

EVALUATION, AUDIT CULTURE AND RECOGNITION IN EDUCATION: EXPLORING LINKS AND RELATIONS

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ABSTRACT

The article explores the linkages between evaluation in education – as policy and as method of assessing individual and institutional performance – to processes of recognition (*Anerkennung*). Being recognised by others is an integral part of individuals' construction as social beings and institutions' functionality in social life. Current evaluation practices, in the context of quality assurance, such as accreditation of educational institutions, and ratings, raise several questions and are heavily criticised for increase of competition, privatisation of public education, a surge of malpractices, and the reproduction of inequalities instead of diminishing them.

An underexplored aspect of the growing practice of evaluation as policy of quality assurance is the extent to which its outcomes are valorised as markers of achievement and recognition for the assessed entities, whether individual or institutional. Achievement and recognition form an avenue of gaining honour and prestige, that places individuals on the social hierarchy. Position of individuals and collective entities on the social hierarchy defines available opportunities and privileges in society, translated as differential access to material and symbolic goods and services.

This essay brings together scholarship developed in different fields of scientific inquiry to explore the underexamined link of evaluation policy in education to recognition. We do this, having in mind that the latter is crucial in understanding the way hierarchies are made and/or reproduced in the institution of education in relation to society.

Keywords: evaluation, evaluation policy in education, recognition (*Anerkennung*), recognition in education, sociology of valuations

ΑΞΙΟΛΟΓΗΣΗ, ΚΟΥΛΤΟΥΡΑ ΕΛΕΓΧΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΑΝΑΓΝΩΡΙΣΗ ΣΤΗΝ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗ: ΔΙΕΡΕΥΝΩΝΤΑΣ ΔΙΑΣΥΝΔΕΣΕΙΣ ΚΑΙ ΣΧΕΣΕΙΣ

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■ ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Το άρθρο διερευνά τις διασυνδέσεις και τις σχέσεις της αξιολόγησης στην εκπαίδευση – ως πολιτική και μέθοδο κρίσης της επίδοσης ατόμων και θεσμών – με τις διαδικασίες αναγνώρισης (*Anerkennung*). Η αναγνώριση αποτελεί αναπόσπαστο μέρος της διαμόρφωσης των ατόμων ως κοινωνικών όντων, αλλά και της λειτουργικότητας των θεσμών στην κοινωνική ζωή. Οι τρέχουσες πρακτικές αξιολόγησης στο πλαίσιο της ‘πολιτικής ποιότητας’, όπως είναι η πιστοποίηση εκπαιδευτικών ιδρυμάτων, και η κατάρτιση λίστας ιδρυμάτων, εγείρουν πολλά ερωτήματα και επικρίνονται έντονα για την αύξηση του ανταγωνισμού, την ιδιωτικοποίηση της δημόσιας εκπαίδευσης, την τέλεση επιλήψιμων πράξεων και την αναπαραγωγή των ανισοτήτων αντί της άμβλυνσής τους.

Μια ανεξερεύνητη πτυχή της αναπτυσσόμενης πρακτικής της αξιολόγησης είναι πώς τα αποτελέσματά της αποτιμώνται ως επίτευγμα και αναγνώριση των κρινόμενων οντοτήτων, είτε αυτά είναι άτομα ή θεσμοί. Το επίτευγμα όπως και η αναγνώριση αποτελούν τρόπους απόκτησης μιας προσωπικής αίσθησης τιμής, αξιοπρέπειας, αλλά και κοινωνικού κύρους, το οποίο με τη σειρά διαμορφώνει τη θέση του ατόμου στην κοινωνική ιεραρχία. Η θέση αυτή προσδιορίζει εν πολλοίς τις διαθέσιμες ευκαιρίες και τα προνόμια στην κοινωνία, που μεταφράζονται ως διαφοροποιημένη πρόσβαση σε υλικά και συμβολικά αγαθά και υπηρεσίες.

Το κείμενο συγκεντρώνει εργασίες, που αναπτύχθηκαν σε διαφορετικά πεδία της επιστημονικής μελέτης σχετικά με την υπόρρητη και ανεξέταστη εν πολλοίς σύνδεση της αξιολόγησης στην εκπαίδευση με την αναγνώριση. Αυτό γίνεται, έχοντας κατά νου ότι η αναγνώριση είναι σημαντική για την κατανόηση του τρόπου με τον οποίο κατασκευάζονται και/ή αναπαράγονται οι ιεραρχίες στην εκπαίδευση σε σχέση με την κοινωνία.

Λέξεις-κλειδιά: αξιολόγηση, πολιτική αξιολόγησης στην εκπαίδευση, αναγνώριση (*Anerkennung*), αναγνώριση στην εκπαίδευση, κοινωνιολογία των κοινωνικών αξιολογήσεων

■ INTRODUCTION

The article explores the relation of *evaluation* – as a practice and method of assessing performances in education, in the context of audit culture and quality assurance – to processes of *recognition* (Anerkennung). Recognition is part and parcel of individuals' constitution as social beings as well as institutions' functionality in social life (Ikaheimo, 2017; Ikaheimo & Laitinen, 2007; Iser, 2019). The reason to undertake this work is to explore how current evaluation practices in education are seen as providing proof of 'value' that in turn it is used as a mechanism to attribute or support claims of achievement and recognition (McBride 2009), leading to differential or privileged treatment, that promotes inequalities in education but also in other fields of social life.

Current evaluation practices in education assess individual and institutional performances according to certain criteria. Results gained from evaluation however tend to be interpreted as value, portrayed moreover as being 'objective'. The current evaluation in the form of 'ranking lists' of universities tend to valorise established institutions: the elite universities of the past are ranked higher than others, as though evaluation criteria coincide with criteria these universities function with. This is then questionable in terms of validity as are other evaluation results (Badiuzzaman, 2025; Editorial Board, 2021; Kayyali, 2023; Ossandon et al., 2021). Evaluations of higher education institutions furthermore are seen as mechanisms of control as they usually accompanied by imposing sanctions to individual and institutions that do not comply with this policy. Though these accusations are serious there is another side that has not been articulated clearly, namely that evaluation may from the outset constitute a value judgement instead of being 'value free' as scientific research dictates. In addition, results that valorise the assessed entity (personal or institutional) are seen as though it is an achievement and recognition of their higher quality of work; when value attribution is unequal so is the bestowing of recognition. Thus, evaluation results may contribute to the reproduction of inequalities.

Currently, it is not (only) economic obstacles that hinder people to access higher education but their lower status as they may be seen as prone to fail in their studies and this would show negative in the evaluation of the respective institution (Sandel, 2022/2020). Furthermore, institutions placed high on the University 'ranking lists' dominate funding opportunities, while academics with 'high' publication records in 'esteemed' journals may have more opportunities to employment (Kreiner, 2021; Cefai et al., 2015). In its turn, academics residing in the West,

considered white and male, may have more opportunities in publishing their work than their colleagues coming from the Global South. These examples point to the existence of hierarchies in terms of value that is translated in recognition which in turn provides access to public goods and services possible, but in an unequal manner.

Furthermore, there is growing concern with problems associated with value and merit. The work of Sandel (2022/2020) describes illegal practices of individuals when in need of obtaining certificates showing achievement in different areas, so that they secure access to higher education. There are several issues mentioned so far and attributed to evaluation and to the audit culture that dominates in higher education institutions. These refer to close monitoring and control of individuals and institutions by governments (like in Greece), exploitation of working people, growing inequalities, the adoption of anti-DEI laws (against Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) in the USA, growing alienation, privatisation of education and other public institutions, and limiting access and opportunities (e.g. to esteemed journals and/or to funding opportunities for research).

Sociology has usually dealt with the way status and prestige structures social relationships and informs the structural formation of hierarchies. Philosophy, especially the work of Honneth (1995), attempts to work out how citizenship and recognition go hand in hand, and this could form a sound basis of the democratic functioning of modern states (Honneth, 1995).

The relation between evaluation and recognition is, to my knowledge, scantily researched. This line of inquiry could provide fruitful insights into the less obvious aspects of power arrangements as well as into social transformation processes and the trust citizens may have in social changes. In this article we focus more on the link between evaluation and recognition. In a previous work we examined in more detail the social bases of evaluation in social relations, as for example the complex of 'honour and shame' in Mediterranean societies to issues of prestige and self-esteem (Kantzara, 2001, 2023).

The questions we pose are: *How is evaluation related to recognition and for what reasons this is important?*

The article contains five sections. The next section is devoted to framing the present inquiry. The third section delves into the different aspects of evaluation, followed by the fourth section on recognition. The problematic and the threads that run through the text are tied up in the last, concluding, fifth section.

■ FRAMEWORK OF INQUIRY

This inquiry is placed in the context and conditions of the audit culture that was created after the Second World War and from the perspective of the ‘New governance’ as a form of managing public institutions. This new form is based on using a ‘soft’ hand in managing and relies more on individual’s self-discipline through prizes and recognition. The underlying viewpoint from which I examine the subject under investigation is based on Goode’s (1978) approach, that by giving prizes it is more effective socially than by punishing; I borrow Parson’s idea that individual achievement is important to social cohesion and continuation of the status quo; indirectly the ideas are based on McClelland’s (1961) idea of ‘the need of achievement’; and I rely mostly on the work of Honneth (1995) on recognition, who was based on Hegel, who in turn was based on Fichte, and which I shall examine in more detail below (see section 4). I also rely on Maslow’s (1943) notion of ‘hierarchy of needs’ in which recognition figures as the top priority of individuals after all material needs have been met; in addition, the work of Mead and others in philosophy shows that the self is relational in its construction. The work of Dewey talks about how value is created in interaction (Dewey, 1939). The literature on evaluation and especially the insight that publications in ‘esteemed’ international journals is used as a trusted indicator that the work of the scientist is valued and is used among others in hiring practices (Kreiner, 2021; Cefai et al., 2015).

The text is an essay and some of the ideas originate from my participation in the feminist movement and from my Ph.D. on gender and prestige and later status (Kantzara, 2001, 2016). Recently, I started being interested in evaluation as part of perception and as policy in the context of new governance. The text is based on literature, observations, discussions with colleagues and others, and research in the changes in education over the past 20 years. The methodological perspective relies on Glaser’s and Strauss’ work (1967) on ‘grounded theory approach’, according to which there is a continuous movement from theory to research material and back to formulate theoretical ideas; indirectly I am using the epistemological principles of Blumer’s (1969) symbolic interactionism on meaning.

In this text, by the term ‘evaluation’ we mean *the overall tendency to judge, assess and rank performances of journals, universities, and educational systems even if these are not always carried out in a formal way, as for example in the case of scientific journals. Evaluation as part of an audit culture that is gaining momentum and it is applied in different endeavours, from performance of institutions to individual contributions.* Evaluation, in the hands of management, is applied to judge or assess individual

and institutional performance on set goals and on basis of indices and criteria that supposedly express success or failure to meet these set targets. Evaluation has acquired an aura of ‘objective’ measurement which is very much questionable as every scientific endeavour must account for its epistemological bases and its claims to truth and objectivity, the two most important aims of science (Espeland et al., 2021).

The next section unravels the different connotations of evaluation as a concept.

EVALUATION AS A CONCEPT

Evaluation as policy in relation to social valuation

The concept of evaluation has lent its name to a policy that attempts to pin down and assess in a quantitative manner performances, services, and products according to criteria to check or prove whether set targets were met. At the same time, by evaluation we also mean the social processes by which people and positions are juxtaposed and are given a relative value in the form of prestige, status and power forming thus the ‘positions’ on the social hierarchy. Social evaluation usually distinguishes the differences between similar objects to attribute a differential value, which is done by exaggerating sometimes the differences rather than the similarities, as for example about gender. It is in this sense almost always ridden with cultural beliefs, based knowingly or not on tradition (see also Lamont, 2012). Social valuation legitimises practices and imposes sanctions for transgressing them, contributing thus to social cohesion. Individuals are bound to social values as they are continuously judged if they behave ‘normally’ or in a socially acceptable manner. Social evaluation permeates laws and customs, as well as the sharing of common goods, but most of all defines the distribution of common goods, both material and symbolic. The distribution is not equal and is dependent very much on the social evaluation of jobs, cultures and consequently of people doing these jobs or having the characteristics of the category they are placed on.

Sennet’s and Cobb’s work (1972) explores the hurt feelings of the working-class men dignity, and freedom. They feel that they have no choice but to work even more to provide for their family. The only pride is to furnish all these goodies for which they must work double or triple shifts to earn the money needed. At the end however they have no time to enjoy them or to be with their families. If only they had done better at school –they say– to have more options in life and better salaries. Thus, achievement measured according to the social standards is related to their own sense of self-respect and self-esteem. Social success is structurally

related in various ways to distributing access to other social goods, which are also hierarchically valued.

Evaluation research as a term

Evaluation research is a field of scientific endeavour to be applied in business and other institutions to measure outcomes (see Patton, 1990; Ozeki et al., 2019). Moreover, the name was used to carrying out evaluations as part of policy from the World Bank (WB) and the Organisation for Cooperation and Development (OECD). When financing the so-called ‘third world’ countries WB and OECD demanded proof of ‘good governance’ as a prerequisite to continue funding. One of the ways to prove that money was spent wisely and not for corruption practices was called evaluation. Since the 1990’s OECD policy disseminates this ‘good practice’ of evaluation in the context of ‘New Public Management’ based on the idea among other of ‘accountability’. The emphasis is on steering rather than on imposing and dictating desired actions of others (Eagleton Pierce, 2014; OECD, 1995).

The OECD policy was strengthened and influenced by what authors describe as ‘audit culture’ (Strathern, 2000) and ‘audit society’ (Power, 1999): the burgeoning use of evaluation as a control mechanism was legitimised on the notion of accountability. Its roots are to be found in the financial sector that gradually was widespread through international and supranational organisations fostering culture of accountability and control that gave rise to forms of evaluative measurements (Power, 1999). These gave rise to an extensive formalism resulting in hierarchical rankings of countries, thus supporting domination of already dominant countries in the world. The phenomenon was aptly described as ‘governing by numbers’ (Grek, 2009; Ozga, 2008).

Issues in evaluation research and practices

The problem with the current use of evaluation as a policy measure is that it has far reaching connotations that are not part of the relative research undertaken in any company, university or school. Its outcomes are translated as quality though the measuring was about quantified items. For example, number of incoming and graduating students are measured but not the labour and care expressed in doing ‘service work’, such as setting up a new department internet site or new rules of studying, and the mentoring tasks, that are important and count for the overall student’s success. These are not quantifiable or are not seen in this light and so they are not taken into consideration (see e.g. Järvinen & Mik-Meyer, 2025).

Furthermore, evaluative results tend to be seen hierarchically, and we often

see university ‘ranking’ lists or learning outcomes (e.g. the famous PISA research programme of assessing students’ reading and reckoning abilities in OECD countries), that is numbers positioned hierarchically supposedly representing quality. Our objections apart from other things is that the connotations and the denotations of the concept evaluation make the application of measurement procedures not an objective procedure. Thus, results are also contestable (Kayyali, 2023). The platform with the acronym CoARA (Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment) was initiated at the European level and shows the concern of practitioners for sound and valid evaluation results (see coara.eu).

The issues arising from evaluation practices are numerous: Apart from definitional problems (Gullickson, 2020), selectivity in choosing indices may lead to the issue of ‘commensuration’, that is the relation between the indices and what they represent (Espeland & Stevens, 1998). The measurements may not count for what counts for the observed results, as mentioned above when discussing ‘service work’. Evaluative measurements however, such as impact factors and publishing in high profile journals, are conceived as an ‘objective’ more or less index of academic ‘value’ of the candidate. As one critique put it: ‘Not having time to read all the publications one accepts publication scores as proof of value’ (Kreiner, 2021). Furthermore, according to a study, the evaluators were not aware of the existence of a ‘formal logic of evaluation’ underlying their inquiries (Ozeki et al., 2019).

Sociology has proposed a field named ‘sociology of valuation’ or ‘sociology of worth’ to tackle the social bases and biases of evaluation, as it rests on prevalent ideas and it is not a neutral endeavour (Lamont, 2012). Stark (2000) notes, for example, that worth, value, and price of products are closely related. Additionally, dominant values in different social worlds form ‘economies of worth’ that set the background for, among other, justifying individual actions (Boltanski & Thevenot, 2006).

Applying evaluation as a method of judging individual and organisational performances potentially turns it into an instrument of control par excellence. The outcomes of evaluation, such as position on ranking lists, number of citations and so-called impact factors, often are interpreted as achievement and recognition of their efforts and their work. More so, these numerical indices are worn as ‘badges of value’ to use the term of Sennett and Comb (1972), and are often mentioned by individual curriculum vitae and institutional newsletters. A further consequence of evaluation results are that these may be used as an ‘objective’ point of reference to define access to public goods and services, like employment for individuals, and funding opportunities for institutions.

The next section delves into aspects of recognition.

RECOGNITION (ANNERKENNUNG)

The concept of recognition

Philosophy took an early interest in recognition. Since Fichte (1802), we know that mutual recognition is a process by which social relations are structured: for example, accepting others denote that you consider them as equal to you (*cited in* Ikaheimo, 2017; Honneth, 1995). Hegel in his early writings in Jena wrote about recognition as an integral part of becoming a self (Hegel, 1807/1979). He argues that from infancy, persons are becoming ‘universal individuals’ through recognition. When the needs of an infant are met, then the child feels accepted, nourished, and loved. In other words, s/he is being recognised by her/his take-carers. Thus, recognition is related to the love an infant receives. From there on the social self is created out of this relationship when s/he is recognised it means that the person in question feels that s/he is respected and s/he is at the same level than others; at the same time, s/he is differentiated and feels unique. A universal individual according to Hegel has acquired the consciousness and the knowledge that s/he is particular/unique, while at the same time participating in something universal that surpasses her/him as it unites hem/her with a universal category of similar entities. The notion is not the same as ‘homo universalis’ the ideal of the Renaissance, whereby an individual should be characterised by polymathy, critical spirit and ethical high standards, but shows the link between individuals and society.

Relying on Hegel’s work on recognition, it was Honneth (1995) that took up the task to formulate a social and political theory that would connect all individuals as citizens among themselves and to the polity through the notion of recognition. For Honneth, recognition works at it were on three level and entails love, respect and solidarity. These three are important to found social relationships of respect and esteem. More particularly, at the first level, the recognition through love during childhood builds individual’s self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem. Noteworthy here, that people in social life try to regain them and in doing this are being involved in a struggle of recognition. The second level of recognition is broader and entails participation in organisations and means acceptance and respect of rights, while the third level means that when citizens esteem the consequence is to show solidarity in a way they guarantee the rights of others to existence.

According to Honneth (1995) different fields that entail recognition, as I understand them, are those described in Table 1.

Table 1. Recognition in the different social fields according to Honneth's work (1995)

Fields of relations	Recognition as member	Working out of recognition
Family/caretakers	Love	Self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem
Civil society	Respect	Civil Rights
Society in general/the world	Esteem	Solidarity

The three pillars of the 'moral grammar' for a cohesive and moral community based on acceptance and tolerance are love, respect and esteem, all based on recognition (Honneth, 1995). Love is cultivated in a caregiving environment; respect is cultivated in a community; and esteem is accorded in a wider social context (see also McBride, 2009).

It is significant to note that being recognised means that a person is accepted, respected and his/her rights are not violated. Persons do not just flow in society but are classified or categorised according to certain characteristics deemed important in society to do the categorisation, such as gender, class, ethnicity, age, etc. Every individual becomes part of the social classification system which is accorded a value making up the dominant hierarchy. The position on the hierarchy will define opportunities, and prizes, how much s/he will earn, whom s/he will marry, where s/he will live and even where s/he will go for vacations.

The concept of recognition is important in other's people work too, like in Taylor's (1992), that linked it to struggles of social movements to gain recognition; this notion can explain the civil rights movement 'Black Lives Matter'¹. Honneth's conception on recognition functions complementary to previous notions and shows that it is far more important than initially perhaps thought. The use of the concept and the literature have grown fast the last two-three decades (Iser, 2019).

Linking recognition and valuation

Here I refer to the link between recognition and valuation. A recent example comes from the workers' strikes at the railway in Germany in the beginning of 2024. In a photo, portraying people demonstrating pictures a board saying "Wir sind mehr wert" (We are more worthy/of value). It may mean that they are more worthy and therefore their salaries should reflect it and/or that their work is of more value than it is currently acknowledged (29-1-24)².

1. <https://blacklivesmatter.com/>

2. <https://www.lifo.gr/now/world/paralyei-i-germania-apo-tis-nees-apergiakes-kinitopoiiseis>

Additionally, there is a growing tendency to portray curriculum vitae and biographical details of academics on the site of higher education institutions. It is a form of advertisement as the emphasis lies on the number of publications, the number of translations of their work in other languages and the number of prizes they received in home country and abroad. Recently, next to names I saw numbers, that presented the amount of funding brought to the university, which to my view shows that commercialisation has gained momentum in the academy, but this is now beyond focus for the time being. It is an example of bestowing worth on oneself based on recognition gained by others.

In relation to number of publications, I have read on the curriculum vitae of academics that they authored 250 or 300 publications, usually in the form of articles. In my opinion, for one academic alone is not possible to achieve such high numbers in social sciences. Yet it all seems possible with co-authors. If we look closely, then the academic in question did this together with other authors, usually more than five. The issue is not the number of the authors or of publications, but that every author of these publications also claims in their respective curriculum vitae the 250 publications crafted together with other authors. Then in total, the 250 publications multiplied by 5 or even 10 authors amount 1.250 or even to 2.500 publications, a number totally misleading. Next, the 250 publications have to be divided by 5 authors and then see what is replicated and subtracted from the total to be able to assess how much each one has actually written. Thus, the author that is proud of having written 300 publications has not even written 10 papers with original ideas (Personal info & data). But if you apply for an academic position and have written 10 papers and your competitors claim 250, then she or he gets the points of achievement, even if these 250 publications have content that may be dubious as to its quality or have been written with 5 co-authors. The sheer high number is dazzling and covers semantically in importance your perhaps 'meagre' 5 or 10 papers (info comes from participation in recruitment committees and have read more than 40 reports assessing the most 'suitable candidate').

They, academics and institutions, present themselves on basis of various evaluation results that are treated as trustworthy. The frenzy to acquire educational titles and diplomas goes hand in hand with the fever to prove one's worth by publishing or acquiring prizes so that one is being recognised in his or her area of expertise. The slogan 'publish or perish' describes the situation at the field of higher education, as though the academic is validated by number of publications, prizes, or research funding. Academics may feel esteemed or even demand it as their 'contribution' to society can be proven by so-called 'objective' measurements.

Another example promoting recognition are the emails promoting platforms on which researchers and academics are given space to showcase their work (Table 2).

Table 2. Promotional emails sent regularly with heading like the following

Subject heading of email	First line of message
"Vera, people are reading your work"	"Vera, people are reading your work"
"4 people noticed you"	"You are getting noticed"
"You have 10+ invitations"	"You have 10+ invitations"
"Vera, you reached a milestone"	"Vera, you reached a milestone"
"Congratulations, Vera, you reached top stats last week"	"Vera, you have a new achievement"

Source: 2023-2025 promotional emails received from LinkedIn and Research Gate, two platforms where researchers and academics place their work. The name Vera is fictitious; the emphasis is in the original.

We could analyse the table as follow: the message is written twice in an almost identical manner. First, with bold letters on the subject line of the email and then as the first line of the message. Sometimes the second line is slightly altered from the first sentence. Next, the first name address or the personal pronoun ‘You’ shows a sense of familiarity and closeness in an otherwise cold, and unfamiliar world, but also that is directed to you personally.

Now, if you receive them regularly and do not delete them, you could get whole pages (say 50 emails), as for example in Google account like Gmail. Then you might even think for a moment that you are important. If people appreciate your work, then for sure you are recognised as a valuable contributor to science, to society or to your university’s brand name. A last note, the first two of the emails above present your so-called ‘contribution to society’.

One could argue that these are not formal evaluations, but the point is that formal and non-formal evaluations go side by side and contribute to the culture of audit and to connecting evaluations to recognition.

Discussion: Recognition as symbolic compensation (as payment in return)

Evaluation results are commonly perceived as indication of value, and as achievement both of individuals and institutions. In its turn valuation thus gained is conceived as receiving something in return of one’s efforts, as a symbolic compensation. In this sense, valuation denotes recognition. The link however should be questioned. It is not a coincidence that the University of Zurich retracted from rankings recently giving as a reason that “the ranking creates false incentives” to

personnel that may “compromise quality” (Swissinfo, 2024). Additionally, ranking meant often doing work performed in unrelated areas, instead of for instance teaching. In addition, the European platform (with the acronym CoARA), as we mentioned in section 3 above, was set up to meet critics and refine requirement for a sound evaluation, shows not only the epistemological problems associated with this endeavour but the far-reaching effects when results are unquestionably translated in terms of value.

Being recognised is essential for creating a relation to the self, as this relationship is mediated by relating to others (according to Marx). Recognition structures individuals as social subjects – who are structuring the world around them. Different fields are structured in terms of valuation of the individual that takes the form of love, respect and esteem. To these correspond acceptance, rights and solidarity. Evaluation of performances seen as validations for individual academics and institutions: a growing antagonism ‘struggle for recognition’ and this means misuse of resources, as much of it goes for lucrative use. Power and domination hide behind practices that erroneously or closely denote higher quality, used to exclude rather than to include. Esteem goes only to those who succeed in what can be measured only with designated criteria, disregarding work and relations important to sustain institutions and the function these fulfil.

Conformity and homogeneity are reproduced in many fields, something that does not contribute to democracy. These are not the direct consequence of evaluation but of people and institutions following and adopting current cultures and forms of evaluation (Ossandon et al., 2021).

There is a tendency to treat metrics, lists and other measurements as an ‘objective’ point of reference by different actors: in hiring practices or choosing which university to study. It is a kind of procrustean logic. Academics for instance and their performances are compared and measured up accordingly. Their value is weighted in a special, denigratory manner.

Last, I would like to mention, even if I do this in passing, the movement of ‘open access’ to knowledge and ‘open source’ that attempts to counterbalance the highly antagonistic sphere of the academic and scientific world. Open access policy creates alternative opportunities for the less privileged. It provides opportunities for networking, researching and to exposing coloniality, sexism and hidden privilege. At the same time, open access may be misused, but this is another subject, and we leave it for another time.

The last section ends with conclusions and ideas for further research.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Evaluation as a social phenomenon resembles a ‘social fact’ (in Durkhemian terms) as it permeates and structures social relations, creating, sustaining and largely reproducing the hierarchies of people and things. The bases of evaluation as a policy instrument of control have a history. It is based on social evaluations, from religious origin, the evaluation policy and research that was used in business and finances to assesses skills, services and products.

Evaluation practices in education and in other social fields may reproduce categorical hierarchies of people and things. The reason for this lies in that the outcome of evaluations (formal, non-formal, and as a policy instrument) is perceived as achievement to which a certain amount of recognition in terms of value and worth in a hierarchical manner is bestowed upon persons and institutions, so that they somehow deserve better and exclusive treatment, attracting more funds, more academics, and more students. The outcome of evaluations as a policy instrument of control validates pre-existing hierarchies in a new clothing. They are not merely about quality, it is about building an ‘objective point of reference’ and/or an ‘objective point of view’, according to which other performances are measured, but are questionable and flawed in many aspects (see also Chinta, Kebritchi & Ellias, 2016).

Evaluation practices operate on basis of (social) evaluative elements that inform quantifications and algorithmic reasoning and the obtained research result is thus objectified (Espeland et al., 2021); on basis of this, the result is seen as objective and it is translated as proof of value, which in turn is attributed to the entity under evaluation, whether personal or institutional. Evaluation indices matrices and ranking lists are used as though they form an ‘objective reference point’ for hiring purposes, to attract new students, and acquire more funds for research or other activities.

The current evaluation practices show several changes that are taking place: First, that traditional forms of social evaluation, such as status or class, represent are deemed not enough to define a certain value or to use it a criterion to accord rights, privileges and the like. We need a more ‘objective’ method. Objectivity and numbers, as we all know, go hand in hand as what can be measured seems objective. *A difficult question however arises: What do we measure?* This is not only a scientific question, but it is also a political one.

Secondly: It seems that evaluations of different forms bind individuals to current social order. Parsons said achievement is the vehicle to social integration. It was the time when men talked in terms of “the need of achievement” (McClelland),

though I would think one would better talk for the *need for recognition of one's own value*. But this is a struggle, an endless one in social life. To my view, the current evaluation policy and practices offer a continuous proof of one's own 'value' but in the 'eyes of the other'. In so doing, processes of domination are kept intact, self-control of individuals is at place, which is functions better than imposing order through external coercion or violence.

Thirdly: The recognition offered by the evaluation practices is earned on basis of competition, so it looks that it is even more objective, as it can be measured in the form of citations and 'impacts' and can be worn as a 'badge of value' (Sennett & Cobb, 1972). It is mentioned in curriculum vitae, it hangs on internet sites, and it is portrayed as achievement of higher education institutions of its staff, indirectly but securely suggesting their own high 'doubtless' value.

The issues that arise are numerous: first there are epistemological issues that lead to faulty research results; secondly, results are interpreted as value, while at best these partly describe a situation; thirdly, evaluation measurements are used to exclude rather than to include. Thus, access to public goods and services is controlled, as previously highly esteemed journals however continue to have a high 'impact' factor, highly appraised universities continue to figure as 'top' higher institutions and receive more funding and recruit the 'best' academics.

In a few words, current evaluation practices often legitimise exclusion and inequality in the name of 'value'. Thus, what is culminated in evaluations is the re-creation of sources of value. This can explain the burgeoning interest in using evaluation as an instrument of assessing, that is self-control and imposing conformity. Evaluation becomes a means par excellence to bind institutions and individuals to work intensively in the growing field of more publications, more research, more funding, having no time left for something else. The Weberian notion of the iron cage metaphor applies unfortunately here, too.

The notes in this text are meant as a contribution towards a theory of how value and worthiness is created socially, it is supported in culture, translates in economic gain, while it permeates spheres of social life reproducing social hierarchy. By unravelling the relationship between evaluation and recognition I intended to analyse and support the idea that the wide spreading of evaluation, in many forms and social fields the last three decades, is due largely to the unspoken connotations of value that leads to claims of recognition. And this is important, because recognition is crucial in understanding why evaluation is becoming such a powerful mechanism of conformity and at the same time important to analyse several social processes that involve public trust, and domination, but also societal change.

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