s, both in the European context and in Latin America, the idea of HE evaluation represented something quite new, in contrast to the North American environment, where

the HE evaluation has already been a tradition. In the late 1980s, Neave (1988) indicated the emergence of an “Evaluative State” in Europe, replacing a previous bureaucratic control based on the planning by some posterior evaluation mechanisms. In the same decade, the Brazilian post-dictatorship scenario was marked by the North American influence, which during the dictatorship evaluated Brazilian education and higher education and "offered" agreements and "solutions" to the country by the interference of international financial organizations (DIAS SOBRINHO, 1996). It can then be said that, in the case of the countries under review,

In the last two decades, the evaluation of institutions and courses in higher education has gained an unprecedented dimension at the global level as multilateral organizations and national governments have encouraged the creation of evaluation systems and accreditation and quality assurance agencies under the justification of maximizing social benefits of educational systems (BRETOLIN e MARCON, 2015, pp.106, own translation).

According to this perspective, mechanisms with different nomenclatures were created, such as evaluation, accreditation and quality audit, also called peer review processes (PEREIRA et al., 2015).

Therefore, the relationship between quality and quantity is crucial for understanding of higher education evaluation in contexts of expansion and massification. Even with their own socio-historical influences and specificities, Brazil, Portugal and England – and we could bring other countries here for this topic – started from the association between increased volume and diversification of the profile of subjects in higher education and the need to rethink and to evaluate HE to maintain or improve its quality. It is clear that "In the quest for excellence, quality becomes a relevant differential factor for the prominence and survival of Institutions of higher education in the market" (PEREIRA et al., 2015, pp. 62, own translation). However, it is necessary to look at the differences in what has been placed as a parameter to measure this quality, which is discussed when the topic is the evaluation of higher education systems in different countries.

The relationship between education and economics is one of the aspects considered in the evaluation of education quality, namely through the articulations between higher education and labor market, observed in the dynamics of employment and work of graduates. This is because of higher education expansion coexists with the strengthening of the valuation of the respective contributions to economic development. Thus, in any of the three countries the systems and processes for assessing the quality of education include as one of the aspects to be considered the professional integration of graduates, involving the definition of indicators and the collection of data on this subject, with differentiated configurations.

Portraits of the evaluation of higher education

Recognizing the current centrality of the evaluation of higher education around the world, and without intending to present in exhaustive way processes and mechanisms related to the assessment of higher education in Brazil, Portugal, and England, it is intended to briefly explain the main characteristics of teaching-learning evaluation. For this, we consider the following elements: institutional framework, general intentionality, type of information mobilized and expected effects. It is noteworthy that the corpus analyzed has documents related to the evaluation of higher education in Brazil, Portugal and England, including the following survey and analysis fronts: national legislation

that regulates the evaluation systems of these countries, open access information and data on the websites of the agencies responsible for this assessment, and specialized scientific literature on the topic.

The Brazilian case

According to Article 46 of Law No. 9.394/1996, higher education institutions in Brazil must undergo periodic evaluations that are coordinated by the Ministry of Education (MEC). In 2002, the election of the president Luís Inácio Lula da Silva represented a political context marked by social changes, including large educational debates, among which the need to create a new system to evaluate higher education in the country⁵ stands out. Thus, the National System for the Evaluation of Higher Education (SINAES) was instituted by Law No. 10.861/2004 as an expression of the new political and social environment in Brazil.

SINAES is coordinated and supervised by the National Commission for the Evaluation of Higher Education (CONAES), while the National Institute for Educational Studies and Research Anísio Teixeira (INEP) operationalizes such processes, involving public and private higher education institutions: universities, university centres, faculties and federal institutes (NEVES, 2012).

There are three main fronts in the analysis carried out from the SINAES, namely: evaluation of institutions, evaluation of courses, and evaluation of student performance. According to INEP (2015), the main objectives of this evaluation are: a) improving the merit and value of higher education institutions (HEIs), their courses and programs; b) improving the quality of higher education by better targeting the expansion of university offer; c) promoting the social responsibility of HEIs. These objectives are still presented by the official institutions with the goal of integrating the dimensions of teaching, research, extension, management and training, on the one hand, and respect the institutional identity and autonomy of each institution, on the other.

From the operational point of view, SINAES has a series of instruments that complement each other in the formulation of results, such as: National Student Performance Exam (ENADE), information tools (such as the census and register), and institutional evaluations of the courses (external, on-site and self-evaluation). While the assessment of undergraduate institutions and courses aims to identify the teaching conditions (involving teaching profile, building conditions, and didactic-pedagogical organization), the students' evaluation seeks to assess their performance against the curricular guidelines and their abilities to adjust to the demands of the evolution of knowledge and their profession (INEP, 2015).

The results are made public through the dissemination of the following Census of Higher Education indicators: the Preliminary Course Concept (CPC) – a marker of quality based on the students' performance in ENADE and the value added by the training process and inputs related to offer conditions (teaching staff, infrastructure and didactic-pedagogical resources) – and the General Index of Institution Assessed Courses (IGC), which crosses the data of the undergraduate courses (CPC) and the graduate programs in the country (in the evaluations carried out by CAPES), besides taking into account the distribution of students between the different levels (undergraduate or graduate

⁵ Barreyro and Rothen (2006) present the details of the disputes of the projects for the system of evaluation of Brazilian higher education in this historical moment.

studies). Also, the SINAES results are used for the renewal of recognition and accreditation of the courses (INEP, 2015).

For undergraduate degree a grade from 0 to 5 points is awarded to each higher education institution in the country, as well as to each course. Besides promoting a ranking of HEIs and their courses, some questions are crucial to thinking about SINAES: the problem of self-evaluation, ENADE as a current version of other large-scale tests applied to students of higher education in Brazil and hyper-focus in the product of schooling (BARREYRO, 2004), and the constant production of value judgments by evaluators (DIAS SOBRINHO, 2000).

The Portuguese case

In Portugal, the Agency for the Evaluation and Accreditation of Higher Education (A3ES) has been in existence for a decade and was created in 2007 in close coordination with the publication of Law No. 38/2007, which approved the Legal Regime for the Evaluation of Higher Education. This law is indissociable from the Legal Regime of Higher Education Institutions, Law No. 62/2007, and together constitute another way of institutional organization of universities and polytechnics, as well as their articulation with the national government. Nóvoa (2018) stresses that these laws mean the implementation of a “modernization agenda” that reinforced employability and competitiveness as central values within higher education systems nationally and internationally. Accordingly, the aim is to clarify and reinforce the autonomy of higher education institutions to use the models of institutional organization and management that they consider to be most appropriate for the fulfillment of their mission and the specificity of their context.

The appreciation of autonomy coexists with the reinforcement of accountability through quality assessment systems. In such context, the creation of the A3ES aims to promote a quality internal institutional culture through the implementation of the evaluation and accreditation processes of higher education institutions and their courses. In other words, the focus is placed on each institution and on the need to safeguard the quality of the respective training offer, giving an independent institution the power to validate the training offered by universities and polytechnics.

The accreditation and evaluation processes implemented by the A3ES take into account information related to the courses, in particular: their general characteristics (curricular structure, working regime, internships), resources (materials, teaching and non-teaching staff, students) and results (academic, employability, scientific, technological and artistic activities). Bachelor's, master's, and doctoral courses are analyzed. The procedures involve the elaboration of a report of self-evaluation by the own institution that is appreciated by a team of evaluators (teachers from other Portuguese universities and other countries) who later visit the institution and interview teachers and students of the course and even employers of graduates. The result of the process is the accreditation (or not) of the course evaluated for a period of 1, 3, or 6 years. One of the critical aspects of this process is the need to ensure the impartiality of the evaluators who are themselves teachers and responsible for courses of the same scientific area in other universities and polytechnics.

The academic literature on that topic has built a strong criticism about this emphasis on accreditation in higher education in Portugal. For Carr, Hamilton and Meade (2005), the task of A3ES to accredit courses implies a transformation of the mechanisms of previous intervention by audit mechanisms. Felix, Bertolin e Polidori (2017) call attention to the relationship between that

perspective and the increased competitiveness involving higher education institutions in the national and international contexts in the post-Bologna period.

The English case

The Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) emerged in England in 2016 with the general intention of encouraging excellence in teaching and providing information to students to choose the courses and institutions to attend. This initiative was developed by national government bodies and justified on the basis of the need to consider the quality of teaching and learning following the implementation of the reforms of the 1990s, that transformed polytechnics into universities and increased costs for students with enrolment and attendance at university.

Within the framework of the commercialization of higher education that characterizes the English scenario, TEF is a result of massification and aims to provide elements that allow students to make the best and most appropriate choices based on information on the costs of attendance of course and institution and the results obtained by the same in the TEF. Besides that, TEF also means an intention to value teaching and learning activities in English universities and to assess their quality, questioning the great importance given to the “Research Assessment Framework” which since the 1980s has helped to promote and ensure the quality of research activities in higher education.

The TEF considers information on three main aspects: Quality of Teaching, Learning Environment and Student Results and Learning Gains – using data obtained through questionnaires applied at the national level to the students to measure their levels of satisfaction (National Student Satisfaction Survey) and to the graduates to characterize their courses of professional insertion (Destinations of Leavers of Higher Education). The result of the evaluation is expressed in the attribution of a medal (bronze, silver or gold) to each institution, in a logic of commercialization of courses and institutions in which the future student is a consumer who needs this type of information to make rational choices in the frequency of courses and institutions. One of the critical aspects of such process is the adequacy and validity of the results obtained in the national questionnaires already identified, as well as how they effectively reflect the quality of courses and institutions.

Gunn (2018) understands the TEF as the result of the market conception that was consolidated in the United Kingdom in the educational field, so the reconfiguration of this "higher education market" required an update of its quality and regulatory regime. According the author, two agendas can be deduced from the TEF: 1) the appeal of quantitative measurement to express the performance of students, teachers and institutions, and 2) the transformation of the student into a consumer (GUNN, 2018).

A comparative portrait

The confrontation between the three countries illustrates how the worldwide tendency to develop higher education assessment systems assumes diverse configurations across national contexts that reveal similarities and differences between them. Concerning the institutional framework, we observed that the assessment of education is under the responsibility of State agencies in the Brazilian and English cases and of a foundation of private law in the Portuguese case. This observation is inseparable from the fact that the evaluation conducted by A3ES in Portugal is mainly undertaken as an accreditation of courses aimed at guaranteeing the quality of higher education, while in the other

two countries the main objective is to improve quality (Brazil) and promote excellence (England).

Consequently, in the Portuguese case the institutional evaluation focusing each institution as an organizational entity was absent until 2017/18, being the predominant focus in the courses. In the Brazilian and English cases, this perspective may be more evident but also has a characteristic that is absent from the official rhetoric about evaluation of education in Portugal: the importance of providing information that aims to support the choices of courses and institutions by students and to rank institutions in each country through the attribution of a “grade” (Brazil) or a “medal” (England). Thus, in these two countries the results of the evaluation of SINAES and TEF, respectively, are closely associated with rankings of each institutions’ prestige that are part of a very significant logic of higher education commodification, echoing the model existing in the United States of America since the 1970s. However, it should be noted that since the 1960s a broad set of studies in several countries has relativized the role of higher education institutions and evidenced the strong influence that students’ socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds have on their results (BERTOLIN e MARCON, 2015).

The process of adopting market logic as a regulatory parameter of the evaluation systems, regardless of the public or private nature of the institutions, is the most important aspect within the three countries. The systems of evaluation and accreditation of higher education are articulated to the premises of the globally structured agenda of education (DALE, 2004). In this regard, as Dale (2004) states, the local-global key is important to understand the re-significations that these premises receive in each social context. Finally, the evaluation practice promotes and stimulates a competitive environment for the sector (FELIX, BERTOLIN e POLIDORI, 2017), instead of supporting a diagnosis that could help national states to reformulate and reorganize higher education as a social right.

The comparative approach within the present study ends up demonstrating a potential for understanding the heterogeneity of the Brazilian, Portuguese and English cases, while allowing the evaluation of higher education systems to be objectified not as closed systems, but with a view to apprehending their specificities and positions within the international trends (BRAY, 2002). In this way, we synthesize the approximations and distances between Brazil, Portugal, and England in the following way:

Table 1: Characterization of the evaluation of higher education in Brazil, Portugal, and England.

	Brazil (SINAES)	Portugal (A3ES)	England (TEF)
Institutional framework for the evaluation of education	SINAES - National System of Evaluation of Higher Education by the Ministry of Education through the National Commission for the Evaluation of Higher Education (Conaes), together with the National Institute of Studies and Educational Research Anísio Teixeira (INEP), another federal authority.	A3ES - Agency for Accreditation and Evaluation of Higher Education: Foundation of private law recognized as of public utility.	TEF – Teaching Excellence Framework: Exercise developed by governmental bodies such as the Department of Education of England and the Higher Education Funding Council for England.

Global aim of the evaluation	SINAES aims to improve the quality of education, guide the expansion of the offer and promote the social responsibility of HEIs. This is based on the evaluation of institutions, courses and student performance. Dissemination of the results is aimed at supporting public policies, informing students about their choices, and recognizing and reorganizing HEIs and courses.	The mission of the A3ES is to ensure the quality of higher education through the evaluation and accreditation of higher education institutions and their courses. Insert Portugal into the European system of quality assurance in higher education.	The TEF aims to recognize excellence in teaching in addition to the quality required in national standards for higher education institutions. Provide information to support students' choices about the institutions to attend.
Type of information considered for evaluation of teaching	Institutions; Courses; Students' performance.	Characteristics of the courses (curricular structure, operating regime, internships); Resources (materials, teaching and non-teaching staff, students) Results (academic; employability; scientific, technological and artistic activities).	Quality of Teaching; Learning Environment; Student Results and Learning Gains.
Effects of teaching assessment	Recognition and re-accreditation (or not), in addition to assigning a grade of 0 to 5 for each institution, as well as for each of its courses.	Accreditation (or not) of the courses for a period of 1, 3 or 6 years.	Attribution to each university of a gold, silver or bronze medal.

Source: Authors, based on official documents.

The consideration of the link between education and economics is present in the evaluation of education in the three countries, albeit in specific ways in each experience. In Portugal and England such link is expressed by a thematic area in which it is essential to collect and analyze empirical information that allows characterizing the transition paths of the graduates to into the labor market and the adequacy of the academic formation to the professional activities that they perform. In Brazil and England, in turn, the hierarchy of higher education institutions based on its performance in the assessment exercises is, as we have already pointed out, a significant expression of a kind of creation of an educational "market" in higher education (TOMLINSON, ENDERS e NAIDOO, 2018). And also, from a wider point of view, education and economics connection is manifested in the three contexts studied given the central position that education occupies within its territories. It is clear that education is valued as an important factor in the individual and collective economic development within the rationality of the national states and supranational organizations. The relationship between

economy and education, which underlies the definition of human formation policies in capitalist society (SHIROMA, MORAES e EVANGELISTA, 2002), reinforces the mediating character that the form and content of the formative practices elected assume, when taken as capable of responding more effectively to the expectations of development. In the three cases analyzed the benchmarking of higher education relates with the qualification of individuals for the occupation of jobs in the technical and social division of labor in different ways and with different emphases.

Moreover, it reinforces the disengagement of the State by promoting the improvement of the conditions of access and permanence of students, as well as the work of academic professionals. This is evidenced by the fragmentation of institutions and courses promoted by the evaluations of higher education in Brazil, Portugal, and England: the widely publicized results of each of the evaluations we studied bring a subtle accountability of the individuals involved in these evaluations (higher education institutions and courses, the academics and the students).

Final Considerations

Considering the relationship between educational and economic fields, through the analysis of the context of the emergence of higher education evaluation systems and their structuring and operationalization, this work aimed to highlight how the crossing lines of these spheres express themselves in three countries. This analysis deepened the understanding of institutional rearrangements that the pressures derived from the increase of interdependence between nations promoted in the national education systems, pressures that can be seen, for example, from the growing concern of multilateral organizations in the education field. At the same time, the analysis shows that there are specificities of each country's system rooted in different cultural, economic and social contexts, all of them emerging from the hybridization of international models with national structures and agents (ALVES e TOMLINSON, 2020).

Such approach can be taken as a possibility to understand the homogeneity and heterogeneity that education and HE evaluation systems have assumed in the countries studied. The portraits of the evaluation of higher education revealed by the panoramas of Brazil, Portugal, and England were able to point out similar directions and orientations in the comparison between different educational and evaluation systems. The comparative analysis was crucial as it enabled us to see correlations between systems that can be considered closed at first glance, but which are situated and speak to us of a complex web at a global level in the field of higher education and its evaluation (ARNOVE e TORRES, 2007). In this way, it was interesting to understand not only the particularity of the systems of evaluation of higher education in the three countries, but above all to point out the relations that each evaluation system maintains with the broader social process of qualifying higher education around the world.

From the second half of the twentieth century onwards, the three countries analyzed were confronted by increasing importance of the relationship between education and development, which pushed higher education systems to increase their vacancies and courses and triggered the debate on quality and quantity in this degree of education. The evaluation of national higher education systems appears in this context as a way of equating national and international demands and of standardizing and framing the training of professionals in line with the "needs" of the market. Even if this growing centrality of the relationship between education and the economy is recognized,

[...] this cannot mean the confinement of the functions of higher education to those that are strictly devoted to the training of professionals. Alternatively, it is desirable to value other contributions from higher education, such as informing and involving civil society, promoting critical thinking about modalities of social organization and citizenship (ALVES, 2015, p. 896, own translation).

In this sense, finally it is evident that both the higher education evaluation and the analyses that start to be developed from their conceptual constructs and its results, with which this text endeavored to dialogue and contribute, make us reflect on relations between the university field and the other social fields that influence it and still on the social functions of higher education.

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