

# Papers as student assessment in graduate courses: educative tool or a sub-system of assembly line?

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## Abstract

This paper aims to discuss the method of assessing graduate students in subjects of master and doctoral programs in Management. The text seeks to highlight the risk of some faculty members misusing the students' assessment process as a "sub-system of papers assembly line" that supports productivist interests, overlapping the mission of educating high level masters and PhDs. Besides the criticism, it seeks to present some possibilities of assessment, as well as to propose a debate about the best alternatives to an educational process in graduate courses.

**Keywords:** Papers. Student assessment. Graduate courses in Management.

## *Artigos como avaliação discente em disciplinas de pós-graduação: instrumento educativo ou subsistema de linha de montagem?*

### Resumo

Este artigo tem por objetivo discutir a forma de avaliar discentes em disciplinas de programas de pós-graduação em administração *stricto sensu*. O texto procura evidenciar o risco de mau uso do processo de avaliação, por parte de alguns docentes, como um "subsistema de linha de montagem de artigos" que atende a interesses produtivistas, os quais se sobrepõem à missão de educar mestres e doutores de alto nível. Além da crítica, também busca apresentar algumas possibilidades de avaliação, bem como propor um debate sobre as melhores alternativas de um processo educativo na pós-graduação *stricto sensu*.

**Palavras-chave:** Artigos. Avaliação discente. Pós-graduação em administração.

## *Artículos como evaluación de los estudiantes en los cursos de postgrado: herramienta de educativa o subsistema cadena de montaje?*

### Resumen

Este artículo tiene como objetivo discutir la forma de evaluar a los estudiantes en las disciplinas de los programas de postgrado en gestión. El texto pretende poner de relieve el riesgo del uso indebido del proceso de evaluación, por parte de algunos profesores como un "subsistema de producción en línea de artículos" que cumple intereses productivistas, que se solapan con la misión de educar a los maestros y doctores en alto nivel. Además de la crítica, también busca presentar algunas posibilidades de evaluación, y proponer un debate sobre las mejores alternativas de un proceso educativo en postgraduado.

**Palabras clave:** Artículos. Evaluación de los estudiantes. Postgrado en administración de empresas.

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## INTRODUCTION

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Educational evaluation is a topic of debate and continuous improvement. It has been one of the main concerns of not only international but also Brazilian higher education projects and graduate programs in recent years (OLIVEIRA, MORO, SANTOS et al., 2011; SILVA and COSTA, 2014; ZABALZA, 2004). In particular, into graduate education, the question of evaluation permeates almost all major decisions taken by teachers and collegial bodies, mainly because since the 1990s there has been a significant strengthening of the national regulatory and evaluation agency called Brazilian Federal Agency for Support and Evaluation of Graduate Education (CAPES), what generated greater demands for graduate programs.

Our experience and contacts with other professionals working in graduate programs in Brazil show that the vast majority of the educational actions and educational projects are planned based on the parameters that CAPES evaluates as positive or negative. They also take into consideration what CAPES will consider to raise or lower the programs grading. The CAPES grading is relevant because it affects directly the numbers enrollments, the accreditation of professors, the programs (Masters and Doctorate) authorization for operate, and especially in the financing of projects or grants to professors and students.

This concern seems at times to exceed the limits of a sense of education that is the basis and that, in our view, defines the reason for existence of a *graduate* program, which is to educate high quality professionals in order to promote social, economic and cultural development of a state, a region or a country. The risk of a deviation is real when we observe that, potentially, targets and actions that are or would be developed to meet this purpose are diverted to attend to what is meant to be a “CAPES requirement.” That is, it is possible that an action or the execution of an academic project are not oriented towards education excellence, *a priori*, but only to meet the demands of CAPES.

Obviously, this is not a problem if the requirements of CAPES are fully aligned with the general objectives of the graduate education. In fact, we have no doubt that this is the aim of people who represent CAPES. The problem, on the other hand, happens when the rules fail to enable overlapping purposes or when they are interpreted in different ways by agents acting within each program. The “productivism”, which has been widely debated in Brazil, can be mentioned as an example of distortion of these rules. This has become a problem because “productivism” has been one of the main concerns of professors, what many times leaves the main purpose of education at graduate programs on a second plan.

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\* Image: By the Author (August, 2015) | William T. Young Library of Kentucky University (EUA).

It is not our intention to discuss productivism which has already been the subject of a long discussion (cf. MACHADO and BIANCHETTI, 2011; BARSOTTI, 2011; DOMINGUES, 2013; GAJANIGO, 2013; TAVARES, 2011). In fact, productivism is a problem in itself and also because of its consequences. Taking care to avoid blaming productivism for the faults which may be found in the programs, we take a particular point that has close association: the issue of course assessment by professors.

In this sense, our goal here is to reflect on how to assess students in course of graduate programs in Management. Specifically, highlights the risk of misuse of the evaluation process, by some professors, making it a “papers assembly line subsystem” which aims to meet the productivist interests and overlap the mission to educate high quality students in master doctorate degrees. In our view, courses assessment is a student’s concern but a “comfortable” practice for the professors. For students, evaluation determines whether they pass or not in the disciplines, while for professors it could be an opportunity to analyze the performance of their work or used as a powerful tool to impose on students the construction of materials or actions that are professor’s responsibility. The association between productivism and the possible use of courses as an environment for writing papers—for later submission in conferences and journals--serves as a relevant example in this discussion.

However, the issue of assessment go far beyond productivism, we know, and therefore we believe it is appropriate to promote a wider (but risky) discussion. We are dealing with a sensitive subject for students and professors shedding light to a situation in which some professors take the opportunity to fulfill their interest trough power (ESCOBAR and VERDINELLI, 2010; SOUZA and REINERT, 2012). It is important to make clear that the reflection upon the “assembly line” presented here does not presuppose a generalization or an accusation to professors who use papers as a means of assessment in their courses. The assumption is that there is risk of using papers as a means of assessment being pointless when it becomes a way to meet interests of productivism distorting its educational and pedagogical purpose.

This paper was developed as an essay analyzing not only the assessment of students in graduate programs in Management but also as an opportunity to discuss alternatives and practices that could be implemented. The first step was to present a literature review about assessment and about what we understand to be the purpose of the graduate education and the sorts of courses commonly offered. Then, we expose our readings on the subject of practices observed in evaluation procedures and the available alternatives. Finally, we present elements of a discussion that does not end here but only aims to start this debate.

## **CONSIDERATIONS ON THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS: MEANING, PURPOSE AND PECULIARITIES**

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The teaching performance in the Brazilian graduate programs is equipped with a series of activities related to teaching and research. This combination makes many people believe that research in Brazil should be the responsibility of graduate programs, what leads teaching to second plan. Well, if the master’s and doctoral degrees aim to educate students to be professors and researchers, why should they give priority to research? We must make clear that we consider research an activity of graduate programs but aiming to educate future researchers—as a mean—and not an end itself (cf. SILVA and COSTA, 2014). The research, in our view, should be in charge of research groups and research foundations.

We understand that the first function of the master’s and doctoral programs in Brazil is to prepare professionals to be able to perform at a high level in higher education, as well as in conducting research with scientific rigor. Thus, among teachers education duties are the planning and preparation of students’ assessment. It is an activity characterized as a process that can meet two basic objectives: a) asses knowledge, skills and competences acquired during the courses; b) foster self-assessment ability to identify possible deficiencies that need to be overcome by the student and professor. Assessment is, thus, a fundamental stage of formation, for its ability to diagnose strengths and shortcomings in the teaching and learning process of the students (CASEIRO and GEBRAN, 2008; LORDÉLO, ROSA and SANTANA, 2010; OLIVEIRA, MORO, SANTOS et al., 2011; PERRENOUD, 1999).

Generally, the most prominent evaluative activity in graduate programs is the presentation of the dissertation or thesis. However, our position does not corroborate this condition of overvalue dissertation and thesis. In spite of recognizing the importance of the dissertation, we believe that education, as well as assessment (relevant part of the educational process), is procedural and should be monitored closely along the program.

Thus, the student assessment during the courses potentially assumes this educational role which is, in our view, as relevant as the presentation of the dissertation or thesis (CASEIRO and GEBRAN, 2008; LORDÊLO, ROSA and SANTANA, 2010; OLIVEIRA, MORO, SANTOS et al., 2011; PERRENOUD, 1999). However, we are not claiming that the assessments of the subjects in isolation (in each course) are more important than the final work, but that the number of evaluations during the program enables the correction of any deficiencies throughout the process, while the final works present only the final result of the educational process. That means that dissertation or thesis are the point of arrival which offers limited opportunity to return for correction of possible weaknesses identified throughout of the education process.

This understanding, also advocated in the literature on higher education (TAVARES, 2011; ZABALZA, 2004), places for graduate professors a demand for careful planning of assessment activities of their disciplines, so that these activities are not only protocol in order to have “a grade”. It is important to note that most of the professors of Brazilian graduate programs are not from areas related to education and also have no previous training in this area. Possibly, this condition leads many professors to diminish the importance of assessment as they are unaware of fundamentals and alternatives that can assist them in building an evaluation and educational process which is an strategic part in the development of teaching and research skills of students (cf. OLIVEIRA, MORO, SANTOS et al., 2011; CASEIRO and GEBRAN, 2008).

In short, our defense is in the sense that the assessment in courses of graduate programs must facilitative skills development. This condition is a peculiarity of graduate education because of the need that the students have at this level of education to gain autonomy, especially doctoral students, which is a requirement for being able not only to reproduce knowledge, but especially to generate new knowledge through research, and educate new staff.

## **GRADUATE EDUCATION: PURPOSES AND SORTS OF COURSES**

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In this section, we explain the conventional purpose and effectiveness of the graduate programs in Brazil. To do so, first we make a more general consideration, without specifying the type of program, and then present the tradition of courses in the area of Management.

As for the purposes of graduate education, these can be multiple when comparing the various areas; including the subareas. In general, to avoid being exhaustive, we can say that the most commonly observed purpose is “to educate researchers” of high level in the core area of the program. For example, the purpose of education in organizations such as the Institute of Pure and Applied Mathematics (IMPA), in its master’s and doctoral programs, is just to educate researchers to advance the frontiers of research in pure and applied mathematics.

However, graduate education also educate professionals to be professors—teachers—at the higher education and for research. This teaching process, which we believe is secondary in most programs (SILVA and COSTA, 2014), ends up being, in fact, the core competence that these professionals will need during their careers. This happens, first, because most students who finish Master’s as well as doctoral degrees find jobs as teachers and do not go to research institutions.

A second general purpose possibly practiced in graduate education is the preparation of high level professionals, which is done through the professional master’s programs, as the example of IMPA already mentioned (NEGRET, 2008; VASCONCELOS and VASCONCELOS, 2010). The formation of masters and doctoral students takes place through a wide range of activities, including classroom courses, teaching internships, academic guidance, seminars, among other activities. For the purpose of this paper, we are giving a quick description of the courses.

Unlike conventional courses of undergraduate programs – most bringing together a set of predefined content and some with the same syllabus for decades (for example, microeconomics undergraduate courses are the same, at least since the

1970s)—, courses have more flexible content in graduate programs. Courses range from more closed cases around themes to others of fully open content—set by each professor individually that may vary from period to period. For example, in linguistics graduate programs it is usual to have courses of linguistic theories that have a more or less well-defined syllabus. This, however, is not what happens to the vast majority of the other courses. The programs usually offer courses with more general designations (seminars, special studies, topics, etc.), and its construction in each semester is updated by latest publications references.

The central difference between undergraduate and graduate education, in this sense, is precisely the proportion of courses with more flexible content (although in smaller numbers, undergraduate programs also offer flexible content courses). We understand that this flexibility in the graduate level is given by two main aspects. First, the formation of graduated scholars—at a higher level—should always be updated in terms of content, which makes it unsuitable to have a fixed content. Second, most graduate programs meet agendas of studies and research of professors who need the flexibility to change content and bibliography periodically.

The same happens in graduate programs in Management, with the following fixed content being more recurrent (though not necessarily equal among programs): organizational theories, research methods and quantitative and/or qualitative methods; multivariate methods. The other subjects (such as topics or special or advanced seminars), besides the courses of research, are often flexible regarding content and bibliography. However, different graduate programs have courses with similar names (in fact, it is possible to notice that syllabus of courses such as consumer behavior, common in programs with focus on marketing, have very few similarities among different programs).

In any context or modality, courses central assumption is that they should be focused on the assessment of content or topics that are relevant to the educating skills of the future professor. Therefore, the competence to be formed defines the dynamics of implementation and assessment of each course.

We take as a good idea that in more closed content courses, classes are focused on the professor and assessment is focused on ascertaining the level of learning acquisition of the content, which is done through works and seminars related to content, test or any other form of verification of the multiple evaluation alternatives existing. Yet for the most open content courses, the assessment can vary depending on the professor and the content. However, we believe it is more appropriate to focus more on leading of the teacher with an evaluation process that can be, for example, a literature review on the topics, a seminar, a position paper, a mental map, among other possibilities.

Eventually, any of the two types of courses—but especially in the latter—it seems possible to have a specific application of any technique learned. If that is the case, or the writing of an essay that can, depending on the construction of the authorship later (obviously not escaping from the real sense of authorship; cf. SOUSA, COSTA and MUZZIO, 2011), be referred to a journal or a scientific event. Nevertheless, the initial goal should be the student education and not the publication of the submitted work. We understand those publications that resulted from these types of work should be a consequence, focusing on training students in the competence of production of academic/ scientific texts (in this case, paper/essay) and not to meet the requirements of publication and scores of professors demanded by CAPES.

## **A (PARTIAL) ANALYSIS OF PRACTICES IN MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS**

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In this section, we deepen the discussion on the assessment practices in disciplines in graduate programs in Management, supported by our experience as professors, which not only includes the experience in programs that we have already participated, but also from the exchange of experiences with other professors of various national and international programs. We do not want to put us in reference and intransigence position on the subject. We aim to open the discussion to broaden



the debate and reflection on the topic which we believe is very delicate and controversial because it gives evidence for misaligned practices with the core educational mission of the graduate programs.

## **PROFESSOR'S PRODUCTIVITY/PRODUCTIVISM AND RISK OF SIDELINED FORMATION**

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In the introduction of this paper, we announced that part of the assessment problems in the graduate programs is associated with productivism. It is important to note that the demand for high productivity is real and beyond Brazilian borders. By the way, we usually follow what happens in the European and American academia. On the other hand, the point in question is precisely the disproportion between the quantity and quality of what is produced.

An example of what we are talking about is the process of CNPq (National Council for Scientific and Technological Development) productivity research grant, where the lists of many contemplated reflect how much they did and not the quality of what they have actually done. Of course, we must recognize the importance of incentives such as grants, and many colleagues who receive them certainly deserve to be recognized as reference researchers in the country and sometimes abroad. A second example concerns the evaluation of graduate programs by CAPES, which adopts the amount of points accumulated by professors throughout the evaluation period (when we wrote this paper, the evaluation was done ever three years) as one of the most important criteria.

From these examples, it appears that the excessive focus on the production of academic papers is stimulated by an assessment framework external to graduate programs. It creates a crucial point for many professors to seek a way to ensure their productivism rates through the works produced during the courses they teach. It is not uncommon for some professors to transfer responsibility for the production of papers for students, imposing this work as an assessment requirement of courses. Nor it is unusual that they require the completion of a final research paper that “result in papers to be published”, possibly requiring these as a requirement to receive the diploma (sometimes even requiring the publication to “has the name of the advisor professor”).

The strategy of requiring students to deliver papers as the end product of assessment of courses seems to be very much a concern of the professor (who adopts this practice) in relation to their own assessment by the graduate program to which he or she works for (accreditation and disqualification) – and consequently CAPES – than an educational assessment strategy for students.

Despite many professors argue that the production of papers in the courses is a training strategy with regard to the competence of planning and writing papers as a genre and at the same time, a preparation for the scientific initiation, the following questions still remain: Why is this strategy dominant in most courses?; Are there no other important skills in the educational process to be developed and included in the assessment strategies? What happens when the paper to be produced is only a potential product to be published and not something pertinent to the goal of building skills from the courses?; Why does not a paper compete, for example, with a didactic text, a class note or an teaching experience report?

We understand that an exaggeration in the demand for papers generates not only an addiction in the overall graduate system (in Management) regarding the number of productions and overestimating the amount of what was produced. More than that, we actually have the risk of a distortion in the perception of students about what their actual professionals' duties when they finish their course. This practice can lead them to think that they should turn “everything” into a scientific paper to be sent to an academic conference or journal. It also prevents them from developing other key skills such as learning to learn, teaching and training new students, trying out new methodological approaches to research and teaching, carrying out research projects etc.

In our view, a focus on assessment giving priority to the production of papers can generate a liability to be charged in a few years, when students actually have the degree of a master and a Phd. This will come from the distortion of the educational nature of the assessment in the courses, as they are seen as opportunities to meet the production logic that, in some cases exceeds the demands for professors of graduate programs in terms of the evaluation of the concept “very good” from CAPES.

Until the 2010-2012 period, this was given to professors with 150 points in the Qualis area, which could only be met with a minimum of three articles published in journals with Qualis B2.

## THE ASSEMBLY LINE AND ITS ALTERNATIVES: THE BLAME IS (NOT) THE CAPES

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In a view of conventional industrial production logic adapted to graduate educational context – which we highlight in the title of this paper to give reference to assessment as a subsystem of an assembly line –, would have a scenario like this: professors and students are inputs of the production system, with professors acting as managers and students as operators. Operators gain specialized training from managers and generate products in two ways:

- First, operators attend courses focused on texts and topics with potential generation of papers and are required to produce competitive works with passing score requirement. As it is not possible for all operators, the worst products gain a minimum score and the best are selected and improved by managers, and then placed on the competition circuit of academic conferences and journals. If products are really good, they will result in awards to managers and operators in the form of scores of the Qualis system (cf. WOOD JR.; 2010);
- Second, after a wider educational formation, the operator will build a more complete product (dissertation or thesis), which also needs to be differentiated/ competitive in theme and method to generate more than a by-product (papers). These products will also be selected by managers and enhanced to enter the same competition circuit of discipline products and potentially receive the same final earnings.

The final output of this process is the academic capitalization of professors (in the sense of BOURDIEU [1983]) in their curricula, which eventually reaches other forms of capitalization, including the economic one. The assembly line is productive for agents who use it fully. It enables professors to stay in the permanent teaching staff of graduate programs, besides generating special prizes such as tickets to events, competitiveness in productivity grants and projects with resources from funding agencies (CNPq, CAPES, FAPESP, etc.), invitations to be a committee member in judging boards in other institutions and trips, among others. Eventually, the students also capitalize from building “a rich curriculum in publications”, which increases their competitiveness in doctoral selections (if the student is in the master’s degree) and in public tests for job positions, especially those for that require a Phd degree, and which demand candidates to show differentiated teaching capacity in the item “academic research”.

A brief description of what we do, although it is not practiced by most professors, is set as a hyperbole of some situations that our experience and their dialogues with students showed. A full practice of this model would, in our understanding, much more deleterious than the actual banking education conceptualization of Paulo Freire (cf. FREIRE, 1974), in which the professor assumes that his or her main aim is to “dump” and “fulfill” the entire contents of the syllabus, leaving the student to seek a way to “learn” what is “taught” as he/she is subjected to the condition of a mere operator in producing results to serve primarily the interests of professors.

Regarding this situation, reaching a potential practice (by the power that professors have) which is very attractive (as it is a situation that has goals and measurable results, as are the scores of Qualis), we pointed out in this subsection two issues of a preliminary debate we have already started. First, the issue of reversing the focus of formation, and second (and main), the question of responsibilities (noting that a third question on the overcoming of alternatives will be discussed later in the article).

On the subject of focus reversion, which has been exposed in this study, it is required to devote more attention to the fact that it is necessary to build and operate a project for educating students in the full sense of the term “education”. This is not to educate efficient producers of papers to inflate curricula with scores for publications (some of which not even the authors recommend the reading – an exploratory analysis of course plans offered by very productive professors illustrates this: in most of the syllabus, the suggested literature has very little of their own individual production). Indeed, graduate education is meant to educate professionals for the exercise of academic activities of teaching, research and engagement. Without the intention of discussing teaching functions at university, we assume that its purpose is to educate professionals to develop knowledge and interact with society (for a more detailed discussion, see MENESES [2000] and ZABALZA [2004])

and not producing papers just for the mere fact of doing it. This implies that the projects and actions of graduate education clearly require an orientation to training skills of students (cf. SILVA and COSTA, 2014) for the exercise of this purpose (which undoubtedly includes the competence for scientific production).

On the issue of responsibility, we previously reported productivism as an inducer of potentially problematic academic practices, including the potential diversion of purpose of the assessment process. The vaunted argument is as follows: "it is necessary to produce because it is a requirement of CAPES". Although the argument is attractive within the lived reality in the daily lives of graduate programs, it does not seem enough for a thoughtless submission. More than that, we believe it is necessary to consider whether the issue is "requirement" of CAPES, as a body that requires the taking of certain educational actions, or if there is a problem of interpretation and appropriation of how it is possible to adapt to enhance the regulatory body requires.

Our experience indicates that, although it seems imposition from CAPES, scientific production is not the most important criterion nor a very high demand. In other words, CAPES does not require productivism. Some professors and some programs are the ones that fit the demands of that regulatory body the way they consider most appropriate, in an easier and more feasible manner. Potentially, the interpretation problem comes from the fact of scientific production being an imposition of an individual and not collective demand. Hence, possibly there is an attempt by professors to pass the problem to students through successful strategies (for being easy and feasible, though not adequate). This seems to be the case for the implementation of the production line model described at the beginning of this subsection.

In our view, CAPES defines the "rules of the game", but does not legitimate the outsourcing of scientific production responsibility from teachers to students, especially when it compromises their education. With this perspective, we understand that teachers do have the option of going towards and effective education of students, besides producing knowledge, without having necessarily to make productivity scores of Qualis their central goal.

That is what will reposition the act of assessing to its rightful place as an educational activity itself in graduate courses. Resuming the title of this paper, the question about the target of assessment (educational activity or assembly line subsystem) has no other response than the one provided in the literature on education. Namely, asses in the graduate programs is an educational activity that should be integrated into the learning process and oriented to the purpose of helping to build skills of students, oriented to better social interest (cf. MASETTO, 2003).

## ALMOST A CLOSING

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In writing this article, one of our goals was to raise a reflection on the risk of making the student evaluation in graduate courses in Management a "factory" of papers in a conscious way, to the detriment of the purpose of promoting the quality of education of the students. We seek to leave a reflection for those who recently finished the graduation degree and also for professors; especially those in doctoral education. We understand that these people begin or recently began their journey as professors in graduate programs and, through a process of mimetic isomorphism practices of their time as students, are likely to reproduce some of these practices in their action. This entails drawing attention to the problem, even in the face of any institutional demands that we carry daily and interfere with our time for reflection of our teaching practice.

Before closing our reflection, we would like to bring to the debate some assessment strategies that can contribute to professors to go beyond the production of papers. Although current belief (verified in our experience in dialogue with colleagues who work in graduate programs) that in masters and doctoral programs there are no tests to asses student, we believe that this is an evaluation strategy that may (or even should) be used by professors in graduate programs. Taking tests is a more direct way to assess the students, especially when you want to check if the student has a specific skill such as, for example, handling a software like R package or Atlas TI. By personal practice and reports of other professors, tests as an alternative complemented with practical exercises that are marked as a grade is a practice with good acceptance among students. With due adaptation, tests are the same applied in undergraduate programs. Literature on higher education is extensive on the subject (GIL, 2009; LOWMAN, 2004; MASETTO, 2003; MOREIRA, 1997).



Also based on the our personal experience and reports from other professors, we consolidated the understanding that an individual or collective production has good results as an evaluation activity. This is the case, for example, of assessments based on the final work discussing a theme or on the preparation of a presentation in the form of seminar. It should be noted that we do not refer to seminars as a means of replacing the teaching of classes or transferring responsibility for graduate students; rare practice, but eventually reported in the routine of graduate programs in Management. The paper, of course, is an activity of this nature, and, as already mentioned, if used in moderation and with no interests other than the development of skills, is a production with great potential to contribute to education; considered as being part of an evaluation process. However, in addition to the paper, there are alternatives that seem interesting and with good potential results, as is the case of mental maps and a memorial (both based on a construction based on the history of the discipline) or building a glossary of the course. We briefly comment on these alternatives as follows.

We understand that the construction of mental maps of the discipline as a whole is an interesting form of assessment because this strategy allows the professor to verify the level of understanding of the subject by students. It also makes it clear to what extent has the student appropriated the subjects studied, enabling a general view of the content and the exercise of the construction of a personal discourse on the subject. Mental maps are used not only to assess the students, but also as a summary of the course for future reference (BUZAN, 2009).

The history of the course is another form of evaluation. The development of a reflective memorial occurs when the organization requires a document stating the collection of weekly readings, presented seminars etc. This reflective memorial also involves a self-reflection on the discipline as a whole. In the search for understanding about what was studied helps the students to develop their dissertation and thesis (SOUZA, 2013).

If the course presents many concepts to be worked out and requires a great degree of abstraction of the learners, creating a glossary of the course can be a good way to review. It is possible not only to build the main concepts used but also it requires from the student an effort to understand these concepts to write the glossary (NUNES and VILARINHO, 2006). Moreover, it is also a way to generate a reference material that will be useful in addition to the evaluation of the subject. Despite that assessment practice being very common in distance education, we have used it in some graduate courses (such as research in Management) with satisfactory results in the opinion of the students.

These are just some alternative exemplifying the broad range of possibilities to assess students as an option to the production of papers. Except from the test, the other alternatives are procedural assessments; that is, the student needs to effectively participate in class and produce partial materials during the course, so that they can build what is requested in the final evaluation. Thus, the student is forced to respond to the demands of the course throughout the process (and not just the final evaluation) and the professor, in turn, is able to monitor the students more closely and identify possible corrections that need to be made during the course. In our view, this gives the concept of a processual and educational assessment, defended by theoreticians of higher education methodology (CASEIRO and GEBRAN, 2008; GIL, 2009; LORDÊLO, ROSA and SANTANA, 2010; LOWMAN, 2004; MASETTO 2003).

The purpose of the study was to raise questions and give an initial configuration of their nature and the alternative solutions when there was a problem. Even with the announced intention of not being exhaustive, we understand that this is a limitation of our text, which leads us to believe in the need to expand the discussions and seek the improvement of education in graduate programs. Our discussion was also limited to the Management field, but it can serve as a reference for a wider debate, reaching other areas. We believe that this debate is urgent, given the significant development of graduate studies in Brazil, so that, as well as in basic education and higher education, it is necessary to reflect on the teaching strategies and education and also on what the professors need to improvement on. Indeed, having the title of "doctor" which is required for professors of this academic universe is not teaching quality assurance and, much less, nor is *carte blanche* for using disciplines, students and assessments to meet their personal demands .

We leave therefore the central challenge as a continuation of this paper, the search for further reflection aiming to establish a "methodology for graduate education", which includes assessment and other issues such as course programs, selection process, classroom practice and student motivation, among others.

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