



Corresponding to Author

<sup>1</sup> Alexey Carvalho

E-mail: [alexeycarvalho@gmail.com](mailto:alexeycarvalho@gmail.com)

Universidade Estadual de Campinas,  
Campinas, SP, Brasil

CV Lattes

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## Higher Education Evaluation and Accreditation in Latin America and the Caribbean

Alexey Carvalho<sup>1</sup>  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-5100-1623>

Maria Márcia Sigrist Malavasi  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-9144-4613>

<sup>1,2</sup> Universidade Estadual de Campinas

### ABSTRACT

In the Latin American and Caribbean context, there are a variety of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and assessment and accreditation systems. This paper analyzes some of these systems, seeking to understand how they are configured, their institutional and course evaluation instruments, their stage of maturity, their relationship with the public policies of their country, as well as aspects related to the valuation of self-assessment and the institutional context. The study consists of a bibliographic and documentary research, based on the documents, laws and official information of the evaluation and accreditation bodies of each country, as well as a field research, with professors and researchers in activity in these locations, in order to capture the perceptions about these systems in each reality. The survey had respondents from eight countries: Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela. It was observed that although there is a great diversity and formats of assessment and accreditation systems, there are very similar processes in some of them, as well as a desire of the respondents to see advance in the systems so that there is an effective contribution to the quality improvement. The results of the analysis of the documents and the perceptions gathered in the field research showed that the evaluation and accreditation systems need to overcome the bureaucratic aspects, compliance verification and to seek formative evaluations that value the self-evaluation and the pertinence of the HEIs and courses, to nurture a quality culture and continuous improvement.

### KEYWORDS

Higher education. Evaluation. Accreditation. Public policy.

## Avaliação e Acreditação da Educação Superior na América Latina e Caribe

### RESUMO

No contexto da América Latina e Caribe, há uma diversidade de Instituições de Educação Superior (IES) e de sistemas de avaliação e acreditação. Este artigo analisa alguns desses sistemas, buscando entender como se configuram, seus instrumentos de avaliação institucional e de cursos, seus estágios de maturidade, suas relações com as políticas públicas de seus respectivos países, bem como, aspectos relativos à valorização da autoavaliação e do contexto institucional. O estudo se compõe de uma pesquisa bibliográfica e documental, tendo como base os documentos, legislações e informações oficiais dos organismos de avaliação e acreditação de cada país, além de uma pesquisa de campo, com professores e pesquisadores em atividade nessas localidades, no intuito de captar as percepções acerca desses sistemas em cada realidade. A pesquisa contou com respondentes de oito países: Brasil, Chile, Colômbia, Equador, México, Peru, Uruguai e Venezuela. Foi possível observar que apesar de haver uma grande diversidade e formatos de sistemas de avaliação e acreditação, há processos muito semelhantes em alguns deles, assim como ficou evidente um anseio dos respondentes no sentido de que os sistemas avancem para que haja uma contribuição efetiva na melhoria da qualidade. Os resultados da análise dos documentos e das percepções colhidas na pesquisa de campo, demonstraram que é preciso que os sistemas de avaliação e acreditação superem os aspectos burocráticos, de verificação de conformidade e busquem avaliações formativas, que valorizem a autoavaliação e a pertinência das IES e cursos, de forma a alimentar uma cultura de qualidade e melhoria contínua.

### PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Educação superior. Avaliação. Acreditação. Política pública.

## Evaluación y Acreditación de la Educación Superior en América Latina y el Caribe

### RESUMEN

En el contexto de América Latina y el Caribe, hay una variedad de Instituciones de Educación Superior (IES) y sistemas de evaluación y acreditación. Este artículo analiza algunos de estos sistemas, buscando comprender cómo están configurados, sus instrumentos de evaluación institucional y de carreras, sus estados de madurez, sus relaciones con las políticas públicas de cada país, así como los aspectos relacionados con la valoración de la autoevaluación y el contexto institucional. El estudio consiste en una investigación bibliográfica y documental, basada en los documentos, leyes e informaciones oficiales de los organismos de evaluación y acreditación de cada país, así como una investigación de campo, con docentes e investigadores en actividad en estos lugares, con el fin de aprehender las percepciones sobre estos sistemas en cada realidad. La encuesta contó con encuestados de ocho países: Brasil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, México, Perú, Uruguay y Venezuela. Se observó que, aunque existe una gran diversidad y formatos de sistemas de evaluación y acreditación, hay procesos muy similares en algunos de ellos, así como el deseo de los encuestados de perfeccionar los sistemas para que se logre una efectiva mejora en la calidad. Los resultados del análisis de los documentos y las percepciones recogidas en la investigación de campo mostraron que los sistemas de evaluación y acreditación necesitan superar los aspectos burocráticos, la verificación del cumplimiento y buscar evaluaciones formativas que valoren la autoevaluación y la pertinencia de las IES y carreras para fomentar una cultura de calidad y mejora continua.

### PALABRAS CLAVE

Educación superior. Evaluación. Acreditación. Política pública.

## Introduction

The region of Latin America and the Caribbean is marked by its great cultural, social and ethnic diversity, in addition to the differences in economic development, social inequalities and the lack of quality education, present in some of its countries.

This sociocultural tangle is reflected in Higher Education and consequently in its accreditation and evaluation systems. Although focused on the reality of each country, these systems are driven to seek the application of methods or the use of quality indicators that aim at international comparison. It is noteworthy, according to Carvalho (2018), that international organizations, dominated by the hegemonic group of large economies, usually define the concepts, guidelines and orientations, with supranational character, which must be followed by other national states, often neglecting cultural aspects, contextualization and social insertion, inseparable from the educational process and which may not contribute effectively to the improvement of quality.

The Ibero-American Network for the Accreditation of Quality in Higher Education (RIACES, 2004, p.23, our translation) defines evaluation as being “a process to determine the value of something and issue a judgment or diagnosis, analyzing its components, functions, processes, results for possible improvement changes” and accreditation as “process to assurance the quality of an institution, program or course” (RIACES, 2004, p.9, our translation). Thus, it can be said that while accreditation has an emphasis on control and quality assurance in a broader way, the evaluation is related to the process itself, which may or may not assure quality. Throughout this article, aspects of evaluation are analyzed with a view to accreditation.

There are often questions about external quality evaluations, the role of the State and the role of evaluation and accreditation bodies as guarantors of quality and promoters of continuous improvement in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and courses. Therefore, continuous reflection is necessary for the improvement and development of evaluation and accreditation systems, so that, as Malavasi (2013) argues, they are not mere portrait producers or conformity checkers, but that contribute to the improvement of policies education.

External evaluations are necessary and important, but “they cannot stifle the practices of dialogue and questioning inherent in participatory institutional evaluation that make institutions public spaces for debates and reflections”, as recalled by Dias Sobrinho (2008, p.823). It is also worth mentioning that the growing commercialization, diversification of supply, internationalization and the need for professional mobility, driven especially by the current technological imperative, reinforce the important role of evaluation and accreditation, to ensure quality training and that contribute to developments local and regional.

Thus, the objective of this article is to analyze the main characteristics of the higher education evaluation and accreditation systems present in countries in Latin America and the

Caribbean. The study examines the configuration of each system, its institutional evaluation instruments and undergraduate courses, in person, in force in each country. Among the aspects addressed, are: the maturity of the system; enhancement of the institutional context and self-evaluation; and subsidy to public policies.

## Methodology

For the composition of the study, a bibliographic and documentary research was carried out, using as main references the documents, legislation and information provided by the official bodies responsible for the evaluation and accreditation of each country and, in addition, when necessary, the support of the authors who studied these realities. Considering the scope that involves Latin America and the Caribbean, it was decided to choose countries previously studied by Dias Sobrinho (2006), Bermheim (2008) and Lemaitre (2018), that is, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Peru, Venezuela, Ecuador, Chile and Uruguay, in addition to Argentina, Costa Rica, Paraguay, Bolivia, the last four of which will not be addressed in this article, since there were no respondents in the field research.

Complementing the bibliographic research, we sought to investigate the perceptions of professors and researchers in activity in each country, through a field survey, whose access to the respondents was done randomly, adopting the accessibility criterion, that is, according to with the possibility of access that the researcher has to the subjects, as defined by Vergara (2005). To invite the participants, contact networks were used: from *Red de Investigación Estudios Organizacionales en América Latina, el Caribe y Iberoamérica* (REOALCEI), *Centro de Investigaciones Internacionales* (CIN-SAS) and personal contacts from the researcher.

Before applying the questionnaires, the research project was approved internationally by REOALCEI and nationally by the Ethics and Research Committee (CEP) of the State University of Campinas (UNICAMP). The collection of information took place from 01/13/2019 to 01/04/2019 at the international level and from 03/18/2019 to 01/01 at the national level.

For the collection of information, two questionnaires were prepared, one in Portuguese and the other in Spanish, structured and with the same content, made available online, using the *Google Forms* tool. The questionnaires were structured in 7 parts, seeking to better group the questions and make it easier for the respondents. The first part contains the explanation of the research and the Free and Informed Consent Term (ICF), the second and fourth contain blocks of closed questions, the third contains blocks of questions with a Likert scale, the fifth contains data related to the characterization of the participant, the sixth raises specific questions for those who declare themselves evaluators and the last one presents an open question for considerations and the request for an electronic address, in case the participant is interested in the research results.

In the analysis of the answers to the closed questions and the data related to the characterization of the sample, nominal scales were used, which according to Marconi and Lakatos (2002), aim to transform qualitative facts into quantitative or variable ones to be measured, in the case of the nominal scale into categories specific, which allows a percentage analysis of those grouped in each category.

In questions with a Likert scale, in which the respondent chooses from 1 to 5, according to their degree of agreement with the statement, the answers are analyzed using agreement and disagreement indices, in which the Agreement Index (CI) considers only the answers 4 and 5, while the Disagreement Index (ID) considers only answers 1 and 2, thus disregarding the indifferent answers (3). In this way, it is possible to compare the two groups of respondents and make inferences.

To analyze the answers to the open questions, the content analysis technique was used, which according to Levin and Fox (2004) allows the researcher to objectively describe the content of the collected messages. In this, the content of the messages collected is grouped into units of analysis and thematic axes, which Franco (2008) calls categories and nuclei of meaning. This procedure helps to understand the meaning given by the respondent and to compare it with other answers, allowing to reach the essence of the content, aiming to answer the research question. Clusters also allow you to quantitatively analyze how often a term appears and which appear more or less.

In the statistical analysis, the *IBM SPSS Statistics* v.25 software was used, the reliability of the instrument, in the questions with Likert scale was tested, based on the sample and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.815 was obtained, which indicates in agreement with Malhotra (2008), a high reliability, the sample being valid and without bias. The chi-square test was also applied to verify, according to Larson and Faber (2010), if a frequency distribution fits into an expected distribution and it was obtained as a result that 11 of the 13 questions tested have a distribution compatible with the expected, that is, the answers occur with equal probabilities. In the questions in which this did not occur, related to the type of HEI of the respondent (public or private) and the perception of the maturity level of the evaluation and accreditation system, the proposed analyzes did not render unfeasible, since they are analyzed in an integrated way with the too many answers.

## Evaluation and Accreditation Agencies and Bodies in Latin America and the Caribbean

In Latin America and the Caribbean, there is an extensive diversity of evaluation and accreditation models, with almost all countries or in some cases sub regions creating their accreditation bodies from the 1990s, according to Dias Sobrinho (2006). In spite of this, it is observed that it was in the 2000s that a large part of the organisms were structured and consolidated their performance.

In most countries, the bodies responsible for these processes are state-owned, but there are also society agencies and international bodies, in some cases. Even though they occur differently in the countries, the processes in general follow the quality standards established by the regulatory bodies, which normally consider self-evaluation and external evaluation carried out by a team of peer reviewers. Course evaluation takes place in all countries, however, institutional evaluation does not occur in the same way.

### *Brazil*

The first experiences involving the evaluation of Brazilian higher education, date back to the 1970s, involving graduate courses and programs. Over the following decades, other initiatives emerged and helped in the discussions that culminated on April 14, 2004, with Law N°. 10,861, which instituted the National Higher Education Evaluation System (SINAES), with the objective of "ensuring the national evaluation process of Higher Education institutions, undergraduate courses and the academic performance of their students" (BRASIL, 2004) and defined the National Institute of Educational Studies and Research Anísio Teixeira (INEP) as responsible for carrying out the evaluations.

SINAES is based on three fundamental pillars: 1) Institutional evaluation; 2) Evaluation of courses and 3) Evaluation of Students; the first two taking place through on-site evaluations, based on standardized evaluation instruments and carried out by a team of experts linked to the Bank of Assessors (BASIS) and the exam of students occurs annually, by areas of knowledge, in accordance with a three-year calendar through the application of the National Student Performance Exam (ENADE). The entire processing of the evaluation processes is done in the e-MEC System, exclusively electronically, which allows for transparency and security.

The institutional evaluation instruments (INEP, 2017a; INEP, 2017b) are structured in five axes: institutional planning and evaluation; institutional development; academic policies; management policies; and infrastructure. The course evaluation instruments (INEP, 2017c; INEP, 2017d) are structured in three dimensions: didactic-pedagogical organization; faculty and tutorial; and infrastructure.

Based on the results of the on-site evaluations, the Course Concept (CC) and the Institutional Concept (CI) are generated. Whereas, based on the results of ENADE, the information from the Census of Higher Education and the concepts of the *stricto sensu* graduate program, when applicable, four quality indicators are generated: The General Course Index (IGC); the Preliminary Course Concept (CPC); the ENADE Concept and the Difference Index between Observed and Expected Performance (IDD). All of these quality indicators are presented on a scale of 1 to 5, in which concepts below 3 are considered unsatisfactory and may imply measures for HEIs or courses, with the provision of punishments ranging from the suspension of the entry of new students, blocking students' access to public funding and even closing the course or HEI. These indicators are made available periodically, according to the evaluation cycle, in a public and freely accessible area of the e-MEC system.



According to Weko (2017), no OECD member country implements public, external, mandatory and standardized exams of higher education students, thus, in this respect, the Brazilian experience of ENADE was innovative worldwide. Despite this, ENADE, within SINAES, has been used disproportionately, which leads the system as a whole to lessen the value of external peer review. There is no adequate valuation of the relevance and social insertion of the HEI, which are reduced to just one indicator in the evaluation instrument. Self-evaluation, although mandatory and considered in the process, usually as a purely bureaucratic requirement, falls short of being able to contribute to improving quality.

As of 2017, these instruments underwent reformulation, which brought with them the objectives of stimulating educational initiatives and improving the teaching and learning process, highlighting the emphasis on innovative and successful practices, as well as the use of management and monitoring of action plans, valuing the use of information technology. However, many of the analysis criteria, previously quantitative, gave way to qualitative criteria, leaving room for interpretation and understanding on the part of the evaluator, which led to a scenario of insecurity for HEIs and a feeling of subjectivity for the evaluator. Since the change of government in 2019, there have been successive changes in the commands of MEC and INEP, which cause insecurity about the policies to be adopted.

### Colombia

The National Accreditation System (SNA) was created in Colombia, by Law N°. 30, of December 28, 1992, with the guidelines defined in articles 53 to 56 and aims to “assurance to society that the institutions that are part of the System comply with the highest quality requirements and that meet their purposes and objectives” (COLOMBIA, 1992, our translation), the law created the National Accreditation Council (CNA) and establishes its relationship with the National Council for Higher Education (CESU).

The Colombian system's striking characteristics are reinforced in the institutional evaluation guidelines (CNA, 2014) and in the course evaluation guidelines (CNA, 2013), the search for high quality, the voluntary nature of HEI participation and the emphasis on institutional self-evaluation, as a permanent task of the HEI and starting point of the accreditation process.

Institutional accreditation, according to CNA (2014), involves a comprehensive examination of the entire organization, divided into twelve factors: mission and the institutional project; students; teachers; academic processes; national and international visibility; research and artistic creation; relevance and social impact; self-evaluation and self-regulation processes; institutional well-being; organization, management and administration; academic support resources and physical infrastructure; and financial resources.

The accreditation of courses, according to CNA (2013), considers ten factors: mission and the institutional and course design; students; teachers; academic processes; national and international visibility; research, innovation and artistic and cultural creation; institutional

well-being; organization, administration and management; impact of graduates on the environment; and physical and financial resources.

Similar to the Brazilian ENADE, Colombia applies two exams to students: SaberPro and SaberTyT, the first being aimed at professional university training courses and the second at professional and technological technical courses, both conducted by the Colombian Institute for the Promotion of Higher Education (ICFES). SaberPro is applied to students who have completed at least 75% of their credits, while SaberTyT is applied to students close to graduating or graduating (ICFES, 2019). These exams are applied to most courses and are mandatory as proof of academic degree and for professional practice, regardless of the student's approval or not. Unlike ENADE, there is no direct link between the results of these exams and the accreditation process, however, it is necessary for the HEI to carry out an analysis of these results, create action plans and demonstrate the results of the actions in the process, thus encouraging improvement to be continued.

The Colombian SNA has as positive points the valuation of self-evaluation, relevance and social impact in institutional evaluation, as well as the impact of graduates in their reality. In July 2019, with the publication of Decree Law N°. 1,330, there were changes in the country's Higher Education and although it was not possible to analyze the impacts of this decree, it is observed that expectations are positive, as reflected in El Meridiano (2019), indicating that there may be an even greater appreciation of identity, institutional vocation and its context, as well as the incorporation of aspects related to employability and learning results as quality indicators. In fulfilling these promises, the Colombian system takes an important step towards quality assurance.

### *Mexico*

From the 1990s onwards, the evaluation of higher education gains relevance in Mexico through actions and policies, aimed at the evaluation of institutions, courses, teachers and student learning are proposed, according to Narro, Martuscelli and Barzana (2012). In this period, the following bodies are established: the Interinstitutional Evaluation Committees of Higher Education Institutions (CIEES), the National Center for the Evaluation of Higher Education (CENEVAL), the Council for the Accreditation of Higher Education (COPAES) and the Commission National Higher Education Evaluation System (CONAEVA), all related to promoting a national evaluation process, establishing general criteria and policies for improving the conditions of higher education courses and institutions.

COPAES is a non-profit civil association that acts as the only body authorized by the Mexican Federal Government, linked to the Secretariat of Public Education (SEP), to grant formal recognition and supervise the Accreditation Bodies (OA). Between 2000 and 2010, COPAES operated under the framework of the CIEES, subsequently, there was the separation of the bodies in order to articulate the work of the different evaluation and accreditation bodies, with today 30 recognized OA (COPAES, 2019). COPAES was established as an additional instance, according to Dias Sobrinho (2006), due to the proliferation of OA.



There is no official institution accrediting IES in the country, equivalent to an institutional accreditation. However, according to Espinosa (2013), there are significant experiences in this regard, which are conducted by the National Association of Universities and Higher Education Institutions (ANUIES) and by the Federation of Mexican Higher Education Institutions (FIMPES), which establish their own accreditation processes. While in the FIMPES process, which operates only in the private HEI segment, membership is optional, in the case of ANUIES, which mainly works with public HEIs, the process is mandatory to join. Both establish self-evaluation and visit by peer reviewers to grant or renew accreditation.

The accreditation of courses is the responsibility of the CIEES, which are configured as a non-profit civil association and have nine Interinstitutional Committees (CI), seven of which are courses and two of educational management. The CIEES (2018a) adopt the methodology of accreditation by modules or functions, according to the type of institution, in all there are six modules: institutional management (basic), research management, innovation management, linkage management, internationalization and management diffusion of culture.

The course accreditation instrument (CIEES, 2018b) has twelve categories of analysis: course objectives; general operating conditions of the course; educational model and curriculum; activities for integral training; process of entering the course; academic trajectory; graduated from the course; student results; course results; academic staff; academic infrastructure and support services. The category student result, was introduced in 2016 and takes into account the results of students in exams of graduates external to the institution, such as, for example, the General Examination for the Graduate Degree (EGEL) applied by CENEVAL, according to the adhesion IES, as well as the competence certifications granted by external bodies, among others.

The Mexican accreditation system shows some complexity, due to its structure and variety of accrediting bodies. Its challenge is to balance the liberality given to HEIs and accrediting bodies over time, maintaining service to the diversity of types of academic institutions and organizations. The fragmentation into modules of the accreditation process, as well as the existence of unofficial institutional accreditation mechanisms, different for public and private HEIs, can provide society with the sensation of a simulacrum of quality.

### *Peru*

The National System for Evaluation, Accreditation and Certification of Educational Quality (SINEACE) was created by Law No. 28,740, of May 23, 2006, with the objective of “ensuring the basic levels of quality that must be provided by the Institutions referred to in the General Law No. 28,044, and promote their qualitative development” (PERU, 2006, our translation).

The accreditation process is voluntary, with the exception of courses in the areas of education and health, carried out by six accredited accreditation bodies within the scope of

the system. For the evaluations, three guiding documents or accreditation models are available: for courses at institutes and schools of higher education; for university courses in higher education; and for institutional accreditation of universities (SINEACE, 2019).

The instrument for institutional accreditation of universities (SINEACE, 2017) encompasses the dimensions: strategic management, institutional management, institutional support and results. Eleven analysis factors are evaluated: institutional planning; positioning; quality management; integral training; applied research, technological development and innovation; social responsibility; teaching management; human and financial resources; institutional well-being; infrastructure and information; and results of impact on society.

The course accreditation instruments (SINEACE, 2016a; SINEACE, 2016b) provide for four dimensions: strategic management, comprehensive training, institutional support and results. The dimensions consider twelve factors of analysis: course planning; management of the graduate profile; quality warranty; teaching and learning process; teacher management; support for students; applied research, technological development and innovation; social responsibility; welfare services; infrastructure and support; human resources; and results related to the graduate profile. The latter does not consider exam results, not provided for in SINEACE, but the monitoring throughout the training process and indicators related to the insertion of the labor market, among others.

The guiding documents (SINEACE, 2016a; SINEACE, 2016b; SINEACE, 2017) explicitly demonstrate a concern to maintain consistency with international models and specifically cites Colombia and Chile. It is perceived in the factors of analysis an appreciation of self-evaluation and the context of HEI, the latter emphasized in the factors of positioning and results of impacts on society. The challenge is to expand institutional accreditation for higher education institutes and schools.

### Venezuela

The Committee for the Evaluation and Accreditation of Higher Education Courses and Institutions (CEAPIES) was created by Law No. 39,032 of October 7, 2008, as an organ of the Ministry of Popular Power for University Education (MPPEU) and with the objective of coordinating the processes of institutional evaluation and accreditation, of courses and programs, as well as ensuring, recognizing and promoting the quality of higher education (ARCU-SUL, 2019).

Unlike the other countries studied, in which official and governmental sources were used, in the case of Venezuela, this was not possible, since the websites of these bodies are closed for access from outside the country. There was no evidence of a process equivalent to institutional evaluation, according to Lemaitre (2018), MPPEU only grants accreditation to HEIs and it would be up to the University Sector Planning Workshop (OPSU) to implement an institutional evaluation program, today it only performs the function of administering the national admission system. It also complements that the Venezuelan evaluation and accreditation system, as well as its legal system, are in the process of restructuring.

*Ecuador*

The evaluation and accreditation functions in Ecuador were defined in the Organic Law on Higher Education (LOES) of October 6, 2010, however, only in 2013, did the Higher Education Evaluation, Accreditation and Quality Assurance Council (CEAACES) take effect), later renamed, the Higher Education Quality Assurance Council (CACES), which presents itself as a technical, public and autonomous body, responsible for planning, coordinating and executing the HEI's evaluation, accreditation and quality assurance policies and undergraduate and graduate courses, in addition to conducting professional qualification exams (CACES, 2019a).

Institutional accreditation is mandatory and applied to universities and polytechnic schools that make up the Ecuadorian higher education system, with the objective of determining the degree of compliance with the quality standards defined in the current model. Institutions that have satisfactory results in the evaluations receive accreditation for five years, according to four categories: A, B, C and D, and the HEIs in category D are those that are still in the accreditation process and have a deadline in order to adapt, if they do not comply, they are included in the group of non-accredited institutions (CACES, 2019a).

The guidelines for institutional accreditation (CACES, 2019b) foresee four fundamental axes of the HEI to be evaluated: teaching, research, connection with society and institutional conditions. Within these axes are considered items such as: faculty, student body, academic and scientific production, infrastructure and management. In each of the axes, three dimensions are considered: planning, execution and results. The indicators receive concepts: non-compliance, insufficient compliance, partial compliance, approximation of compliance, satisfactory compliance.

In order to verify the future purposes of the HEI and promote continuous improvement in the medium and long term, according to CACES (2019b), the new guidelines published in 2019, were added by seven indicators called projective and without accreditation purposes: internationalization; innovation; social use of knowledge; university well-being; inclusion and equity; interculturality; and environmental sustainability, which can be part of the accreditation from 2026.

The evaluation process for undergraduate courses consists of two stages: the evaluation of the learning environment, in which the conditions offered by the course are considered; and learning results, through the National Course Evaluation Exam, applied to students in the last year of the course. The result of the two stages determines the accreditation or not of a course, culminating in the public disclosure of the results. This process applies only to courses considered to be of public interest: Medicine, Dentistry, Nursing and Law, each with a specific evaluation model, with no provision for evaluating the other courses. For these courses, the process is mandatory and in case of non-accreditation there will be a suspension of the course, with new entries being prohibited during the ten-year period.

The Ecuadorian evaluation and accreditation system is well structured, especially in the context of institutional evaluation, whose instrument has undergone changes and brings innovative features. The institutional context, called linking with society, is highly valued and had its weight increased in the institutional evaluation since 2015 according to CACES (2019b). The country's challenge is to expand the accreditation of courses, beyond the mandatory four.

### *Chile*

The legal framework for evaluation and accreditation in Chile was the enactment of Law No. 20.129, of November 17, 2006 (CHILE, 2006), which established the National Higher Education Quality Assurance System, integrated by the Ministry of Education, the National Council of Education, the Superintendence of Higher Education and the National Commission for Accreditation (CNA-CHILE), which is responsible for defining the guidelines for institutional accreditation, for undergraduate and graduate courses.

In institutional accreditation, according to the guiding document of CNA-CHILE (2014), the following aspects are evaluated: mission and purposes; quality assurance policies and mechanisms; operating conditions and results; and adjustment capacity (continuous improvement).

Undergraduate courses are accredited by agencies authorized by CNA-CHILE, which currently number seven. Being voluntary, except for the courses of Medicine, Dentistry and Teacher Training, according to CNA-CHILE (2019). The criteria for accreditation of undergraduate courses are defined in a resolution of CNA-CHILE (2015), which considers twelve criteria: purposes; integrity; graduate profile; curriculum; attachment to the environment; organization and administration; teaching staff; infrastructure and learning resources; student participation and well-being; creation and research of the faculty; effectiveness and result of the training process; and self-regulation and continuous improvement. In the case of the result of the training process, exams are not foreseen for students, aspects related to the training course, dropout, among others are evaluated.

The accreditation guidelines demonstrate an appreciation of self-evaluation, as well as an appreciation of the institutional context. The results of the evaluations, as well as the general information of HEIs and courses, are transparent and publicly disclosed.

### *Uruguay*

Uruguay is the only country in Latin America that does not have an institutionalized higher education evaluation and accreditation system. The Ministry of Education and Culture authorizes the operation of HEIs and courses. To represent the country in the ARCU-SUL System and to administer the system guidelines in its territory, Decree N°. 251/008, of May 19, 2008, created the Ad Hoc Accreditation Commission, with technical independence within the scope of the Ministry of Education and Culture (ARCU-SUL, 2019).

In July 2019, a draft law was sent to parliament for the creation of the National Institute for Accreditation and Evaluation of Higher Education (INAEET), the result of discussions by a working group, led by the Ah hoc Accreditation Commission, according to information provided. by MEC-UY (2019) and La Diaria (2019).

## Results

Altogether 124 responses were collected from 8 countries, Figure 1 below shows the distribution map of respondents.

**Figure 1.** Distribution map of respondents



Source: the authors (2019).

Considering the qualitative nature of the study, as well as the great difficulty in obtaining qualified respondents and adhering to the research proposal at the international level, the responses of all countries were considered in the analyzes, however, it is important to note that Chile and Uruguay, presented only one respondent each and this way, it is not possible to generalize the perceptions obtained in these locations.

Table 1, below, shows the highest occurrences of the characteristics that make up the respondents' profile.

**Table 1. Profile of Respondents**

Characteristics	Answers	Respondents	
		N=124	%
<b>Performance in IES</b>	Private	64	51
	Public	60	49
<b>Acts as an Appraiser</b>	Yes	53	43
	No	71	57
<b>Teaching and Research Activity</b>		94	76
<b>Management Activity</b>		69	56

Source: The authors (2019)

The information indicates a high qualification of the respondents and adherence to the research proposal, considering that a good part acts as an evaluator, as well as developing, in addition to teaching and research activities, management activities in coordination, direction and pro-rector positions.

Among those who work as appraisers, 91% have worked for 4 years or more, and 79% have worked for more than 5 years in this activity, showing relevant experience in evaluation. Considering the link with the accreditation bodies, in which the same evaluator may be linked to more than one organization, 58% are linked to INEP/MEC - Brazil, 14% to CNA - Colombia, 14% to the ARCU system -SUL, 11% to organizations in Mexico and 5% to SINEACE - Peru. It should be noted that those linked to the ARCU-SUL System are also linked to INEP/MEC, as well as the presence of respondents linked to more than one Mexican organization, contributes to the enrichment of the analyzes.

The presence of an important contingent of respondents with experience in evaluation and linked to local and international accreditation agencies, brings an important contribution to the research since this public knows in detail the accreditation processes and regulatory frameworks, they have the experience of both the sides, evaluator and evaluated, as well as, a critical view of the aspects involved in these systems and can collaborate with subsidies for their improvement.

Starting the analysis of the answers related to the evaluation and accreditation systems, the first question asked the respondent to mark the words that best define the system of his country, being able to choose at least 3 of the 15 available. In all, 413 words were chosen, an average of 3.3 per respondent, Table 2 below shows the distribution.



**Table 2.** Definition of Evaluation and Accreditation Systems

Words	Answers	
	N=413	%
Quality	63	15
Regulation	61	15
Certifier	43	10
Supervision	40	10
Control	35	8
Formation	28	7
Standardized	27	7
Auditor	23	6
Ranking	22	5
Internationalization	19	5
Bureaucratic	18	4
Market	11	3
Reliable	9	2
Informative	7	2
Punitive	7	2

Source: The authors (2019)

The respondents' main choices (quality, regulation, certification and supervision) are in line with the dynamics of operation and the objectives of most of the studied evaluation and accreditation systems, which usually contain mention of the quality assurance of higher education, as can be seen: “The purpose of SINAES is to improve the quality of higher education”(BRASIL, 2004), “to assurance to society that the institutions that are part of the System comply with the highest quality requirements” (COLOMBIA, 1992, our translation) and “establish the criteria, standards and processes for evaluation, accreditation and certification, in order to assurance the levels of basic quality that must be provided by the Institutions” (PERU, 2006, our translation). Responses related to the certifying character are more evident in Colombia, Mexico and Peru, and the terms regulation and supervision occur more in Brazil, although they also appear in less evidence in all countries.

Regarding the less mentioned words (reliable, informative and punitive), on the one hand, it can be understood that these attributes would not directly define the systems of evaluation and accreditation. On the other hand, the answers may lead to the belief that there is a lack of transparency, indicating a lack of reliability and information. The punitive character that has not been attributed to the systems can be considered natural, since, with the exception of Brazil and Ecuador, in which there is punishment foreseen, in the others this does not occur.

In the question that deals with the maturity of the evaluation and accreditation systems, respondents were asked to choose one of the options to classify the system: Initial - still incipient and under construction; Executed - meets bureaucratic requirements; Defined - is systematized and implemented; Managed - produces qualitative indicators; Optimized - uses indicators to improve quality and policies. Table 3, below, presents the results obtained.

**Table 3.** Maturity of the Evaluation and Accreditation Systems

<b>Maturity</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Brazil</b>	<b>Colombia</b>	<b>Mexico</b>	<b>Peru</b>	<b>Venezuela</b>	<b>Ecuador</b>	<b>Chile</b>	<b>Uruguai</b>
<b>Initial</b>	18	8	3	2	2	2			1
<b>Executed</b>	33	14	5	8	1	2	2	1	
<b>Defined</b>	30	15	8	2	3	1	1		
<b>Managed</b>	20	9	5	5	1				
<b>Optimized</b>	23	6	9	6	1	1			

Source: The authors (2019)

In the general analysis, it is observed that most of the responses are between Executed and Defined, a pattern maintained in the Brazilian responses, with a slight oscillation in the sense of optimized in Colombia and a discrepancy in the responses from Mexico which is more frequent in execution and optimized. The official documents and evidence presented by Lemaitre (2018), show that the Uruguayan and Venezuelan systems would be in an initial phase, while Mexico, Peru, Ecuador and Chile, can be considered as defined and Brazil and Colombia, as managed. Thus, it appears that in general, respondents usually have a perception below expectations, about the maturity of their systems, which allows for proposals for improvements and their evolution.

Respondents 'perceptions of the evaluators' performance are shown in Table 4 below.

**Table 4.** Performance of the Appraisers

Answers	Total	Brazil	Colombia	Mexico	Peru	Venezuela	Ecuador	Chile	Uruguai
Lack of training for evaluators	32	8	6	8	4	4		1	1
They do not always fulfill their role	35	26	6	2	1				
They are trained and perform their role in an impartial way	57	18	18	13	3	2	3		

Source: The authors (2019)

Although in the general sample 46% of the respondents understand that there is training and exemption in the performance of the evaluators, 54% diverge, 28% pointing to the ethical issue as a point of attention and 26% the training issue. It is noted that in Brazil, 50% of respondents point to a concern regarding the exemption in the performance of the evaluators. In the open responses, it was possible to verify that this is largely related to a possible inadequate performance, in the perception of the respondents, of evaluators from public HEIs in private HEIs. The concern regarding training is more latent in Peru, Venezuela, Chile and Uruguay, which is justified, with the exception of Chile, due to the fact that the systems are in the initial phase or in consolidation, as shown in Table 3.

The composition of external peer review committees is present in most of the countries studied, according to information from their organizations. Each, however, uses specific criteria for the selection, formation of the committee and its bank of evaluators. In Mexico, specifically, which uses the interinstitutional evaluation format, the commission is made up of peer evaluators from the HEI itself, in Brazil, the commissions are composed at random, with restrictions on the performance of the evaluator in the state where he operates.

As for the alignment of the evaluation and accreditation systems with international organizations, it was found that 80% of those surveyed have the perception that the evaluation and accreditation systems are in line with the guidelines of international organizations, occurring in all countries surveyed, and 70% also believe that the evaluation and accreditation systems retain their local and regional characteristics.

With the exception of Uruguay, which does not have an established system, all other countries are in line with what was expected by the OECD (2008) and the BM (1995), in order to develop a quality culture in higher education and ensure evaluation mechanisms however, with regard to the production of information that is transparent to society and that helps HEIs in their improvement, Brazil, Colombia and Chile have already moved in this direction, while the others have not yet.

Regarding the relationship between evaluation and accreditation systems and public policies, about 30% of those surveyed believe that evaluation and accreditation systems subsidize information, but do not directly influence public policies in their country, which is even higher, for Brazilian (44%), Venezuelan (50%) and Ecuadorian (67%) respondents. For Colombians (36%) and Peruvians (37%), their accreditation systems influence policies for the expansion of higher education, while in Mexico the responses were concentrated on: it influences the allocation of resources for public education (30%) and does not influence (30%).

In the Brazilian and Colombian realities, the results of the evaluations influence the expansion policies of higher education. In Brazil, Ordinance MEC No. 11 of June 20, 2017, links the Institutional Concept (CI) to the number of distance education centers that an HEI can open per year, as well as Ordinance MEC No. 20 of 21 December 2017, conditions the increase of vacancies to the CI. While, in a similar way, in Colombia, Decree No. 1.330 of July 25, 2019, allows accredited HEIs with accredited courses, to offer these courses in any part of the national territory without the need for an evaluation visit, facilitating the expansion process. In the other countries, there was no explicit link between accreditation systems and the adoption of public policies.

Table 5, below, presents a summary of the general results about the respondents' perception about several aspects that involve the evaluation and accreditation systems. In these questions, the respondent should, on a scale of 1 to 5, choose the degree to which they agree or disagree with each statement, remembering that the Agreement Index (CI) considers only answers 4 and 5, as well as the Disagreement (ID) considers only answers 1 and 2, thus disregarding the indifferent answers (3).

**Table 5.** General perceptions about the Evaluation and Accreditation Systems

<b>Affirmations / Answers (N = 124)</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>IC</b>	<b>ID</b>
The Higher Education Evaluation System present in my country fulfills its purpose.	6	20	29	57	12	<b>56%</b>	21%
The Higher Education Evaluation System present in my country evaluates Public and Private Higher Education Institutions in the same way.	16	33	16	37	22	<b>48%</b>	40%
Self-evaluation is relevant in the Higher Education Evaluation System present in my country.	5	14	26	53	26	<b>64%</b>	15%
The local and regional context of action of Higher Education Institutions, as well as their relevance, is valued in the evaluation processes.	6	23	31	54	10	<b>52%</b>	23%
The Higher Education Evaluation System present in my country evaluates in the same way, that is, in a standardized manner, all types of courses.	11	19	22	51	21	<b>58%</b>	24%
The evaluators' on-site visits take place at appropriate intervals and comply with the system's proposal.	5	25	24	56	14	<b>56%</b>	24%

Source: the authors (2019).

1- Totally disagree; 2-Disagree; 3-Indifferent; 4-I agree; 5-I totally agree.

Among the statements presented, with the exception of the second, regarding the same treatment given within the evaluation and accreditation system, to public and private institutions, the other responses have a high CI, always with percentages above twice the ID. This indicates that for the majority of respondents, in the general sample, the evaluation and accreditation systems fulfill their purpose, consider self-evaluation and the local context in a relevant way, assessing courses and external visits in a standardized manner, meeting their objectives, however, this consensus does not occur in the analysis of each country

Regarding the fulfillment of the purpose of the evaluation and accreditation systems, there is a greater disagreement than agreement in the respondents in Venezuela and Uruguay, in line with the perception of the low maturity of the systems in these countries, shown in Table 3, and with the fact of structuring their systems.

In the perception of equal treatment in evaluations of public and private HEIs in their systems, the responses from Chile, Mexico and Venezuela have high IDs, 100%, 48% and 67%, respectively, indicating a perception of differentiated treatment of HEIs in these systems. realities. In the Mexican system, the answer is consistent with reality, since there is no official institutional accreditation process, but they are made by entities that bring together different types of HEIs, one mostly for public and one for private.

In the other countries, there is no evidence of this distinction, however, this may be related to two factors: 1) a large part of the evaluation and accreditation systems have originated in public universities and bring within them, indicators and criteria specific to this reality, which later they were imposed on the reality of the private ones; 2) the predominance of members from public HEIs in Councils, Committees and other bodies of the evaluation and accreditation systems is common in several countries, as well as in their own bank of evaluators. Both factors, can bring the feeling of disadvantage of one type of HEI in relation to another. In the comments, which will be analyzed later, this perception is evident by most respondents, from several of the countries studied.

Self-evaluation is perceived as relevant within the scope of evaluation systems in all countries, except in Chile's response. Based on the documents analyzed in each country, as well as on the flow of the evaluation process and the weight of the self-evaluation, it can be said that this is very relevant in Colombia, Mexico, Peru and Ecuador. In Chile, it is possible to observe its greater relevance in institutional evaluation, while in Brazil, compared to the countries mentioned, despite being considered in the process, it does not present considerable weight in the composition of the concepts, which lessens its importance.

The relevance and appreciation of the regional context in the evaluation processes is not perceived by the respondents from Chile and Uruguay, who disagreed with the statement. In the other countries, there was always CI above 33% up to 61%, highlighting Brazil with the highest number of dissenters, ID 31%. The analysis of the evaluation instruments and quality criteria of each system, allows to affirm that everyone considers the institutional context in their processes, however, a greater emphasis is given in Peru and Ecuador. In Brazil, despite the context being considered in the process, it does not present considerable weight in the composition of the concepts. It is also noteworthy that, unlike other countries, the institutional evaluation instrument evaluates Colleges, University Centers and Universities in a standardized way, with a few specific indicators, which are insufficient to consider the institutional vocation of the HEI and its local impact.

As for the evaluation process in a standardized way and occurring in the same way for all courses, there is disagreement only in the Chile respondent, since in the responses from Mexico and Peru, there is an ID of 30% and 38%, respectively. The analysis of the course evaluation documents of each country, showed that although common criteria are adopted, there is no standardization in Mexico, Ecuador and Chile. In Mexico, this is due to the diversity of accreditation bodies and usually specialized in areas of knowledge, which define their own processes and indicators, while in Chile, there are general guidelines, but it is the bodies that define how the course is evaluated, and in Ecuador there is an instrument for each course.

Regarding the periodicity of the on-site visits of the evaluators, only Ecuador does not have a conclusive answer, with the same ID and CI, it is also noteworthy that Mexico has the highest ID (35%). In the information made available by the evaluation and accreditation bodies, it was not possible to evidence any type of distortion in relation to the visits meeting



the proposals of their systems. Specifically, in Brazil and Colombia, there is provision for exemption from visits in certain situations, which may be questionable since the on-site visit is an important component of the system and its periodic occurrence contributes to the HEI seeking continuous improvement.

To complement the information obtained in the closed answers, the answers to the open questions were examined, which were left by 72 of the 124 respondents, of these, 10 answers were disregarded for analysis because they are neutral content, that is, they bring messages outside the context of the search. Thus, 62 responses had their content analyzed, with respondents from six countries: Brazil (35%); Colombia (29%); Mexico (18%); Peru (10%); Venezuela (5%) and Ecuador (3%), noting that in the case of Peru, 75% of respondents in that country also left their considerations in open responses, indicating an interest on the topic.

Through the analysis of the contents, starting from the 62 answers, 97 analysis units were arrived at, which were grouped in 33 thematic axes, Table 6 below shows the five axes with the highest number of responses.

**Table 6.** Thematic axes

Analysis Units	Thematic Axis	occurrences
Subjectivity, lack of clarity, standardization, rigidity, indicators	Evaluation Instrument	13
Process improvement, considering qualitative aspects, considering results	Need for evolution	11
Consolidated system, adequate system, relevance and importance of the system	System Maturity	9
Alignment with regional bodies, valuing aspects of internationalization, validation of titles	Internationalization	7
Training for evaluators, training for HEIs and those involved in evaluation	Training	6

Source: the authors (2019).

The most present thematic axis is related to the evaluation instruments and was mentioned by 10 Brazilian and 3 Colombian respondents. The Brazilians' comments dealt with the subjectivity of the evaluation instrument, as illustrated by the following answer.

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I believe that the evaluation instrument still contains a subjective character, in some indicators, giving rise to divergent understandings and analyzes; what makes the professionals who work in the evaluations to discuss some aspects and that it is necessary a common sense between them (respondent [28]).

Colombians' comments on the subject referred to the rigidity of the instrument, as shown by the answer: "Standardized measurement indicators are important for quality monitoring, however, these aspects have diverted the interest of institutions to comply with indicators (creating a rigid quality control system) and not very flexible to adapt to new areas of public interest" (respondent [38], our translation). As well as a suggestion for the inclusion of indicators that value research and the relationship with companies.

The second most commented thematic axis is related to the need for the evolution of evaluation and accreditation systems, this yearning was perceived in the respondents of all countries that left their comments. It is necessary, according to the respondents, that the systems stop being merely bureaucratic, checking indicators, conforming or non-conforming, and start to bring an effective contribution to quality, in a purposeful way for continuous improvement. As well, it is necessary that the evaluation process evolves beyond documentary analyzes and performs the analysis of results, including considering different forms of qualitative and quantitative evaluation.

The following responses illustrate part of these yearnings for evolution: "My country's system requires studies and analyzes that aim to raise the level of maturity in order to provide support to the evaluators so that their function is not limited to inspection and control" (respondent [55], our translation) and "use multivariate models to assess the multiple dimensions of the perception of educational quality and contrast these results with objective indicators" (respondent [62], our translation).

In the area related to the maturity of the evaluation and accreditation systems, the answers came from Brazil, Colombia and Venezuela. While the comments from Brazil and Colombia presented content emphasizing the consolidation of their systems, those from Venezuela emphasize the need to create and implement a system for the country, in line with what was presented in Table 3.

It appears that the aspects of internationalization are a concern in all countries that responded, except Peru, with more emphasis on Colombia and Mexico, the following comment summarizes this concern: "It is first necessary to have an adequate model in accordance with the requirements Higher Education in Latin America, so that one can compete globally" (respondent [65], our translation).

Regarding training, responses came from Brazil, Peru and Venezuela. In Brazil, the ethical aspects are more present in the comments, while in Peru, the desire for training for employees and others involved in the evaluation is perceived. In both Peru and Venezuela, it was realized that the need for training arises from the lack of knowledge of the system and from being still in its initial phase.

In addition to the axes presented, there were still others, with at least five answers, which should be addressed, as in the case of Brazil, in which there was a strong criticism of INEP's management, including with stronger and even derogatory terms, such as mess, confusion, moment confused and lack of transparency, there was also a charge for the involvement and participation of the evaluators in the review and elaboration of the instruments.

The need to consider the context in which IES operates is a concern in Brazil, Colombia and Mexico, according to the comments below: “It is necessary to develop new public policies to assess public and private universities according to the context of each region. (respondent [76], our translation), “The System does not take regional differences into account” (respondent [42]) and “One must consider the context where the university is located” (respondent [68], our translation). This perception complements and reinforces what was presented in the analyzes, for each country, consolidated in Table 5.

Aspects related to systems bureaucracy were mentioned by respondents from Colombia, Ecuador and Mexico. The points mentioned are related to the formal process of the systems, with requirements that are often unnecessary to comply with guidelines, as well as criticism of the amounts charged and the existence of a market that is only certifying, not interested in quality, but in compliance service. Mentions are also made to the low remuneration of the evaluators and the collection nature of the systems.

In addition to the points discussed, it is worth mentioning the Mexican reality, where the current model, which provides for different evaluation and accreditation systems, with different bodies, brought the perception, by the respondents, that integration and definition are still missing. criteria and minimum requirements for the evaluation. The following comments illustrate this situation well.

In Mexico, there are two systems for assessing and accrediting ES. One as very defined for public institutions in which private institutions find it very difficult to meet some of the established criteria. Another in which only private institutions participate. Perhaps one day both systems will be approved. (respondent [119], our translation)

1.- Establish an agreement on a national strategy and a minimum regulatory framework for the evaluation and accreditation of higher education institutions and courses.

2.- Consolidate an information system within the reach of all institutions where progress has been made in building the System. (respondent [81], our translation)

The analysis of open responses contributed to elucidate and reinforce some points raised in closed questions, as well as, to understand more deeply the respondents' perceptions about their realities. Even though part of the respondents considered the systems adequate or even consolidated, the need for evolution was evident in all the countries analyzed. A desire was noted for the systems to move forward so that there is an effective contribution to the improvement of quality, through multivariate formats of evaluations that include qualitative aspects, that value the results of the actions and the local impact of the HEIs and courses.

## Final Considerations

Within the context of Latin America and the Caribbean, information about the evaluation and accreditation of higher education in eight countries was presented and analyzed, consolidating both the information obtained in the official evaluation and accreditation bodies, as well as the perceptions gathered from teachers and researchers in activities in these countries. places. Considering the breadth of the study, it is important to remember that there are aspects that can be deepened and discussed in the future, the main research findings are highlighted below.

Although there is some diversity in the models and configurations of the studied evaluation and accreditation systems, it is observed that, in general, its processes involve: a moment of internal evaluation, the self-evaluation; the external evaluation carried out on the spot by a peer review committee; issuing of opinions or accreditation acts; and in specific cases the application of exams to students. It is important to highlight that Brazil is the only country that applies exams on a large scale to graduates of higher education courses and whose results are directly linked to their evaluation process. In other countries, when exams are applied to graduates, this occurs in some courses and is usually related to professional practice, not being conditioned to the evaluation and accreditation process, except in the case of Ecuador, in which the result of student performance it is part of the process. It is noteworthy that there is a movement in Colombia, with changes in its system introduced in 2019, in order to use the existing exams for accreditation purposes.

With respect to the bodies responsible for the evaluation and accreditation process, there are those maintained by the State, as in the case of Brazil, Colombia and Ecuador, and those carried out by accredited agencies of society, supervised by the State, as in Mexico, Peru and Chile. With the exception of Brazil and Ecuador, in which the institutional evaluation and accreditation process is mandatory, in all others the accreditation is voluntary, remembering that Mexico does not have an IES accreditation body. In the case of course evaluations, in general, accreditation is mandatory for those considered to be of public interest, usually in the areas of health, education, law, among others. Brazil is the only country that has mandatory evaluation of all courses, thus, it appears that there is a great challenge to the other countries so that there is an increase in adherence to the accreditation processes of course and also institutional.

In the studied realities, with the exception of Venezuela and Uruguay, it was found that the evaluation and accreditation systems are minimally defined and structured, considering that Brazil and Colombia would already be more mature. The most recent changes in the legal frameworks for evaluation and accreditation, which have occurred since 2016 in Mexico and Peru, 2017 in Brazil and 2019 in Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and Uruguay, indicate the concern of these countries in improving their evaluation and accreditation systems. Despite this, it should be noted that Brazil, Chile and Mexico show some stagnation and the changes promoted have not yet been reflected in improved quality, while Peru and Ecuador, even with newer systems, present, together with Colombia, models promising, with a high valuation of self-evaluation and the institutional context.

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Regarding the systems of evaluation and accreditation of higher education, as inducers of public policies for improving education, not only at their level, but which also reflects at other educational levels, the realization that, in all realities, stands out studied, there was no evidence of a relevant connection between the systems of evaluation and accreditation with public policies for education in their countries. Even in the cases of Brazil and Colombia, in which evaluations are used in the policies of expansion of higher education, it appears that they are only regulating supply mechanisms.

Observing the outstanding characteristics of each system, some suggestions, recommendations and reflections are presented below, with a view to improving these systems in their realities. For the Brazilian SINAES to be at the forefront of evaluation systems, as in the past, it is imperative that ENADE be rethought as an exam and mainly in relation to its weight in detriment to the other components of the evaluation process. It is necessary to properly evaluate Colleges, University Centers and Universities, in their own way, as is already done in other countries and to value their local insertion. To the instruments, adding a list of evidences in each indicator, will bring more transparency and minimize the current feeling of subjectivity.

Although it was not part of the scope of this work to analyze the changes that have taken place in the Colombian and Chilean systems, in 2019, it is understood to be advisable in the case of Colombia, to be cautious when introducing in its accreditation process, the results of the large-scale examinations applied to students, so as not to repeat the deviations that occurred as in the case of Brazil with ENADE, especially with regard to the valuation of these exams, since they can easily disadvantage the other aspects of the evaluation process. In the case of Chile, reflection on its evaluation instruments is recommended, in order to improve the way results are considered in each indicator, in line with what already exists in other countries.

The complex structure of the Mexican accreditation system, based on serving the diversity of its institutions and courses, with its various accreditation bodies, has been shown to be inefficient to minimally assurance the quality offered by its HEIs and courses. It is mandatory that an official and coordinated institutional accreditation process be structured, as well as that the consolidation of information about the accreditation of HEIs and courses be carried out in a single system that makes this information available to society in a transparent manner. It is also necessary to analyze the current accrediting bodies and to encourage the establishment of common guidelines, greater coordination and cooperation between them, so that, together, they can promote changes that reflect in improving the quality of national evaluations.

The accreditation systems of Ecuador and Peru, present solid bases, with good future perspectives and a vision of continuous improvement, especially highlighting the Ecuadorian evaluation instruments that present differentials among all those studied. Both face the challenge of expanding their scope, in the case of the Peruvian system, expanding institutional accreditation for other types of HEI, in addition to universities; and in the case of the Ecuadorian system, take the accreditation of courses beyond the mandatory four.

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Uruguay's mission is to implement its national accreditation system and remove the hassle of being the only country in Latin America that does not have an accreditation system. As for Venezuela, in spite of all its difficulties, it is up to the restructuring plan of its accreditation system to be carried out so that it can even recover the prestige of its courses and institutions.

To a greater or lesser degree, there is an urgent need for the systems to move towards seeking to assurance and improve the quality of training in higher education in their localities. It is necessary to overcome the bureaucratic aspects, verification of conformity, pure and simple attribution of concept, developing formative evaluations that value self-evaluation, taking into account the local context and relevance, as well as the impacts, results and the transformation that HEIs and courses bring about in their realities, in order to foster a culture of quality and continuous improvement, which abandons the idea of classification, exclusion and submission to an unfair meritocratic system that rewards some and condemns others. On the contrary, that the evaluations are justified because they seek to foster national public policies that induce actions of broad education of the student, of the full citizen and of building a more egalitarian and fair society.

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