
EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT IN TEACHER TRAINING: Comparative study between exact and biological sciences courses at a brazilian and a uruguayan university

EVALUACIÓN EDUCATIVA EN LA FORMACIÓN DOCENTE: un estudio comparativo entre licenciaturas de exactas y biológicas en una universidad brasileña y uruguaya

AVALIAÇÃO EDUCACIONAL NA FORMAÇÃO DE PROFESSORES: um estudo comparativo entre os cursos de ciências exatas e biológicas em uma universidade brasileira e uruguia

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the inclusion of educational assessment in Exact and Biological Sciences teacher training programs at Federal University of Espírito Santo (Brazil) and University of the Republic (Uruguay). Qualitative and exploratory research was conducted, involving document analysis and utilizing the IRAMUTEQ software for assistance in analysis. The study examined eight course syllabi and 520 course outlines. The results indicate that while educational assessment is prescribed in the course outlines of the Brazilian university, it is absent from those of the Uruguayan university. It is concluded that the presence or absence of assessment in curricula correlates with the graduate profile of each course and university.

KEYWORDS: Educational assessment; Teacher training; Comparative study; Brazil; Uruguay.

Introduction

Initial training for teachers is a space in which professional a teaching identity is constructed. It is at this stage that trainee teachers learn to understand themselves and act as teachers. According to Nóvoa (2017), this learning process involves three main dimensions: the first implies the need to develop one's own scientific and cultural life, favoring more effective interaction with students who bring diverse experiences. Secondly, it is essential to develop a professional ethos based on an ethical dimension. Finally, teachers need to understand that the school environment is permeated with uncertainties and, consequently, is unpredictable, which indicates the need to be prepared to face unconventional situations in order to build a teaching identity.

Given this perspective, Nóvoa (2017) recognizes the importance of reformulating the teacher training process, focusing on the creation of specific professional teacher training that values a professional continuum and draws inspiration from other university professions. To this end, Nóvoa (2017) emphasizes that it is essential to build a new institutional space that brings the teaching profession closer to the institutions themselves. The author draws attention to the urgency of establishing a new institutional space for teacher training, promoting a closer link between the university and the school. This would allow the construction of new connections that go beyond the traditional relationship between these institutions. Teaching practice thus becomes a space for the construction, training, and production of knowledge in a formative way, which means ensuring that future teachers acquire substantial knowledge about curricular, pedagogical, and didactic content, in which educational assessment plays a fundamental role (Nóvoa, 2017).

Educational assessment, in turn, encompasses a variety of elements, moments, contexts, functions, agents, concepts, criteria, and natures (Stieg *et al.*, 2022). This practice covers different areas that determine who, how, and why assessments are carried out, impacting teaching, learning, and assessment processes in educational systems and institutions (Santos *et al.*, 2022).

Learning assessment takes place within the classroom and involves both the teacher and the student, providing information about the educational process and offering evidence of what the student has learned. Institutional school assessment, on the one hand, is a process that encompasses everyone involved in the school, with the aim of seeking appropriate levels of improvement based on the specific challenges faced by the institution. On the other hand, system evaluation is external and is seen as a tool for monitoring the overall performance of educational networks, with the aim of establishing historical series and identifying trends over time (Puppim Lopes, Stieg, & Santos, 2024).

Thus, educational assessment is seen as a broad field of study, with concepts that vary between different countries and approaches, and which is integrated into the pedagogical practice of teachers at different levels of education. In this sense, interest in this area of research arose from initiatives by researchers who have revealed the importance of educational assessment in the initial training of teachers, contributing to the understanding of the constitution of the field of evaluation (López-Pastor and Pérez-Pueyo, 2017; Santos *et al.*, 2022). These findings are fundamental for identifying redundancies, omissions, passing trends, and weaknesses that, when properly considered, contribute to the recognition of the topic in the scientific field and indicate ways to strengthen it in the academic community.

In Brazil, recent studies analyzing the presence of assessment in curricula and teaching in initial teacher training contexts highlight the importance of specific courses on the topic and the need for them to be offered and discussed in undergraduate programs. The authors point out that these subjects allow future teachers to understand the different aspects involved in educational assessment processes, their ramifications, contexts, and professional implications (Möller & Gómez, 2014; Stieg *et al.*, 2022).

In Uruguay, studies on assessment have focused on research addressing assessment in the context of school physical education, learning about assessment in teacher training, and the relationship between assessment theory and practice (Stieg *et al.*, 2024).

It is important to note that academic interest in studies on educational assessment and initial teacher training is not limited to Latin America. Research has been conducted in countries such as Australia and New Zealand (Penney *et al.*, 2009), Spain (López-Pastor and Pérez-Pueyo, 2017), and England (Baird *et al.*, 2014), which points to the need for further discussion on the topic in Latin American countries.

In this context, this study aims to analyze the prescription of educational assessment in the prescribed curricula (Sacristán, 2000) of teacher training courses at two

different public higher education institutions (HEIs): Federal University of Espírito Santo (Ufes/Brazil) and University of the Republic (Udelar/Uruguay), focusing on careers in Exact Sciences (Mathematics, Chemistry, and Physics) and Biological Sciences. This is relevant because, in the latest results of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2022, these countries scored below average in Mathematics and Science compared to the member countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

Considering these results, the question arises: Do future teachers in these areas study the topic of educational assessment during their training? Thus, this article, focused on initial teacher training and educational assessment, aims to contribute to the discussion of how undergraduate courses have addressed these topics with a view to future teaching practice. A comparative study of the topic will allow us to delve deeper into the subjects related to educational assessment, establishing a dialogue with the assessment problems that arise in educational systems and teacher training, covering two public HEIs in South America.

Methodology

This is a qualitative and exploratory study (Creswell & Clark, 2013), which uses critical documentary analysis (Bloch, 2001) as its theoretical and methodological approach, and is also based on the comparative method in education (Ferrer, 2002). The sources used were career projects and subject plans (PAs), understood here as prescribed curricula (Sacristán, 2000), for the Exact Sciences (Mathematics, Physics, and Chemistry) and Biological Sciences careers at Ufes/Brazil and Udelar/Uruguay in the year 2022.

It should be noted that this study is linked to two projects that received funding: one from the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq) called *Avaliação educacional na formação de professores em instituições da América Latina* (Call for Applications for Research Productivity Grants – CNPq Call No. 4/2021, process: 316377/2021-0) and another from the PIMCEU 2021 called *La enseñanza de la evaluación en la formación del profesorado de la Universidad de la República – Uruguay*, supported by the federal government of Uruguay. Both are developed in collaboration between researchers from Ufes in Brazil and Udelar in Uruguay.

In the first part of the results, a distinction was made between what initial teacher training means and how it is organized in the national contexts in which HEIs are located (Brazil and Uruguay).

After this first stage, data collection was carried out at both HEIs based on undergraduate courses and PAs, requiring searches on the undergraduate course

websites, considering the following criteria: a) being a teacher training course in Exact Sciences (Mathematics, Chemistry, and Physics) or Biological Sciences; b) provide PAs online; and c) have prescribed educational assessment in some part of these PAs.

To assist in the analysis of these sources, Microsoft Office Excel and the *Interface de R pour les Analyses Multidimensionnelles de Textes et de Questionnaires* (IRAMUTEQ) software were used. Quantitative data regarding the number of AF that prescribed educational assessment were organized in Excel. In turn, IRAMUTEQ was used to assist in the organization of qualitative data, based on what is prescribed in the PAs. Initially, the titles, syllabi, objectives, and/or content that addressed the topic in the PAs were selected. These elements were organized into two files in notepad format (one for each HEI) and, after being sent to IRAMUTEQ, allowed the generation of Figures 2, 3, 4, and 5, which correspond to word clouds and similarities. The visual representations through the clouds allowed us to identify words that are repeated at least three times in the data set analyzed. The similarity analysis allowed us to identify combinations between words, producing clusters (sets of words) that indicate connections between them (Camargo & Justo, 2013), in addition to showing evidence of how the theme is prescribed for teaching in these training contexts.

Like Ferrer (2002), we understand that, in order to conduct a study based on comparative aspects between two contexts, the researcher needs to analyze the parts separately and then integrate them and establish comparisons, respecting the cultural characteristics of the educational systems and the specific training concepts of the training areas, especially with regard to the prescription of assessment teaching in undergraduate courses.

We emphasize that during the process of analyzing the sources, we were not interested in judging them, but rather in questioning them to understand their intentions (Bloch, 2001). When exploring the documents, we analyzed the clues left by the sources and the intentions of those who produced them (Ginzburg, 1989). In this sense, it is relevant to present a description of the methodological paths adopted in this research, as well as the data analysis process, taking into account the relationship between the final result of the work and the approaches selected for its production.

Results and Discussion

Teacher training in the Brazilian and Uruguayan contexts

Considering that this is a comparative study (Ferrer, 2002), it was necessary to analyze the existing teacher training in each context investigated (Ufes/Brazil and

Udelar/Uruguay), understanding that it occurs differently in the countries where the HEIs investigated are located. In Brazil, for example, university-level training is generally offered at universities and colleges (public and private), in accordance with Law No. 9,394, Art. 62 (Brazil, 1996). Meanwhile, in Uruguay, university education undergoes a process of 'universityzation' (Teixeira, 2022), regulated by the National Public Education Administration (ANEP), as indicated by Law No. 18,347, unlike other countries, where the Ministry of Education (MEC) has this function. Figure 1 was prepared to understand how the training system is organized in the Brazilian and Uruguayan contexts.

Figure 1
Educational levels in Brazil and Uruguay



Note. Authors' preparation (2024).

Figure 1 shows significant differences in compulsory schooling between the two countries. For example, the periods of time allocated to primary and secondary education differ in each country. In Brazil, elementary education is divided into two cycles: elementary education I (five years) and elementary education II (four years). In Uruguay, this division into two cycles applies only to secondary education, which is divided into secondary education (three years) and upper secondary education (three years).

Regarding the initial teacher training, in Uruguay, teachers working in compulsory education are trained at initial teacher training institutes administered by ANEP (Mancebo, 2019), while in Brazil, this training is offered directly by universities and colleges. However, although there is a different configuration in the provision of initial teacher training, something common to both countries is that in order to teach at public universities, candidates must complete a postgraduate degree and obtain a specific qualification (master's and/or doctorate) to obtain a permanent position at these

institutions. On the other hand, private colleges hire teachers with undergraduate degrees and the highest degree possible, which may be a specialization, master's or doctorate.

Considering this, Ufes/Brazil and Udelar/Uruguay offer postgraduate courses, but differ in the type of training that each degree offers (in this case, Exact Sciences and Biological Sciences). At Ufes/Brazil, careers are mainly focused on Compulsory Education, while at Udelar/Uruguay, training focuses on some teaching contexts, but mainly on the training of researchers, as indicated on their websites.

Configuration of educational assessment in the curricula of Ufes/Brazil and Udelar/Uruguay

A second analysis in this study focused on the requirements of PAs in the Exact and Biological Sciences courses at Ufes/Brazil and Udelar/Uruguay. This revealed the inclusion of educational assessment in some disciplines and courses, but not in others, as shown in Table 1. This table shows the number of PAs reviewed and those that include the prescription for teacher educational assessment.

Table 1
Number of PAs consulted by undergraduate program and HEI

Undergraduate course	Ufes/Brazil		Udelar/Uruguay	
	PAs consulted	PAs that prescribe assessment teaching	PAs consulted	PAs that prescribe assessment teaching
Mathematics	199	19	49	0
Chemistry	186	24	216	0
Physics	200	16	58	0
Biological Sciences	212	29	109	0
Total	797	88	432	0

Note. Authors' preparation (2024).

Based on Table 1, it can be observed that the offerings of compulsory courses (those that all students must take) and elective courses (specific subjects that students can choose according to their interests) in the four courses at Ufes/Brazil total 797 PAs. This scenario highlights the high number of courses in Mathematics (199), Physics (200), Chemistry (186), and Biological Sciences (212). However, the number of PAs that prescribe the teaching of educational assessment in some part of the plan includes 88 PAs in the Ufes/Brazil specialties.

On the other hand, in the courses analyzed in Udelar/Uruguay, there is a striking variation in the number of subjects offered per course, ranging from 49 subjects in

Figure 2 highlights the word *assessment* as the central part of the cloud. In addition, other words appear with some frequency, such as *teaching*, *learning*, *basic education*, *internship* (pre-professional practices), and *methodology*. These terms represent recurring pedagogical themes in Ufes/Brazil undergraduate courses, such as Supervised Practices, Didactics, and Basic Education Policy and Organization (POEB). These subjects constitute the pedagogical basis of teacher training at Ufes/Brazil and are mandatory in the university's undergraduate courses. It is in these subjects that educational assessment is discussed in greater depth, as can be seen in the fragments of the PAs,

Assessment and planning (Ufes/Brazil, Estágio Supervisionado no ensino fundamental I, 2017, p. 41).

Learning assessment (Ufes/Brazil, Estágio Supervisionado no ensino fundamental I, 2018, p. 37).

Learning assessment: criteria and instruments (Ufes/Brazil, Didática, 2021, p. 43).

Discuss educational services in Brazil and Espírito Santo, as well as quality standards and systemic assessments of Brazilian education (Ufes/Brazil, Política e Organização do Ensino Básico, 2019, p. 33).

Components of the teaching and learning process: planning, objectives, content, methodology, resources, assessment, and teacher-student relationship (Ufes/Brazil, Didática, 2019, p. 42).

In this sense, we see an alignment between assessment and the common pedagogical disciplines among the courses. To further the discussion on what is prescribed in relation to the teaching of educational assessment in the disciplines of the Ufes/Brazil programs, we created Figure 3, which represents the similarity between the words, seeking to observe this relationship between the prescriptions of the subjects.

student, teacher, class, teaching, development, and project developed are some of the most representative within these subjects. Another group of PAs addresses assessment in a broader teaching context, covering topics ranging from institutional and systems assessment to the development of students as future teachers. Examples of subjects related to these topics are Basic Education Management, Teaching Practice in Natural Sciences, and Assessment Methods with IT.

The third group of words refers mainly to the evaluations of the systems present in the PAs, establishing relationships on how these educational policies can function as mechanisms for discussing education as a whole and in particular. This is evident in the objectives of the course Basic Education Policy and Organization, offered in the Chemistry program, which includes discussion of educational services in Brazil, as well as quality standards and systemic evaluations of Brazilian education (Ufes/Brasil, Política e Organização da Educação Básica, 2018, p. 29).

On the other hand, as shown in Table 1, it was not possible to identify the presence of a prescription for teaching educational assessment in any of the subjects analyzed within the Bachelor's degree courses in Exact and Biological Sciences at Udelar/Uruguay.

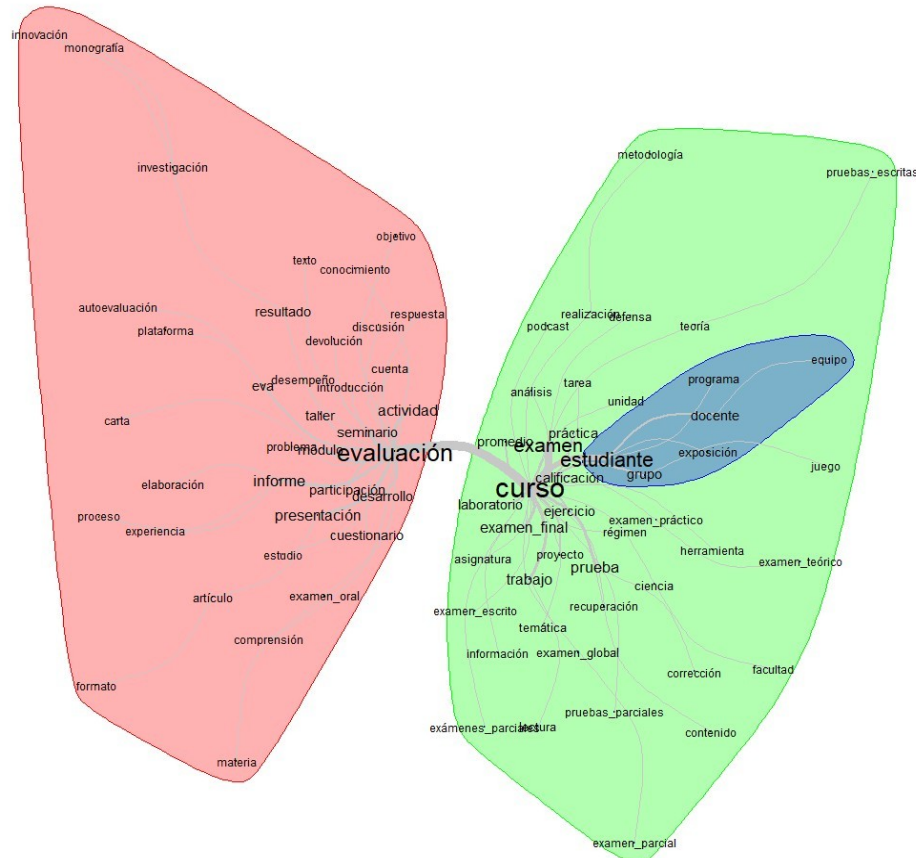
Therefore, in contrast, the analysis of courses at Udelar/Uruguay can be based on evidence that explains why educational assessment is not taught in Exact and Biological Sciences courses, together with the debate on the importance of addressing this issue.

In addition, when analyzing the PAs of the Udelar/Uruguay courses, an assessment proposal called the "Ganancia System" was observed. Figure 4 was created to present what this system includes.

According to the excerpts, the forms of assessment identified as instruments used in the subjects include: *exam, test, report, presentation, various exams (practical, final, comprehensive, written, oral, partial), seminar, questionnaire, and exercise*. These examples reveal a wide variety of ways to assess students. To establish a comparison between the terms presented in Figure 4, a word similarity was produced (Figure 5).

Figure 5

Word similarity of assessment prescriptions in the PAs of Udelar/Uruguay



Note. Authors' preparation (2024).

Figure 5 shows three clusters involving three main words: *evaluación, curso y estudiante*. In the first case, the cluster refers to the means that will be used within the PAs to mobilize assessments. In this sense, terms such as *plataforma, conocimiento, objetivo, formato, contenido, análisis, and información* are some examples. In the second case, the most recurrent indication of specific forms of assessment record production is observed, composed of words such as *examen teórico, examen parcial, trabajo, examen final, juego, ejercicio, and pruebas escritas*.

The blue cluster shows a convergence between the figure of the *estudiante* and their roles in relation to *evaluación*: presentation as a method of student assessment and *trabajo en grupo* as a form of collective (team) work organization. In addition, this

cluster shows the connection between the student and the role of the teaching staff and teaching identity as a process to be constructed throughout the course (*programa*).

Based on these findings, it is understood, as Stieg *et al.* (2022), that teacher training courses should offer theoretical and practical elements so that future teachers can appropriate them, especially those related to assessment. In this sense, concerns related to students' learning on this topic, as well as how they are assessed in training courses, are linked to its implications for future professional performance. Studies indicate a significant gap in teaching about assessment, suggesting that future teachers are not receiving adequate preparation for this practice (Villas Boas Soares, 2016). As a result, in many cases, they tend to reproduce the same assessment methods they were subjected to when they were students.

Due to these factors, it is important to prioritize the inclusion of the educational assessment topic in the training of university students, ensuring that it is an integral part of the curriculum. By adopting this approach, future teachers will be more familiar with and involved in the topic throughout the course, which will increase the likelihood of applying it in their activities at the educational institutions where they will work professionally in the future (Chepyator-Thomson & Liu, 2003).

Given these findings, the question arises: what does it mean to consider initial teacher training that does not provide students with opportunities to teach educational assessment and experiment in practice? Considering teaching as something that occurs in the interaction between theory and practice implies offering subjects that focus only on theories and concepts, which can have implications for the students' educational process, limiting concrete opportunities for this practice. In this context, initial teacher training courses represent an important and significant moment for designing teachers' future pedagogical practices, highlighting the importance of conducting assessments within this process (Chepyator-Thomson & Liu, 2003).

Studying, learning about, and reflecting on assessment practices requires actions taken by students in the training process, favoring new ways of being and learning to be a teacher (Larrosa, 2020). Along the same lines, there is an urgent need for teacher training courses to adopt the theme of assessment as a central axis of teaching, understanding its importance and discussing specific assessment possibilities that strengthen their teaching skills, considering its application in the context of basic education (Stieg, 2022).

Based on these findings, it is understood that assessment is a recurring theme in various higher education careers (Molloy, Boud, & Henderson, 2020). Although it can be considered a slightly more complex system, Slingerland and Weeldenburg (2019) argue

that the integration of theory and practice in the assessment of learning during teacher training careers facilitates specific interventions that can be planned, implemented, and evaluated in real situations.

Although the data from this study reveal the presence of prescriptions for teacher assessment in one course (Ufes/Brazil) and the way in which this assessment is carried out in another (Udelar/Uruguay), we defend the importance of subjects that integrate the theorization and materialization of assessment, enriching student training and broadening their understanding and projection to different contexts, including institutional assessments that consider the didactic-pedagogical organization and standardized exams that are increasingly carried out in different contexts (Guerra & Ribeiro, 2019; Stieg *et al.*, 2024).

It is important to understand the implications of educational assessment, especially large-scale assessment, in everyday teaching practice in different contexts in Latin America (Rodrigo & Moyano, 2023; Diker, Briscioli, & Stoppani, 2023; Sánchez-Amaya, 2023; Salsamendi & Peri, 2023). In this sense, it is increasingly necessary to prepare future teachers to understand the scope of assessment, in both its conceptual and practical aspects. This involves thinking, planning, providing experiences, and facilitating spaces for discussion in teacher training courses that cover the entire school curriculum (Stieg & Santos, 2025; Stieg *et al.*, 2025).

Thus, through the analysis of the available PAs, it was possible to identify that the faculty of Udelar/Uruguay specifies the assessment procedures in each subject (called the Ganancia System), which characterizes it as an interesting and different factor in relation to what is presented at Ufes/Brazil. At the same time, it was not possible to identify any teaching prescription regarding educational assessment in the objectives and/or content of the PAs.

Final considerations

This study aimed to analyze what the Exact and Biological Sciences courses at Ufes/Brazil and Udelar/Uruguay prescribe for the teaching of educational assessment in the PAs that make up these undergraduate programs. In this sense, we identified that in the case of Ufes/Brazil courses, 88 subjects present prescriptions for teaching educational assessment in some part of the PAs. Considering the different areas of assessment (learning, institutional, and systems), the results showed that the prescription of learning assessment was more frequent compared to the other areas. On the other hand, we identified that in the case of Udelar/Uruguay undergraduate courses, out of a total of

432 subjects offered in the four courses, none of them prescribe the teaching of educational assessment areas in their PAs, objectives, and/or content.

It is understood that, in the case of Ufes/Brazil courses, the PAs that prescribe the teaching of educational assessment areas are generally common among courses, especially those with a pedagogical approach focused on basic education and that are mandatory in teaching degrees. Some examples of these subjects are Policy and Organization of Basic Education, Didactics, and Supervised Internship. It is important to note that these courses only include two specific subjects related to educational assessment: Methodology and Assessment in Chemistry Teaching and Assessment Methods using Information Science (Biological Sciences).

Another result obtained through the analysis of the sources was that, in the case of the four undergraduate courses offered at Udelar/Uruguay, no subject was identified that prescribes the teaching of educational assessment in its content and/or programmed objectives. These data indicate that one of the reasons for this result may be related to the fact that the courses in these areas offered by Udelar/Uruguay, although they qualify students for teaching, are more oriented towards training researchers and, in some cases, qualify them to teach at the institution itself, which partly explains the absence of this prescription in the course syllabi analyzed here.

When conducting comparative analyses of the courses at both universities, it was found that at Ufes/Brazil, educational assessment is included in its PAs as content to be taught, both in the programmed content and in the objectives; on the other hand, it does not indicate how students will be assessed in each subject. At Udelar/Uruguay, however, a contrary approach was identified, since the PAs include a specific topic on how the evaluation process will be carried out (Ganancia System), while other areas of educational evaluation are not prescribed as teaching content.

This raises the following questions: Do the initial teacher training programs at Ufes/Brazil and Udelar/Uruguay adequately address the issue of educational assessment? Are the PA prescriptions effectively implemented? In relation to Udelar/Uruguay, is there concern on the part of the teaching staff to include the topic of educational assessment in their courses, given that their assessment procedures have been identified in all PAs? Furthermore, given that teacher training at Udelar/Uruguay aims to prepare people to work in higher education and the issue of educational assessment is not addressed, it is pertinent to question whether the teacher training institutes managed by ANEP share these concerns.

These questions remain open at the end of this study, but they can serve as a starting point for future research that establishes a dialogue with the teachers and

students of these teacher training programs. The goal is to understand the extent to which the presences and absences identified in this study reflect what the PAs actually present. At the same time, it is necessary to analyze other teacher training courses, especially those offered at teacher training institutes in Uruguay and private colleges in Brazil that offer specific training for teaching in basic education.

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RESUMEN

Este artículo analiza la prescripción para la enseñanza de la evaluación educativa en las carreras de formación del profesorado de Ciencias Exactas y Biológicas de dos instituciones públicas, la Universidad Federal de Espírito Santo (Brasil) y la Universidad de la República (Uruguay). De carácter cualitativo y exploratorio, implica el análisis de documentos y utiliza el software IRAMUTEQ como herramienta de apoyo para el análisis. Las fuentes incluyen ocho proyectos de cursos y 520 planes de asignaturas. Los resultados indicaron que en los cursos de la universidad brasileña, el tema está prescrito en los planes de estudio, mientras que en los cursos de la universidad uruguaya no aparece esta prescripción. Se concluye que la presencia o ausencia de la evaluación en los planes de asignaturas está relacionada con el perfil de egreso de cada carrera.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Evaluación educativa; Formación del profesorado; Estudio comparativo; Brasil; Uruguay.

RESUMO

Este artigo analisa a prescrição para o ensino da avaliação educacional nos cursos de formação de professores de Ciências Exatas e Biológicas da Universidade Federal do Espírito Santo (Brasil) e da Universidad de la República (Uruguai). De natureza qualitativa e exploratória, o estudo envolve análise documental e utiliza o software IRAMUTEQ como ferramenta auxiliar para análise. As fontes são oito projetos de curso e 520 planos de disciplina. Os resultados indicaram que, nos cursos da universidade brasileira, o tema é prescrito nos planos de disciplina; por outro lado, nos cursos da universidade uruguaia, essa prescrição não aparece. Conclui-se que a presença ou ausência da avaliação nos currículos está relacionada com o perfil de formação de cada curso e universidade.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Avaliação educacional; Formação de professores; Estudo comparado; Brasil; Uruguai.