

EVALUATION IN EDUCATION: THEORETICAL ESSAY

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ABSTRACT

Evaluation in education represents one of the pillars for understanding student development and the improvement of educational systems, serving as a basis for political, pedagogical and social decisions. In a context of constant changes and complexities, it is essential to rethink evaluation practices so that they promote not only the diagnosis of teaching and learning conditions, as the final point of the process in a summation score, but also encourage the development of inclusive, effective and transformative policies. Evaluation should be seen as a reflective and dynamic tool, going beyond quantitative judgment to contribute to a qualitative analysis of educational processes and their impacts on the education of students and society in general. This study, in the form of a theoretical essay, intends to discuss evaluation as an instrument capable of promoting equity, inclusion and educational quality, allowing the educational system to approach a truly humanizing and transformative education.

Keywords: Evaluation in education. Evaluation categories. Kinds of evaluation. Humanizing evaluation.

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INTRODUCTION

Evaluation, a word loaded with fear, whether in a school or non-school environment. Regardless of the moment in which it was used, it was probably in a measuring, classificatory character, seeking to quantify something or something.

In the school or academic environment, even in contexts not directly linked to formal education, the word evaluation often refers to the idea of a written or practical activity, aimed at verifying the mastery of a content or information in a specific area. This perception is common in several environments, as evaluation has always been associated with the process of measuring someone's knowledge, comparing this understanding to a numerical scale from zero to ten, meaning that the score of zero was low in the development of learning, and the score of ten emphasizing an emphasis on a supposed total level of absorption of the content, leaving aside other aspects that interfere, and sometimes determine, an entire teaching and learning process.

Abramowicz (1996) describes how evaluation has been used:

Evaluation is seen as the attribution of grades, via tests, and gains an essentially measured dimension. As a measure, precise and objective, it focuses on learning outcomes, quantitatively expressed. In this way, students are classified without any concern to interpret and understand the meaning of these grades (Abramowicz, 1996, p.87).

The author brings a perception of how, for decades, this system has been used in the areas of education, forcing and imposing the barrier that the student should only be the receiver, memorize the subject and describe it on paper or in speech, as explained by the evaluator.

However, this simplistic understanding of what evaluation is and how it should be used no longer fits in the context of today's contemporary and technological society, such as the twenty-first century generation, which has information of all levels in the palm of its hand. Evaluation should and should also be a daily practice, which needs to be reviewed, analyzed, and organized in every action proposed by the teacher or applicator, allowing the participation of the entire context employed in the act of the evaluated.

Evaluation should be understood as a continuous learning process, which enables students to reflect on their trajectory, identify their difficulties and potentialities, and build their autonomy, always with the objective of promoting their integral development (Hoffmann, 2009, p. 47).

Hoffmann (2009) indicates that evaluation is a formative process, centered on the student and focused on their growth and self-knowledge, migrating from a singular



conception to an idea of knowledge with the plural, developing their cultural, intellectual and social meanings in an emancipatory and autonomous way.

In this sense, this study, in the form of an essay, intends to discuss evaluation as an instrument capable of promoting equity, inclusion and educational quality, allowing the educational system to approach a truly humanizing and transformative education.

HUMANIZING EVALUATION

In the school environment, traditional thinking around assessment is often limited to measuring how much students retain from the subject, without considering the development of critical dimensions of thinking. This type of traditional authoritarian evaluation tends to focus on the simple verification of information, an example of "copy-paste", instead of fostering social, cultural, intellectual production and a deeper understanding of the full context of the student's experience and daily life. Hoffmann (2000, p.16) considers the "dichotomy of education and evaluation to be a great fallacy", because the need for change is preached, to be concerned with the student's learning, but in reality what is done when evaluating it's an "judgment of results".

To prevent this principle of evaluation from persisting, it is essential to explore different ways of analyzing and understanding the evaluation process, taking into account the particularities of each individual, and for this to occur covering an entire social context and specificities, that there are several methodologies, approaches and ways in which they can be developed and presented in the course of an evaluation, Not focusing on the teacher as a measuring center of knowledge, but rather, allowing the teacher to develop his probes and methods that will lead everyone to a full understanding of the content or study presented, fostering critical, playful, social and dynamic thinking to see an entire teaching and learning process in the act of showing his ideas and knowledge through an evaluation.

The assessment of learning is an essential component in the educational process, which, far from being restricted to the mere attribution of grades or classifications, should be understood as a profound and transformative pedagogical practice. In the view of Hoffmann (2009), evaluation needs to be an instrument that diagnoses the student's progress, offering him opportunities to reflect on his difficulties and potentialities, and thus allow learning to occur in a meaningful way. As the author states, "evaluation should be understood as a process of learning, self-reflection and construction of autonomy, and not as a value judgment about the student" (Hoffmann, 2009, p. 47). Evaluation, in this sense, is an ally of the teacher to adjust teaching to the needs of students, constantly seeking to support their integral development.



As important as the evaluative act being emancipating, unilateral and allowing critical thinking, analyzing and contributing to the entire context of the evaluated, from the point at which the student was able to understand, how he understood, to the reality and the environment in which the student develops his study, it is to collaborate so that students bring with the evaluation, the analysis of social life, thinking about its horizontal context, if this student is a full-time working father or mother, if they have technological and physical resources to develop the study and activity, if their needs at home with the routine allowed them a broad development when seeking to understand or study a subject, and other issues that are important to analyze before and in the evaluation process, knowing that each human being has a specificity of social life and way of learning and developing their learning.

Tavano (2021) understands that evaluation should be understood as an educational process deeply linked to the socio-historical-cultural context. She discusses assessment as a practice that goes beyond the simple measurement of learning, addressing its importance in the development and construction of student learning. The author emphasizes the need to reflect on the different types of assessment and their implications in the school routine, arguing that they must be aligned with the educational objectives and the realities of the students, always seeking to promote reflection and continuous learning. It discusses evaluation as a dynamic and essentially educational process, which goes beyond its classificatory function, a continuous process, which involves the monitoring of learning, critical reflection on pedagogical practices and the adaptation of teaching to the needs of students, with the objective of promoting their integral development.

The author goes on to indicate that evaluation should be understood as a tool to support the learning process, favoring reflection and the construction of autonomy in the student. In addition, it highlights that evaluation should be seen as an instrument to help the student, enabling his overcoming and progress within the teaching-learning process, instead of being just a means of classification or judgment. All these points and other aspects can be analyzed and we must highlight and understand with the student so that the evaluation is not linked to just one movement, the routine of the classroom as a process of passing the year, giving grade or measuring knowledge.

Luckesi (2005) argues that evaluation should go beyond its normative and technical character. For him, evaluation needs to be an ethical and emancipatory act, with the purpose of promoting personal growth and student autonomy. The author states that "evaluating is, fundamentally, helping the student to learn and to surpass himself in his development process" (Luckesi, 2005, p. 67). It proposes an evaluative practice that frees



the teaching-learning process from a punitive and controlling view, focusing on it as an activity that helps the student to understand the world and himself in a critical way.

In this way, Hoffmann (2009), Luckesi (2003) and Tavano (2021) converge in the conception that evaluation should be a humanizing and constructive practice, with the intention of transforming the educational experience into a meaningful and formative process. This joint vision establishes a solid theoretical basis to reflect on the role of assessment in the development of the individual and in the construction of a more inclusive and democratic education.

However, evaluation is not limited only to the classroom and students, it is also developed and applied at various levels and dimensions that not only evaluate the student's learning development, but also analyzes and seeks, through public policies, to help the entire context in which this student is inserted, such as the structure of the school, teaching and learning proposals, pedagogical proposals, teacher training and all other aspects that involve education. We will address here the three categories of evaluation: internal; external; learning.

CATEGORIES AND KINDS OF ASSESSMENT

In order to understand these three categories, it is worth mentioning that they, in their way and manner of being applied, seek to collect information at different scales and levels, starting from the micro as we can guide, which refers to the classroom and the students, to the macro of evaluations, where the concept and learning, infrastructure, material at various scales and educational institutions at the municipal level are verified, state and federal.

External, or large-scale, evaluation refers to a process of analyzing the performance of educational institutions, students, or educational systems, usually carried out by external entities, such as government agencies or independent or private institutions, designated for this function. This is prepared, applied and evaluated by external bodies to the institutions that are being evaluated, that is, the school, university or environment that receives this external evaluation has no interference in its process of creating, analyzing and correcting what is applied. It is applied in such a way that a whole profile of what happens in that particular institution can be observed and analyzed, from its physical structure to its teaching and learning process.

External evaluation plays a significant role in education, and can act as a catalyst for improvement and innovation. However, it is crucial that this process is developed in a balanced and reflective way, considering the particularities of each educational context in



which it is being inserted. The emphasis should be on promoting meaningful learning, rather than merely seeking good results in assessments, so that the information collected can provide objective data on the quality of education, assisting in the comparison between schools and education systems, and can promote the responsibility of educational institutions in relation to student learning, using the results to identify areas that need improvement and direct educational investments and policies, allowing schools to learn from each other, by seeing what works well in different contexts and social particularities.

On the other hand, external evaluation has received criticism through literature and studies on these methods, part of these studies affirm the excessive focus on tests applied by the institutions that receive this type of evaluation, which can lead to a teaching of "teaching for the test", instead of promoting deeper and more meaningful learning. Another question is the pressure placed on students and teachers to obtain good grades, often generating stress and demotivation, causing a reduction in diversity by not considering the particularities of the places or their cultures, leading the evaluation to an inadequate standardization. Among other factors, we also have the devaluation of non-measurable skills, such as creativity, teamwork and critical analysis that may not be adequately evaluated, as it is something standardized.

Hoffmann (2009) criticizes external evaluation in the educational context, especially when it becomes an instrument of control and classification, instead of promoting student development. She points out that external evaluation, often associated with standardized exams and tests, does not take into account the individualities and real conditions of students, which can generate distortions in the teaching-learning processes. For Hoffmann (2009), these external evaluations tend to reduce learning to numbers or classifications, without providing a space for critical reflection and growth for students. In addition, the author argues that evaluation should be, first and foremost, a formative process and not an external judgment, and she believes that true evaluation is the one that occurs within the context of the classroom, where the teacher has the ability to monitor the student's progress in a continuous and adaptive way. Thus, external evaluation often contrasts with these deeper and more individualized pedagogical practices.

Cipriano Luckesi is also critical of external assessment, especially in the context of standardized exams that are widely used to measure student performance. He considers that external assessment, such as large-scale tests, can result in a fragmented and reductionist view of the student, since these tests do not take into account the real learning context and the individual characteristics of the students. For Luckesi (2005), this type of evaluation does not favor the complete development of the student, but rather competition



and classification, arguing that true evaluation is formative and should be done within the school environment, in a continuous and adaptive way, allowing the teacher to follow the learning process in an integral and constructive way. External evaluation, by focusing on punctual and quantitative results, often fails to provide rich information that can help promote students' learning and critical reflection, advocating that an evaluation is more than just an external judgment, and should focus on students' autonomy and knowledge building.

Tavano (2021) sees assessment as a continuous process, which must accompany learning in an adaptive and reflective way. In this sense, external evaluations can be limiting, as they do not consider the individual context of the students and can distort the educational purpose, which is to promote integral development. For the author, the evaluation should be done in a contextualized way, seeking to understand the specificities of each student, instead of reducing it to a standardized evaluation.

Bauer, Alavarse and Oliveira (2015) discuss the use of large-scale evaluations as instruments of educational management and accountability of teachers and schools. Standardized assessments, widely adopted in several countries, including Brazil, generate a debate about their advantages and limitations. The study highlights both the validity and role of these evaluations in educational reforms, as well as the criticism of their use, such as for the allocation of resources, the definition of bonuses for teachers and the creation of competitive rankings between schools and education systems. The authors also present a critical reflection on the use of these evaluations and suggest that, although useful, they should not be seen as the only indicator of teaching quality.

Institutional or internal evaluation is a process in which the educational institution itself analyzes its practices, structure, and results to identify aspects that need improvement. This type of evaluation seeks to understand how the school or university is functioning in relation to its pedagogical, administrative, and social objectives, and, thus, favor the development of strategies that promote a more effective and inclusive learning environment.

Unlike external evaluation, which is carried out by bodies or entities outside the institution, internal evaluation allows the school or university to have a closer and more personalized look at internal needs and realities. This process is largely self-reflective and continuous, encouraging everyone involved, from managers and teachers to students and employees, to actively participate, as the vision of each group contributes to a more complete and realistic analysis of the institutional context. Among the main objectives of institutional evaluation are the improvement of the quality of teaching, the strengthening of the work environment, the adequacy of pedagogical practices and the search for



administrative efficiency. Tools such as questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups are commonly used to collect data on the different sectors and dimensions of the institution. From this information, it becomes possible to propose concrete changes that meet the real demands of the educational context, so Hoffmann (2009, p. 56) highlights that:

Institutional evaluation, unlike external evaluation, allows for an internal, closer and more continuous look, which involves all actors in the school community, with the objective of promoting the improvement of teaching, the adaptation of pedagogical practices and administrative efficiency, based on a reflective and participatory analysis.

In Brazil, institutional evaluation plays a central role in school management, especially in institutions that seek to improve their performance in the face of the guidelines and requirements of the Ministry of Education. The Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (LDBEN) (Brazil, 1996), encourages the execution of regular evaluation processes to ensure the quality of education, indicating as the competence of the Union:

Art. 9, VI - to ensure a national process of evaluation of school performance in elementary, secondary and higher education, in collaboration with the education systems, aiming at the definition of priorities and the improvement of the quality of education (BRASIL, 1996).

This practice, in addition to contributing to internal improvement, is also a way of being accountable to the school community and society in general, reinforcing the institution's transparency and commitment to the education of its students. The involvement of all actors in this process is essential for the results to truly reflect the state of the institution, promoting a culture of collective responsibility. Lück (2009, p. 72) emphasizes that:

Institutional evaluation is not limited to the improvement of internal processes, but also constitutes a mechanism for accountability to society, reinforcing transparency and co-responsibility among the various actors involved in the educational process.

Therefore, institutional evaluation is a strategic tool to strengthen educational and administrative practices, putting the institution on a path of constant evolution. This process allows it to respond to the new demands and challenges of education, continuously adjusting to provide quality teaching and a positive experience for all involved.

Finally, learning assessment, also called content assessment, discipline assessment, performance assessment, among other designations. It aims to evaluate the development of students and, at the same time, guide teachers in adapting their pedagogical practices. This should support the integral development of the student, the focus of the evaluation is on the continuous development and construction of the student's autonomy, instead of



being limited to measuring or classifying, it has the purpose of promoting the improvement of teaching. Learning assessment serves as a mechanism for the teacher to adjust their pedagogical practices according to the needs of the students, promoting a more personalized and effective approach, helping to stimulate reflection, this should also encourage both the teacher and the student to reflect together on what is being learned and how learning can be improved.

The assessment of learning, when well applied, provides constant *feedback* to the student, allowing him to understand not only his successes, but mainly his difficulties and mistakes throughout his development. This *feedback* should be constructive, helping the student to reflect on their learning process, adjusting their study methods and strategies. This approach is reinforced by Luckesi (2003), who sees assessment as an opportunity for students to make their self-assessment and perceive themselves as protagonists in the learning process.

Tavano (2021) complements this view, stating that the assessment should also be a diagnosis, being aligned with the specific needs of each student. This means that teachers should use assessment as a tool to understand where students are in their learning process, adjusting teaching to meet their needs. Evaluation should not only be an instrument of judgment, but a continuous process of diagnosis and monitoring of the student's development. This perspective allows the teacher to identify individual strengths and challenges, promoting a more meaningful and personalized intervention. By aligning the assessment with the specific needs of each student, the educator favors a more inclusive and efficient learning environment, where the evolution of each student is respected and stimulated, reinforcing Hoffmann's (2009) view that assessment is a process of self-reflection and construction of autonomy.

It is also necessary to understand the types of evaluation: formative, summative and diagnostic.

Formative assessment is a type of continuous assessment, whose main objective is to monitor and improve the learning process of students over time. The purpose of formative assessment is to identify difficulties, adjust teaching methods, and help students progress in their knowledge and skills. It involves activities such as quizzes, debates, practical exercises, projects and tasks that help in the observation of the student's development. According to Luckesi (2011), formative assessment should not be seen as a judgment, but rather as a support tool, helping students to understand their areas of difficulty and find ways to overcome them. The author also highlights that formative assessment should not be a simple verification of contents, but an "investigation"



instrument", which questions the relationship between teaching and learning, enabling a pedagogical intervention that is more appropriate to the difficulties of each student. The idea is that the error, instead of being penalized, is understood as a natural part of the learning process, being an opportunity for adjustments and improvements, both by students and teachers. In essence, formative assessment promotes more active and personalized learning, where the received feedback enables the student and teacher to adjust their study and teaching strategies to achieve educational objectives more effectively.

Fernandes (2006) also discusses formative assessment, offering a detailed reflection on the role it plays in the educational context. In his text, he proposes the construction of a theory that goes beyond traditional evaluation models, with a more integrated, continuous focus adapted to the needs of students and teachers. The author in his study introduces the concept of alternative formative assessment (AFA) to differentiate formative assessment that really aims to improve the teaching-learning process from practices that are only "intentional" or punctual, often poorly founded. For him, teachers often claim that they are applying a formative assessment, but, in reality, they are using summative methods or that they only verify the achievement of specific objectives in isolation. AFA is seen as a more robust approach, which not only collects data on student progress, but also seeks to regulate and guide it continuously, utilizing tools such as continuous feedback, review activities, and reflective pedagogical practices. It aims at the continuous improvement of learning, rather than just classifying or certifying the student.

Formative evaluation, according to Fernandes (2006), should also be thought of as a social practice that goes beyond the classroom. It should actively involve the educational community, including teachers, students, and even parents, ensuring that everyone has a clear vision of the objectives and expected results. The central idea is that the evaluation reflects the teaching-learning process and promotes a culture of continuous improvement, in which all agents involved in the educational process feel responsible for learning.

The author strongly criticizes traditional assessment, which focuses only on summative assessment, that is, that which seeks only to measure students' results through tests and grades. For him, this model is limited because it does not contribute to the learning process itself, but only to the classification of students. On the other hand, alternative formative assessment is aligned with constructivist and sociocultural pedagogical approaches, which seek to understand learning as a dynamic and interactive process, in which feedback plays a central role.

Fernandes (2006) argues that, for formative assessment to be truly effective, it needs to be applied in an integrated, continuous and student-centered way. It should not be seen



as a simple moment of verification of learning, but as a pedagogical practice that influences and improves the teaching process. Alternative formative assessment, therefore, is a robust alternative to traditional assessment, contributing in a concrete way to the development of all those involved in the educational process.

Summative assessment is a type of assessment that takes place at the end of a teaching-learning process and its main objective is to measure and classify the performance of students, verifying whether they have achieved the previously established educational objectives. Unlike formative assessment, which aims to provide *continuous feedback* and promote improvements during the learning process, summative assessment is focused on the end result.

This type of evaluation is commonly carried out through tests, tests, final exams, or conclusive projects, and has a more formal character, being used to assign grades or concepts. Summative assessment, therefore, serves to "add" the knowledge acquired over a period of time and often has an impact on the student's academic record, also serving for certification purposes or promotion to more advanced levels of education.

According to Luckesi (2011), summative assessment is associated with the idea of final judgment, seeking to verify the level of learning achieved by the student, without necessarily offering an opportunity for correction or reassessment before the conclusion of the learning cycle. It seeks to classify and categorize students based on final performance, and is often used to make comparisons between students or even between educational institutions. In addition, summative assessment is crucial for the evaluation of educational policies and program outcomes, as it offers a consolidated view of the overall performance of students and the education system.

Fernandes (2021) discusses the differences and interactions between formative and summative assessments (designated as summative by the author) in the educational context. Summative assessment, according to Fernandes (2021), is focused on student results after the teaching process and aims to determine the level of performance achieved at the end of a certain period of time. It should not be confused with formative assessment, which follows the learning process continuously, focusing on providing *feedback* to improve student performance during the educational path.

Summative assessment³ allows us to draw up a balance, or a status report, of what students know and are able to do at the end of a teaching unit or after a certain period of time has elapsed. In this sense, summative assessment is punctual, because it occurs at certain more or less predetermined moments, while formative assessment tends to be continuous (Fernandes, 2021, p. 4).

³ A term spelled as used in Portugal, it refers to summative assessment in Brazil.



However, summative assessment can also have a formative role, if it is used to reflect and improve pedagogical practices. The author also discusses the methods and techniques of data collection for summative assessment, such as exams and tests, and emphasizes that the main function of this assessment is to provide information that helps to understand the level of learning achieved by students in comparison with the established objectives.

Finally, we have the diagnostic assessment, this is a pedagogical tool used to identify the level of prior knowledge of students before starting a new content or teaching module. Its main objective is to understand what students already know, what skills they have, and which areas need more attention, allowing teaching to be tailored to better meet their needs.

According to Luckesi (2011), the diagnostic evaluation does not seek to classify or judge the students, but rather to diagnose their knowledge difficulties, so that the subsequent teaching is more effective. This type of assessment is especially useful at the beginning of a school cycle or a new topic, as it guides pedagogical planning, helping the teacher to adjust their teaching strategies based on the specific needs of their students.

Tavano (2020, p. 40) highlights that:

It should be clearly explained that the applied activity seeks to know exactly what they know, as this previous knowledge will be essential for an accurate planning of activities and contents and so that time is not wasted talking about what they already know.

This approach aims to improve teaching time by avoiding the repetition of concepts that students have already mastered and allowing planning to focus on the areas where they really need the most support. This principle is fundamental for an effective pedagogical practice, as it allows for personalized teaching, offering students more meaningful learning focused on their real needs. Thus, diagnostic assessment, as argued by Tavano (2020), is not only a means of measuring knowledge, but a crucial initial step towards building more targeted and profitable learning.

Diagnostic assessment can be carried out through various activities and is essential to personalize learning, promoting pedagogical interventions from the beginning of the learning process. In addition, it contributes to student engagement, by showing that the teacher is attentive to their level of understanding and willing to support their development in an individualized way. This type of assessment is critical as it allows for a more effective and student-centered approach, resulting in better academic outcomes in the long run.



In short, evaluation in the educational context, whether diagnostic, summative or formative, plays a crucial role in improving the teaching and learning process. Therefore, the different forms of evaluation should be seen as complementary, each with its specific role within the educational process. When applied well, these assessments not only allow educators to monitor learning but also contribute to the continued growth of the institution by offering a deeper understanding of teaching dynamics. Evaluation, in any of its forms, should always be an instrument at the service of learning, promoting a fairer, more inclusive and effective educational environment.

FINAL CONSIDERATION

Upon completing this study, we analyzed what an evaluation is and its levels, how it works and what its advantages and disadvantages are, therefore, it is essential that the evaluation of education is considered a continuous and inclusive process, in order to promote not only student learning, but also the improvement of educational institutions and the entire system. Critical reflection on evaluation practices, as suggested by the aforementioned scholars, must be constant, because only then will it be possible to build a fairer, more efficient and transformative education for all.

We observe the definition of educational evaluation and its different levels, highlighting how each type of evaluation works, in addition to its advantages and disadvantages in the school and academic context. It is essential to understand that evaluation should not be a one-off or isolated process, but rather an ongoing and inclusive practice. The main objective is to promote not only student learning, but also the constant improvement of educational institutions and the entire education system.

In addition, the role of public policies in building a fairer and more efficient educational system is fundamental. Assessments, when used in a reflective and contextualized manner, can provide valuable information for the formulation of educational policies that meet the needs of all layers of society. However, the construction of effective public policies depends on a careful analysis of the data from these evaluations, without reducing education to numbers or performance rankings. Reflection on the use and limitations of these evaluations is a necessary condition to avoid perpetuating inequalities and exclusionary practices within the educational system.

Finally, it is essential that the evaluation of education becomes an inclusive practice, involving all participants in the educational process. As several scholars in the field suggest, evaluation should be a reflection of the realities of the school context, taking into account not only the academic performance of students, but also their personal and social



development. In this way, it will be possible to create a fairer educational environment, which not only measures the knowledge of students, but helps them to develop fully, both in the cognitive and human aspects. By promoting critical reflection and the adaptation of evaluation practices, it is possible to advance in the construction of quality education, capable of transforming society and meeting the needs of students and communities.

Therefore, by integrating different ways of assessment, always with a close eye on their limitations and potential, we can not only improve the teaching and learning processes, but also contribute to the construction of a fairer, more efficient, and transformative educational system. Assessments should not be seen as an end, but as a means to achieve an education that is truly capable of preparing students for the challenges of the twenty-first century, enabling them to acquire not only academic knowledge, but also critical and creative skills that enable them to actively participate in building a more equitable and democratic society.

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