

# The colonial legacy in the knowledge of evaluation

O legado colonial no saber sobre avaliação

El legado colonial en el conocimiento sobre la evaluación

[Maria de Fátima Farias](#)  [Wellington Pereira de Queirós](#) 

## Highlights

There are, to a greater or lesser extent, aspects of coloniality present in evaluative theories.

The evaluation models practiced in Latin America are based on European epistemological standards.

It is necessary, based on the critique already initiated by the emancipatory paradigm, to construct a decolonial evaluative model.

## Abstract

This essay seeks to identify and problematize the aspects of coloniality present in the main evaluative theories described in the literature. To this end, we used Latin American decolonial thought as a literature review, highlighting key concepts of this theory, such as modernity and the triad of coloniality of being/knowledge/power. As a result, we observe that the colonizing function of assessment has been present since its inception and can be identified in: the obsession with the efficiency of Certification Assessment, which aimed to train students to serve the industrial economy of the first half of the 20th century; in the logic of regulation for the success of Formative Assessment, which subjects assessment processes to the demands of early 21st-century neoliberalism; and, in a much less evident but still present way, in Emancipatory Evaluation, due to its accommodation to the Eurocentric epistemological standard. It is therefore necessary to rethink evaluative theory and practice in the sense of its decolonization.

[Resumo](#) | [Resumen](#)

## Keywords

Decoloniality. Eurocentrism. Evaluative theories.

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## **| Introduction**

Evaluation practices are at the heart of some of the most important discussions in the educational process, influencing and being influenced by the curriculum, the organization of pedagogical work, methodological choices, and political-pedagogical projects (Esteban, 2013; Fernandes, 2019; Saul, 2015). Thus, due to its centrality in pedagogical processes, as well as its articulation with other dimensions of educational activity, in addition to its importance in terms of students' cognitive development and learning prospects, school assessment becomes a privileged space for epistemic disputes, involving issues of power, ethics, justice, and diversity, among others. More than two decades ago, Dias Sobrinho (2002) already emphasized the political bias of evaluation. The author highlights the power relations that are established through the practice of evaluation, the intentionality, and the effects produced by this process. For him:

[...] The evaluation cannot in any way be considered neutral or naïve. It transforms. That is, it produces effects on both individual life and society and the state. It legitimizes values and ideologies, justifies admissions and dismissals, promotions and failures, rewards and sanctions, reinforcement and coercion in the behavioral sphere, funding releases and cuts, etc. (p. 37).

However, recent research (Mota & Mamede-Neves, 2021; Schardong & Rigo, 2022) shows how technicality still predominates in school evaluation. In this sense, Poso et al. (2021, p. 614) assert that "the idea of evaluation as a neutral, purely technical act that generates results and is isolated from pedagogical work is still strongly rooted." Despite the constructivist theoretical hegemony that guides academic debate, studies indicate the persistence of positivist thinking in evaluation, highlighting the difficulty of integrating contemporary pedagogical ideals into teaching practice in this context.

In light of the above, it is important to understand how learning evaluation concepts and practices are structured. In this sense, Ribeiro and Gasparini (2021, p. 3) argue that the foundations underpinning the evaluation models practiced in Latin America "follow the standards established by the colonizing European episteme, with ramifications for the definition of privileged methods and approaches." To break or minimize the mechanisms of power that operate within evaluation and their ramifications in the reproduction of social asymmetries, it is necessary to be clear about the influence of the European episteme on the historical construction of knowledge about evaluation.

Thus, this theoretical essay seeks to identify and problematize aspects of coloniality in theoretical perspectives on school evaluation. Thus, our reflections will be guided by the question: What is colonial about the main evaluative theories described in the literature?

## **| Modernity and coloniality: theoretical contextualization**

The hegemonic model of society provided by modernity originated in Europe in the 15th century and became globalized through colonization efforts, establishing a new standard of power: capitalism. Capitalist power emerged at the same time and in the same historical movement as the colonization of Latin America, becoming the global standard. This power, racist, predatory, and colonial-epistemic, is forged from the structuring of new collective identities (Indians, Blacks, Whites) and geocultural identities (America, Africa, Europe), as well as new parameters for validating knowledge. This has led to a new paradigm of domination, based on these intersubjective relations, under Eurocentric hegemony (Quijano, 2010).

Europe's political expansion into colonized territories imposes the West as a model to be followed by dominated peoples, implying, in addition to political domination, epistemic domination. A relationship of superiority established between colonizer and colonized supplants the knowledge, culture, identity, and even humanity of the dominated social groups (Dutra et al., 2019). Europe is thus converted into the epistemic center of the world; the construction of modern hegemonic knowledge meant the subalternization, erasure, and marginalization of non-European knowledge. This self-construction of a distinct and immeasurably superior identity found a tool in modern scientific knowledge for affirming European superiority, imposing Western science as the only way to produce true knowledge about the world (Nunes, 2010).

According to Santos (2010), the epistemological perspective of modern Western thought is structured along abyssal lines, that is, based on the division of the world into two sides: a human side and a subhuman side, a civilized side and a side in a state of nature, a rational side and an irrational side. The author considers modern knowledge to be one of the main manifestations of abyssal thinking; according to him, "In the field of knowledge, abyssal thinking consists of granting modern science a monopoly on the universal distinction between true and false" (Santos, 2010, p. 36). The idea of modern science as the only form of valid and rigorous knowledge is perhaps one of the most well-established premises of abyssal thinking to this day.

The form of domination, founded on colonialism, has been transforming and rearticulating itself to maintain asymmetrical power structures and mechanisms of exploitation and subordination in contemporary times. Quijano (2010), in defining colonialism, also describes how it becomes coloniality:

Colonialism is obviously older, while coloniality has proven, over the last 500 years, to be more profound and lasting than colonialism. However, it was undoubtedly conceived within that context, and without it could not be imposed on the intersubjectivity of the world so deeply rooted and prolonged (p. 93).

Thus, colonialism extends beyond political, military, or administrative domination; it survives beyond the legal emancipation of the colonies in the form of coloniality,

with ramifications in the ways of being, living, and knowing of the peoples in the former colonies. It was through colonialism that Europe produced scientific knowledge as a single, universal model, silencing and nullifying all non-European epistemologies.

In view of this pattern of domination, Quijano (2010) describes the concept of coloniality of power as a regime that operates across all material and subjective planes and dimensions of everyday social existence, promoting the valorization of Western epistemologies and ontologies and silencing other ways of being and knowing. The coloniality of power is constituted and reproduced based on the dimensions of coloniality of being and coloniality of knowledge, concepts that are closely interrelated, intersecting, and overlapping.

Maldonado-Torres (2010) develops the concept of coloniality of being, initially conceived by Walter D. Mignolo, as a reflection of the ontological oppression arising from the processes of subalternization of the colonial experience. Thus, "The coloniality of Being refers to the process by which common sense and tradition are marked by power dynamics of a preferential nature: they discriminate against people and target certain communities" (Maldonado-Torres, 2010, p. 350). To define the coloniality of being, the author proposes transgressing the boundaries of Western and Eurocentric philosophical thought, which, in one of its most widespread currents, Heideggerian existentialism, disregards the influence of colonization and the persecution of different subjectivities. In this sense, he proposes establishing relations among Being, space, and history, which are disregarded in Heideggerian formulations.

The importance of knowledge in the context of coloniality is quite evident. Over time, coloniality has continued to reproduce the economic, political, cognitive, and natural logic forged during the colonial period, one of its main consequences being the colonization of knowledge. The epistemological paradigm imposed globally since the West's colonial experience in modernity represents an extreme reduction in the diversity of cultures and epistemologies worldwide today. Epistemologies and cultures that did not suit the interests of European colonial domination were forgotten, exterminated, plundered, or marginalized (Santos, 2010).

The hegemonic reference point of Western epistemology is inseparable from modern science, which has been elevated to a standard against which the validity of other forms of knowledge is measured (Nunes, 2010). Science is, therefore, in the logic of Western epistemology, the holder of the criteria for determining the validity of all other knowledge. Just as the imposition of the superiority of the European white man, regarded as the definition of humanity, is the justification for denying the humanity of others, the universalization of science as the only true knowledge represents the epistemic disqualification of other forms of knowledge, as follows:

The long tradition of scientism and Eurocentrism has given rise to an idea of abstract universalism, which decisively marks not only the production of knowledge, but also other areas of life: economics, politics, aesthetics,

subjectivity, relationship with nature, etc. In all these spheres, throughout more than 500 years of colonial/modern history, models originating in Europe and its beloved offspring—the American model after World War II—are embodied as the pinnacle of human development, while other forms of organizing life are treated as pre-modern, backward, and misguided (Bernardino-Costa et al., 2019, p. 13).

Eurocentrism operates by repressing other forms of knowledge production, denying and silencing the cultural legacy of colonized peoples, relegating them to the category of savages and irrational beings. The loss of self-reference among subaltern peoples represents a gnosiological, ontological, and epistemological loss insofar as it impeded the development of the culture of colonized peoples, eliminated an enormous wealth of cognitive experiences, and suppressed a multitude of human possibilities for producing knowledge, generating a profound epistemological reductionism.

Given this situation, it is essential to adopt an educational approach that considers the different types of knowledge produced by the entire human race as relevant to the development of the world. To this end, it is necessary to implement insurgent pedagogical processes that are guided by the deconstruction of Eurocentric epistemic hegemony, structured on colonialism, capitalism, racism, and patriarchy. Practices that, according to Walsh (2019, p. 17), enable "the construction of a new epistemological space that incorporates and negotiates subalternized and Western knowledge". In this sense, the theoretical perspective presented in this section, particularly represented by the concepts of modernity and the triad of the structure of coloniality of being/knowledge/power, will help us identify possible aspects of coloniality in educational evaluation theory, with a view to overcoming them.

## **| School evaluation: a decolonial critique**

The colonial enterprise promoted by Europe through the invasion, plundering, and brutal domination of the indigenous peoples who inhabited what we now call Latin America gave rise to the socio-political-economic situation that is currently the dominant model in the world. One of the most pressing issues of our time is the discussion about this hegemonic model, which could be described as: a way of organizing society, a model of production and distribution of wealth, a way of producing life, an economic model, or, simply, capitalism. This form of accumulation, based on the exploitation of nature and human beings (Marx, 1996), has various means of affirmation and maintenance, one of which is school education and, within it, evaluation.

Educational evaluation is an extremely broad topic, dating back to the origins of school education. Thus, we have chosen to delimit this study to the evaluative perspectives described since its establishment as a field of knowledge in the mid-20th century. For Dubois et al. (2011), evaluation is legitimized as a field of knowledge based on the modernization process of Western societies and the hegemony of modern scientific rationality. The genesis of contemporary evaluative thinking is, therefore, marked by the preponderance of the experimental method

and the positivist approach. This characteristic helps us understand the "essential roots of the pathologies of imperial power and the persistence of coloniality" (Maldonado-Torres, 2010, p. 350).

The first theoretical model of evaluation was formulated and developed in the United States in the 1960s. During this period, the evaluation was part of a project to restructure the US education system, which was undergoing a crisis of confidence caused by the launch of Sputnik by the then Soviet Union. This fact provoked a reaction in the United States that led to "a new formulation of educational research, based on the contribution of all the sciences" (Manacorda, 1999, p. 335).

In this context, educational technicism emerges, which is based on science and the use of technological resources as mechanisms to guarantee teaching efficiency. Based on behavioral theories' assumptions, the focus of technical pedagogy is on shaping student behavior through external reinforcers. Like the industrial process, technicism seeks to increase pedagogical productivity by rationalizing educational action. In this sense, Skinner (1972, p. 246), one of the most prominent scholars of behaviorism, says: "a teaching technology helps more by increasing the productivity of the teacher. It simply allows you to teach more—more in a given subject, more subjects, to more students.

To improve teaching efficiency, technical expertise relies on evaluation as one of its main resources. Ralph Winfred Tyler (1902-1994), one of the pioneers in the study of evaluation from a technical perspective, considers the possibility of verifying whether or not students have acquired the expected behaviors to be the fundamental element of the evaluation process. The main objective of the evaluation, therefore, is to verify whether the previously outlined objectives are being effectively achieved. Thus, for him: "The evaluation process consists essentially of determining the extent to which educational objectives are actually being achieved by the curriculum and teaching program" (Tyler, 1974, p. 99). Due to this characteristic, this evaluation concept is recognized as a certification assessment.

The experimental character of the certification conception of the evaluation inaugurated by Tyler reveals the influence of the positivist scientific method, borrowing the assumptions of the natural sciences. Tyler (1974, p. 100) states: "It is clear, therefore, that an evaluation involves at least two assessments—one before the initial phase of the educational program and another at some later date so that change can be measured." The certification assessment developed by Tyler in the context of technicist pedagogy is, notably, the result of colonial scientific influence that considers modern Western science as the only reliable way to explain nature. This epistemological trend can be understood, according to Quijano (2010, p. 65), as "a way of producing knowledge that met the cognitive needs of capitalism: the measurement, externalization (or objectification) of the knowable in relation to the knower."

In this sense, Tyler presents very well-defined steps for measuring and controlling learning without, however, problematizing or even mentioning how the curriculum and evaluation are linked to social processes, notably capitalist ones. Despite this apparent neutrality of educational technicism, when translating the interests of the dominant social class, its ideological affiliation becomes evident. Luckesi (1992, p. 354) defines the main objective of assessment in technicism as: "ensuring efficiency in achieving planned results, with a view to training students capable of meeting the emerging needs of industrial society, dominated by the model of transnational monopoly capitalism," making clear the colonizing function of evaluation in this pedagogical perspective.

Educational technicism, developed in the United States during its period of imperialist expansion, was not restricted to the US system and was very useful to American expansionist interests. Economic and cultural domination, which is the basis of colonial processes, occurred during this period with the establishment of large companies from rich countries in peripheral countries. As a result, these countries needed skilled labor and, at the same time, the formation of a consumer market. To this end, as a method for developing this desired behavior pattern, the widespread dissemination throughout the world of "projects for the dissemination and expansion of educational technology, developed and implemented by government and university institutions in the United States of America" (Luckesi, 1992, p. 355) was of great value.

Given the above, we can infer that assessment-as-certification, one of the pillars of educational technicism, was part of an imperialist expansionist project that contributed to the process of coloniality imposed by countries in the global North, such as the United States, on countries in the global South, such as Brazil. In other words, certification, as an evaluative theory, can be understood as part of a phenomenon through which modern science has been used as a mechanism for legitimizing and affirming the hegemony of capitalism as a model for organizing society.

Despite the fact that efficiency was the guiding principle of the certification assessment, this promise did not become a reality. Taking Brazil as an example, where technicism was introduced in the 1950s and intensified in the following decade, influencing academic production and research, pedagogical practice, and educational legislation (Saul, 2010), we can say that its effects are far from being related to an improvement in teaching. In a study analyzing indicators and determinants of failure in Brazil between 1984 and 1997, Leon and Menezes-Filho (2002) concluded that the high rates of student failure and dropout increase as family income decreases.

In other words, a few decades after the Brazilian educational system opened up to technicism, we are witnessing an intensification of school exclusion processes among economically vulnerable social groups, which are known to be mostly made up of minority groups such as Black people, Indigenous people, peasants, women, older people, and LGBTQIA+ people. By demonstrating that, in addition to the

declared objectives of the certification assessment, it fulfills implicit functions, the assessment covertly exercises control over social hierarchies. In this sense, under a chimera of technical neutrality, the certification assessment conceals an effective role as the protagonist of a game that results in the (re)production of coloniality, articulated by the triad of being/knowledge/power.

Amidst criticism of the movement toward one-off and final educational tests, the work of American theorist Michael Scriven represents a milestone in the development of evaluation theory. Scriven (1967) formulated the concept of "Formative Assessment", which became one of the most widespread evaluative theories. His main contribution was to emphasize the procedural nature of assessment, which, in his proposal, ceases to have a purely terminal, verification function and instead aims to monitor student learning throughout the entire teaching process. To this end, he proposes conducting partial tests throughout the course or curricular unit, as opposed to one-off tests before and after the teaching process, as Tyler suggested.

Despite the pioneering nature and important contributions of Scriven's studies, his thinking remains heavily influenced by behaviorist theories. His formulations take on a directive character, which aims at behavioral results. The author defines evaluation as "the process of determining merit, value, or meaning; an evaluation is a product of this process" (Scriven, 2007, p. 1). Thus, evaluation continues to be seen as a technical procedure that does not break with the logic of quantification and is based on Eurocentric and colonial precepts such as scientism and behaviorism, which we can interpret, based on Nunes (2010, p. 222), as a reflection of an epistemic authority conferred on scientific knowledge, endorsed as a "standard for assessing the validity and dignity of all forms of knowledge."

Since the term Formative Assessment was coined by Scriven, this concept has been expanded and deepened by several authors, in Brazil and around the world (Fernandes, 2019). Among the theorists who discuss assessment from a formative perspective, Cipriano Luckesi, Jussara Hoffmann, and Philippe Perrenoud stand out. According to Gama (2018), since the 1980s, the theories proposed by these three authors have exerted a strong influence on teacher training and practice in our country. For Luckesi (1988), evaluation only makes sense if it serves as a diagnostic tool that leads to options for improving learning. Hoffmann (2014) emphasizes mediation, understood as constant monitoring of the teacher, as a strategy for improving the quality of learning outcomes. Perrenoud (1999), on the other hand, bets on regulation, as a system of course correction, to guide the learning process.

The unifying characteristic of these strands of Formative Assessment is, therefore, the suggestion to evaluate with a view to success. This success is related to a managerial quality standard, according to which the results of the evaluation process become the benchmark for the quality of education. These quality assessment parameters are grounded in epistemological assumptions of economic rationality, whose imposition is interpreted through the thesis defended by

Maldonado-Torres (2018) that coloniality involves the joint transformation of knowledge, being, and power.

Worldviews cannot be sustained by virtue of power alone. Various forms of agreement and consent must be part of them. Ideas about the meaning of concepts and the quality of lived experience (being), about what constitutes valid knowledge or points of view (knowledge), and about what represents the economic and political order (power) are basic areas that help define how things are conceived and accepted in a given worldview (p. 48).

For Freire (1987, p. 90), when we are "Subjected to the conditioning of a culture of success and personal success, to recognize oneself in an unfavorable objective situation, for an alienated consciousness, is to curb the very possibility of success". We can understand, based on Freire, this culture of individualism and competition as an obstacle to the affirmation of the human vocation *to be more*, understood as the relentless pursuit of individual improvement necessary for collective coexistence. In this sense, it is possible to interpret the logic of success as a mechanism of coloniality of the being with a view to the domination of consciences.

This logic of success also demonstrates how the colonial matrix of power is reinterpreted and adapted to new forms of capital production. Castro-Gomes (2005, p. 85) argues that, in the context of the industrial economy, there was a need for a profile of individuals who could easily adapt to the demands of production: "The construction of the profile of subjectivity required by such a modern project therefore demanded the suppression of all these differences." The author acknowledges that changes in the process of capital accumulation in the globalized world no longer require the suppression of differences, but rather their production. It is in this sense that the logic of success operates, legitimizing differences through the idea of merit, which will be further developed below, competition, and individualism, which produce ways of being characteristic of colonial domination.

By intensifying the search to improve learning quality, Formative Assessment maintains, through other methods, the logic of productivity and efficiency. A critical analysis of this meaning of Formative Assessment leads us to the understanding that this logic represents a form of submission to the market demands of neoliberal capitalist projects. In this sense, Gama (2018, p. 121, emphasis added) argues: "The thaumaturgical character of formative assessment, as much as it presents itself as 'progressive', in fact, has a conservative and technocratic tone strongly concerned with efficiency, competitiveness and excellence." Although its progress in relation to the mere verification of the certifying function is recognized, it must be admitted that Formative Assessment does not advance significantly in terms of the discussion about the transformation of social structures that operate to maintain the status quo, maintaining the colonizing function of evaluation, since "the idea of social classes is elaborated in Eurocentric thinking" (Quijano, 2010, p. 92) as the articulating axis of the universal pattern of capitalism.

From this perspective, the last decade of the 20th century was marked by public policies that promoted the ideal of quality through control. This evaluative logic goes beyond its effects on school teaching processes, with consequences that influence

the direction of educational policies, the definition of the curriculum, the selection of textbooks, and teacher training. In this sense, Zanardini (2020, p. 18) warns of a "resurgence of external evaluation policies implemented in Brazilian education since the 1990s/2000s," culminating in the establishment of the Evaluating State.

The control of knowledge exercised by evaluation, in this perspective, is committed to the hegemonic project of neoliberal capitalist society. It is not without reason, therefore, that since 2000, the OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) has been tasked with evaluating education around the world based on standards it developed, measured through a standardized test called PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment). In Brazil, the IDEB (Basic Education Development Index) was created in 2007, inspired by this same logic. As a result, we have seen an increase in state control over principals, teachers, and students through the evaluation of international and national performance standards, accountability mechanisms, and merit-based payment methodologies.

The control over school education through evaluation processes, evident in the implementation and expansion of large-scale evaluations from the beginning of the 2000s, is, according to Freitas (2011), part of the demands generated by the global reorganization of capital. In the case of Brazil, the country's economic emergence is attracting international capital, prompting a reaction from large corporations seeking to ensure that general operating conditions are adequate for them to profit from their investments. One of these conditions is the "improvement" of education, understood as a subsystem of production, for the training of specialized labor. In this context, the concept of educational quality is linked to performance in large-scale assessments. This type of evaluation plays a dual role: in addition to influencing the curriculum, legitimizing knowledge centered on hegemonic knowledge, it also creates "a utopian vision of an open meritocratic society, where everyone would receive fair rewards based on their true natural talent" (Karier, 1974, p. 148).

By corroborating the justification of social differences through meritocracy, denying the historical process of exploitation, patriarchal domination, and racialization that perpetuate poverty, large-scale evaluation processes contribute to the maintenance of coloniality in its dimensions of power, being, and knowledge. Freitas (2016) warns of the curricular narrowing caused by the logic of large-scale tests. For the author, by prioritizing the cognitive dimension, the evaluation process and, consequently, pedagogical practice as a whole, creativity, imagination, affectivity, among other important aspects, which are difficult to capture through standardized tests but are part of students' human development, are no longer considered. This implies a reduction in educational aspects, restricted to a reference matrix based on the interests of the productive system and the framework of Eurocentric hegemonic knowledge.

From this perspective, evaluation is therefore an expression of the coloniality of knowledge through the homogenization and standardization of knowledge. From the coloniality of forms of being that leads "subjects socially situated on the

oppressed side of colonial difference to think epistemically as those who find themselves in dominant positions" (Grosfoguel, 2010, p. 459). Furthermore, the coloniality of power is perpetuated by the system of capitalist domination.

In response to existing evaluation paradigms, Ana Maria Saul developed the perspective of Emancipatory Evaluation in the 80s of the last century. The creation of this new paradigm confronts the theoretical-methodological assumptions of the classical evaluation models and denounces the limited impact of their results in the educational context. Originally, the work of Saul (2010), which coined the term Emancipatory Evaluation, was developed in the context of graduate studies and focused on evaluating educational programs. The use of this concept, however, has been extrapolated to educational assessment in general and to the branch of learning assessment, in particular (Loch, 2000; Ribeiro, Veloso & Zanardi, 2020).

Saul (2010) identifies the presence of an authoritarian relation in the context of the evaluation that is generally practiced in schools. The author argues that in these evaluation processes, students are subjected to a posture of passivity, that is, "they are mere informants who serve the purposes of an evaluation whose decisions about *what to evaluate, what criteria to use* are exclusively the domain of the evaluators" (p. 54, emphasis added). In contrast to this logic, the Emancipatory Evaluation is inspired by theoretical-methodological strands that, from a progressive perspective, invoke the principles of democracy, collectivity, and participation.

The paradigm of Emancipatory Evaluation "is characterized as a process of description, analysis, and criticism of a given reality, aiming to transform it" (Saul, 2010, p. 65). It is inscribed in a political-pedagogical strand whose main commitment is liberation, that is, the emancipation of the human being from deterministic conditioning, through critical consciousness.

Emancipatory Evaluation (Saul, 2010) represents an enormous advance in the development of evaluative theory, due to its contribution to the process of democratization of evaluation. Unlike the other evaluation models described here, which, to a greater or lesser extent, are committed to maintaining the status quo, Emancipatory Evaluation presents itself as a proposal that puts social transformation at its core. However, from a decolonial perspective, some questions arise: Is the Emancipatory Evaluation silent in the face of Eurocentrism? Does this paradigm connect with the tools of Western thought? What is the limit of the emancipatory paradigm in relation to the denial of coloniality?

A critical analysis of Saul's (2010) Emancipatory Evaluation proposal shows that the author does not directly address the problem of Eurocentrism. The emancipatory paradigm proposes a partial epistemic insurgency, as it does not explicitly question the coloniality of knowledge beyond modern Western thought. This is because, despite criticizing power relations in evaluation, it ignores silenced and subordinated knowledge outside the Eurocentric canon. Thus, in our reading, the author promotes, in Grosfoguel's (2010, p. 379) words, "a Eurocentric critique of Eurocentrism".

One of the basic concepts involved in the emancipatory proposal presented by Saul is *educational criticism*. This criticism "focuses on the program itself, primarily on the dimension of the *process*, without, however, disregarding the *products*. The function of criticism is *formative* for those who participate in it, aiming at the reorientation of the educational program" (Saul, 2010, p. 67). By focusing its criticism on the "program itself," with a view to its reorientation, the emancipatory paradigm does not question the colonial structures that underpin the program. *Educational criticism*, in this way, seeks to adapt to the hegemonic conception of quality and development. This aspect of Saul's proposal can be read as a certain submission to the standards of adequacy imposed by the hegemonic dynamics of power and knowledge, thereby making evaluation serve a colonizing logic.

Thus, although we understand the emancipatory paradigm as a valid proposal, we consider it insufficient as a decolonial critique, since what matters is "questioning and critical analysis, transformative social action, but also insurgency and intervention in the fields of power, knowledge, and being, and in life; those that encourage an insurgent, decolonial, and rebellious attitude" (Walsh, 2009, p. 27, this translation is based on the authors' translation from the original text). Despite the limitations presented, the great merit of Emancipatory Evaluation lies in the emphasis on the political dimension of evaluation and on the articulation between the search for social transformation and evaluation practice. At this point, Saul's (2010) critical-transformative education option establishes a dialogue with decolonial thinking. Recent studies, such as Prado's (2023), deepen this connection by pointing out that evaluation, to be truly emancipatory and decolonial, must recognize and value subalternized knowledge. This approach broadens the field of critical evaluation by questioning dominant epistemologies and promoting educational practices that challenge colonial structures.

Thus, based on the divergences and convergences pointed out between Emancipatory Evaluation and decolonial thinking, it is necessary to take a few more steps toward an evaluative proposal that effectively contributes to the decolonization of school education. May it unveil the colonizing relation of epistemicide that subjugated, annihilated, and plundered the ways of being and knowing of the original peoples of Abya Yala<sup>1</sup>, that is, a Decolonial Assessment.

## | **Conclusions**

The analysis undertaken in the present study demonstrated elements that evidence the colonizing function of evaluation from its beginnings, evident throughout the history of evaluative theories. In the obsession with the efficiency of Certification Assessment, which aimed to train students to serve the industrial economy of the first half of the twentieth century. In the logic of regulation for the success of Formative Assessment, which subjects assessment processes to the demands of early 21st-century neoliberalism. Moreover, although in a much less evident way, it

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1 The expression Abya Yala has been used in counterpoint to America, the name adopted by the European invaders.

is still somehow present in the Emancipatory Evaluation, due to the omission of criticism of Eurocentrism, a structuring element of the hegemonic model of society.

The colonizing view of knowledge about evaluation presented in this paper is corroborated by the study by Sales et al. (2023, p. 12), which questions the standardization of evaluation processes that serve "coloniality, which takes advantage of inequality and privileges for a few." This idea is also present in the research conducted by Silva & Santos (2024, p. 10), who compare the meanings produced by the evaluation to slave-based colonialism, since, for the authors: "Universality, equality, improvement, and progress were the mottos of the Spanish and Portuguese ships. Universality, equality, improvement, and progress are sometimes also the mottos of evaluation practices that take place in Basic Education classrooms."

Despite the unfavorable trajectory of the evaluation presented and discussed here, it is important to highlight the need, as Paulo Freire would say, to remain hopeful about the possibility of constructing an insurgent evaluation proposal capable of contributing to a new way of teaching that leads us to think outside colonial structures. A possible path can be glimpsed from the understanding of the social construction of knowledge, seen as a continuum, which is to say that "any learning is a continuation of a tradition and a society" (Fleck, 2010, p. 85).

In this sense, even if we can understand the Emancipatory Evaluation as a critique still accommodated within the Eurocentric epistemological pattern and that does not question the colonial-based model of education, this is, among the theories analyzed in the scope of this study, the one that comes closest to a decolonial posture. We understand that it is necessary to decolonize evaluation practice. The challenge lies in resizing evaluation based on new configurations of time, space, and curriculum, considering the heterarchical pluridiversity of human knowledge, by reframing the issue of assessment in light of decolonial thinking.

Finally, it is critical to recognize the limitations of this essay. The perspective of Decolonial Evaluation, although grounded in a relevant theoretical and critical framework, still lacks empirical validation demonstrating its applicability and effectiveness across different educational contexts, revealing a gap to be filled by future research. Furthermore, the approach adopted, centered on classic assessment models (certification, formative, and emancipatory), restricts the analysis, leaving out other approaches, which, we recognize, may influence the scope of the analysis. Even with these limitations, this study contributes to understanding the intersections between evaluation and coloniality, pointing to the urgent need to rethink evaluation practices through a truly decolonial approach that values the plurality of knowledge and promotes the emancipation of historically subalternized subjects.

Given the limitations outlined here and the complexity of constructing evaluative paradigms committed to decoloniality, it is considered necessary to further studies that investigate evaluative practices in non-hegemonic educational contexts, such

as indigenous schools, quilombola communities, and community experiences of popular education. Furthermore, it is pertinent to broaden the dialogue with ancestral and subaltern epistemologies, which often operate outside formal school logic but carry formative potential that has yet to be fully explored by academic research. Approaches such as these can contribute to the formulation of assessment practices that, beyond criticism, effectively break with the colonial mechanisms still present in educational structures.

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## About the authors

### Maria de Fátima Farias

Federal University of Mato Grosso do Sul, Campo Grande, Brazil  
 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2401-8825>

Federal University of Mato Grosso do Sul, Campo Grande, Brazil  
PhD in the Postgraduate Program in Science Education at the Federal University of Mato Grosso do Sul (UFMS, 2025). Master's degree in Chemistry from the Federal University of Goiás (UFG, 2005). Professor of basic education in the municipal school systems of Goiânia and the state of Goiás. Email: [farias7@hotmail.com](mailto:farias7@hotmail.com)

### Wellington Pereira de Queirós

Federal University of Mato Grosso do Sul, Campo Grande, Brazil  
 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9734-7136>

PhD in Science Education from the State University of São Paulo (UNESP-Bauru, 2012). Adjunct Professor 4 at the Institute of Physics of the Federal University of Mato Grosso do Sul (UFMS). Professor and advisor in the Postgraduate Program in Science and Mathematics Education at the Federal University of Goiás (UFG). Email: [wellington\\_fis@yahoo.com.br](mailto:wellington_fis@yahoo.com.br)

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## Resumo

Este ensaio busca identificar e problematizar os aspectos de colonialidade presentes nas principais teorias avaliativas descritas na literatura. Para tanto, utilizamos como referencial teórico o pensamento decolonial latino-americano, destacando conceitos-chave desta teoria, como modernidade e a tríade da colonialidade do ser/saber/poder. Como resultado, observamos que a função colonizadora da avaliação está presente desde seus primórdios, podendo ser identificada: na obsessão pela eficiência da Avaliação Certificativa, que visava treinar os alunos para servirem à economia industrial da primeira metade do século XX; na lógica da regulação para o sucesso da Avaliação Formativa, que submete os processos avaliativos às demandas do neoliberalismo do início do século XXI e,

de modo bem menos evidente, porém ainda presente na Avaliação Emancipatória, por sua acomodação ao padrão epistemológico eurocêntrico. É necessário, portanto, repensar a teoria e a prática avaliativa no sentido de sua decolonização.

**Palavras-chave:** Decolonialidade. Eurocentrismo. Teorias avaliativas.

## **Resumen**

Este ensayo busca identificar y problematizar los aspectos de colonialidad presentes en las principales teorías evaluativas descritas en la literatura. Para ello, utilizamos como referencia teórica el pensamiento decolonial latinoamericano, destacando conceptos clave de esta teoría, como la modernidad y la tríada de la colonialidad del ser/saber/poder. Como resultado, observamos que la función colonizadora de la evaluación está presente desde sus inicios y puede identificarse: en la obsesión por la eficiencia de la evaluación certificativa, que tenía como objetivo formar a los alumnos para que sirvieran a la economía industrial de la primera mitad del siglo XX; en la lógica de la regulación para el éxito de la Evaluación Formativa, que somete los procesos evaluativos a las exigencias del neoliberalismo de principios del siglo XXI y, de manera mucho menos evidente, pero aún presente en la Evaluación Emancipatoria, por su acomodación al patrón epistemológico eurocéntrico. Por lo tanto, es necesario repensar la teoría y la práctica evaluativa en el sentido de su descolonización.

**Palabras clave:** Descolonialidad. Eurocentrismo. Teorías evaluativas.

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