

Bibliometric Study of Scientific Production on Institutional Assessment and Self-Assessment 10 Years after the Implementation of SINAES

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Abstract: This study aims to profile the scientific output concerning institutional assessment and self-assessment within Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) from 2014 to the first semester of 2021. The outcome presented is a systematic review of articles published in the Web of Science, Scopus, and Scielo databases. The analysis employed bibliometric techniques to identify the characteristics shaping the profile, production, authorship, content, and references. The methodology facilitated a delineation of the scientific output's profile on institutional assessment and/or self-assessment in HEIs and highlighted the predominance of institutional assessment discussions as part of broader debates, albeit not as the central theme of substantial output. The research sample revealed the topic's influence within broader discussions, such as those concerning SINAES itself, underscoring the subject's significance due to its integration into numerous higher education dialogues. Self-assessment emerged as a research gap, especially from a strategic perspective, rather than merely methodological or as a tool for institutional assessment.

Keywords: Bibliometrics; institutional assessment; Higher Education Institution (HEI); self-assessment; undergraduate assessment; SINAES.

1. Introduction

Assessment is a tool for socio-institutional change, being an essential part of educational reforms at both macro and micro levels of society. Any change in an educational institution involves an evaluative process, whether prior, concurrent, or subsequent. The issue of higher education assessment became prominent in educational policy discussions towards the end of the 20th century, driven by the sector's growth and a minimum requirement for quality standards, according to Dias Sobrinho (2006). This movement laid the groundwork for what we know as institutional assessment and its segments. This paper aims to present the state of the art regarding scientific production on institutional assessment and/or self-assessment in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

There is scant research on self-assessment, thus, examining how research in this area progresses justifies the work's relevance. The objective of this study is to conduct preliminary research based on a selection process of relevant articles on the topic—institutional assessment and self-assessment in HEIs—published between 2014 and the first half of 2021, to compile a bibliographic reference. This survey aims to outline the profile of this production based on the analysis of articles in available databases. To address the research problem, this study primarily focuses on:

- Defining a selection process for bibliographic references on self-assessment and institutional assessment in Higher Education;
- Conducting bibliometric analyses on the articles focusing on: (a) the number of articles published per year; (b) listing the most prolific institutions on the topic; (c) identifying the most discussed themes within the multiplicity of topics; (d) determining which works have the most impact among the articles through citation count; and (e) identifying and disseminating the most relevant articles and books.

This paper is structured into 5 sections. Following the introduction, section 2 presents the theoretical framework for institutional assessment and self-assessment in HEIs. Section 3 describes the research

methodology, grounding the bibliometric analysis. Section 4 details the methodological procedures, and finally, section 5 presents the study's concluding remarks, limitations encountered, and suggestions for future research.

2. Theoretical Background

Writing about assessment requires those who embark on this journey to establish a process of understanding which type of assessment is under discussion. To this end, as a guide, we undertake the exercise proposed by Professor Cortelazzo in a lecture to faculty members with the challenge of rethinking assessment, prompting the question: "Assess for what/whom?" In the 1990s, the higher education market experienced significant growth; however, this expansion did not necessarily equate to quality. It was necessary to establish a policy for higher education assessment that met international quality indicators, according to Peixoto (2009). Higher Education Assessment became a key agenda item, but what was the concept of assessment? Two main approaches emerged in the debate: the first focused on measuring the performance of undergraduate courses and institutions, and the second concentrated on the activities of academic processes, in addition to identifying weaknesses and developing strengths, as noted by Peixoto (2009).

Regarding the epistemology of these two approaches, Barreyro and Rothen (2006) describe the first as a control activity following a bureaucratic logic, while the second adopts a formative/emancipatory principle, aimed at self-regulation and institutional improvement. The legislative sequences resulting from these debates include: the 1995 Law No. 9,131, which instituted the National Exam of Courses, the "Provão"; the 1996 Law No. 9,394, Law of Directives and Bases of National Education (LDBN), which expanded the categorization of private higher education in Article 20, and linked the recognition and accreditation of courses to the process of periodic assessment in Article 46 (BRAZIL, 1996). A turning point came in 2004 with Law No. 10,861, which created the National System of Evaluation of Higher Education – SINAES.

According to Peixoto (2009), the purpose was to merge the two competing approaches by working towards the construction of a national higher education evaluation system that would articulate the aspects of state regulation and control with formative emancipatory assessment. SINAES was thus structured into two dimensions: the evaluation of learning conducted by external assessments carried out by the National Institute for Educational Studies and Research Anísio Teixeira (Inep) and the institutional assessment that includes a self-assessment process, carried out by HEIs through their own Assessment Commissions (CPA) (BRAZIL, 2004). What was intended as SINAES and how the system was shaped throughout its first decade, extending to 2021 (see table 6), are reflections addressed by a significant number of authors in their selected articles in this review, rethinking the system itself is part of the profile of the bibliographic production selected in this review.

"Evaluation is a process open to polysemy but should not be dispersive. Therefore, higher education assessment cannot lose its main focus, nor can it lose its social and pedagogical effectiveness. In other words, its central reference is the essential roles of higher education. This presents the serious problem of confronting a definition, albeit rudimentary, regarding the purposes and essential roles of higher education – a topic also always laden with ideology, and therefore, values and interests." (DIAS SOBRINHO, 2008, p. 194-195).

Answering Professor Cortelazzo's (2020) exercise to pinpoint which Assessment is under discussion: to assess for what/whom? The answer constructed in this brief historiography is straightforward: to regulate and ensure, in the name of quality, minimum operational standards for HEIs, that is, for regulatory bodies and the institutions themselves. In a response reflecting Professor Dias Sobrinho's perspective, it should go further, that is, to consider the focus of higher education and the interests involved (the "whom" in this reflection). Thus, the discussion goes beyond the realm of regulation, and assessment is not merely about control, but control is a part of assessment, as argued by Dias Sobrinho (2010).

2.1 Institutional Assessment in Higher Education Institutions

Institutional assessment forms part of the evaluative triad of SINAES, which includes course evaluations conducted by commissions managed by INEP, student evaluations through the National Student Performance Exam (ENADE), and institutional assessment, which encompasses two processes: self-assessment conducted by the institution itself and external assessment carried out by commissions managed by INEP/MEC.

One of the mandates of institutional assessment outlined in Article 3 of the SINAES law aims to profile the HEI and its performance by analyzing its Institutional Development Plan (PDI). The PDI should include, among other things: mission, values, goals, and objectives, which must align with institutional policies and the institution's profile, i.e., to verify if the outlined policies are in accordance with each institution's mission and values (BRAZIL, 2004). The visits by the commissions should verify the effectiveness and implementation of these policies. The PDI should serve as a strategic tool beyond just a legal requirement.

Institutional assessment, both internal and external, is the core process of SINAES. It involves a comprehensive review that each institution must undertake to understand itself more deeply, reflect on its responsibilities, problems, and potentialities, and ultimately, plan and set goals to improve quality across all institutional and educational dimensions. (DIAS SOBRINHO, 2008). The multiplicity of evaluative instruments is justified by the complexity of the object of assessment, which is the Higher Education Institution, in pursuit of continuous improvement.

2.2 Self-Assessment

Self-assessment is an integral part of institutional evaluation. For its management, HEIs are required by Law No. 10.861/2004, in its Article 11, to establish an Internal Evaluation Commission (CPA). The CPA's composition should include representatives from civil society and all segments of the institution's community. However, the institution's higher collegiate bodies are responsible for determining the number of members, organization, and functioning of the CPA. The following figure summarizes the suggested steps for the self-assessment process.

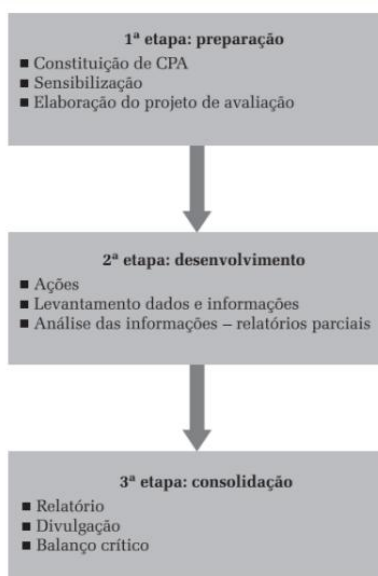


Fig. 1 – Etapas da Avaliação Interna

Source: CONAES/ Orientações Gerais para o Roteiro da Autoavaliação das Instituições pág. 15

Regarding the objectives, self-assessment should have a direct relationship with the institution's strategic planning, as one of the goals is to capture the perceptions of those involved in the pursuit of quality and performance for planning that enhances management (BRAZIL, 2004). In principle, it should be dialogic, participatory, and representative among the involved parties; otherwise, a partial view of the Institution is established. As highlighted by Galdino in the following excerpt:

Self-assessment is closely linked to the (re)construction of the institutional project and the pedagogical project, calling on all members of the school community for effective participation in the transformation and improvement of the institutional reality. The manager plays a fundamental role in raising awareness within this community and in the institutionalization and utilization of the results obtained from the self-assessment, in order to correct and (re)define the directions of the institution's history. (GALDINO, 2011)

3. Methodology

Regarding the methodological framework of this research in terms of its objective nature, it is classified as descriptive, as it aims to characterize the profile of a specific academic production. Concurrently, it is oriented towards producing research of a theoretical-conceptual nature by presenting a systematic literature review at the end, as described by De-La-Torre-Ugarte-Guanilo, Takahashi, and Bertolozzi (2011).

The research logic is inductive, starting from a series of samples defined by the adoption of an instrument to obtain deductions of formal logic. As for data collection, the sources are categorized as secondary. That is, articles that are by nature secondary sources, as they have the prerogative of working with primary sources. The problem's approach a priori by the instrument was quantitative and as a final step qualitative, as

noted by Pagani, Kovaleski, and Resende (2015). The result has basic characteristics because it seeks the state of the art of a field of study.

Characterizing the technical procedures, we classify them as a survey technique and action research through the application of bibliometric technique and also bibliographic research conducted based on already published materials, as per Gil (2002). The chosen instrument was the Methodi Ordinatio over the Proknow-C, for being a multi-criteria decision-making methodology adopted in the selection of scientific articles and composition of bibliographic portfolio, as discussed by Pagani, Kovaleski, and Resende (2015). The method uses three relevant multi-criteria factors for selection: the number of citations (recognition of the publication by peers); impact factor (relevance of the journal in which the article was published) and year of publication (timeliness of the research), according to Carvalho, Sokulski, Silva, Carvalho, Moura, Francisco, and Veiga (2020).

The choice of bibliometrics as a technique for studying the state of the art and creating the profile of scientific production on institutional assessment and self-assessment in Higher Education Institutions is justified because it is a consolidated tool in the evaluation and selection of scientific journals, identifying, for example, the behavior and quality of publications. The modus operandi of bibliometrics is defined by a study of the quantitative aspects of production; dissemination, uses of the information recorded in the databases available to researchers, based on an analysis methodology using statistical models, as outlined by Carvalho et al. (2020).

4. Results

The results will be presented through the application of the Methodi Ordinatio protocol for a bibliometric proposal of scientific production. The Methodi Ordinatio is organized into 9 phases. We will follow these same steps to present the results of this work as described in the study by Pagani, Kovaleski, and Resende (2015). This study aims to build a bibliographic portfolio from scientific articles on institutional assessment and self-assessment in Higher Education Institutions. Expanding the previous intention to verify the state of the art in this field and to outline the profile of the scientific production on the said theme.

This stage was conducted as follows, first, the research theme was isolated: institutional assessment and self-assessment in Higher Education Institutions. Through this exercise, it was possible to isolate 3 basic terms for the search:

- **First term:** Institutional Assessment (in HEIs and/or Higher Education);
- **Second term:** Self-Assessment (in HEIs and/or Higher Education);
- **Third term:** Undergraduate Assessment; HEIs and/or Higher Education were added to avoid collections outside the research theme. For validation, the terms were tested in the Web of Science database, which, due to its multidisciplinary collection, was suitable for this purpose.

Three databases were selected for data collection, based on the profile and volume of journals in the databases and the research theme. The databases are Web of Science, Scopus, and Scielo. Scielo was added due to the perception that significant journals for the theme classified as Qualis A1 were not indexed in the other two databases, which could limit the research. For methodological robustness, a fourth collection was added by searching the Capes subject database, although this phase is not foreseen in the method. The keywords were tested in the databases and translated into English. In this exercise, it was necessary to consider more than one translation for the word "avaliação" (evaluation and assessment), and in the preliminary searches, both brought results. When dealing with higher education assessment in the Brazilian context, it is essential to consider the acronym SINAES (National System of Higher Education Assessment).

The raw final search resulted in a total of 1162 materials. It is important to note that two crucial filters for the methodology had not been defined before the examination of the collection: the type of material (journals, books, book chapters, reviews, conference productions, etc.) to be collected and the temporal scope. These definitions were made during the bibliometric filtering phase. Table 1 demonstrates the raw result of the collection.

Entradas	Palavras - Chaves	Scopus	Web of Science	Scielo	Capes	Somas
P1	"institutional evaluation" AND "higher education evaluation"	6	1	15	39	61
P2	"institutional assessment" AND "higher education assessment"	4	1	6	61	72
P3	"institutional evaluation" AND "higher education evaluation" AND self-evaluation	2	0	6	18	26

P4	"institutional evaluation" AND self-evaluation	21	12	27	373	433
P5	"higher education evaluation" AND self-evaluation	7	0	12	91	110
P6	SINAES	39	32	97	292	460
Totais		79	46	163	874	1162

Table 1: Search on "Institutional Assessment and Self-Assessment in HEIs" in Databases

Source: The Authors

The tools used in this process were EndNote (reference manager) and an Excel spreadsheet. The first step involved eliminating duplicates, which reduced the volume of materials by 24.80%, resulting in 874 raw data items. Subsequently, four database cleaning actions were performed. The materials needed to be grouped by a second round of keywords and then regrouped. This process led to a visible elimination of 55 items.

Action	Selection
DatabaseCleaning 1 "higher education"	556
DatabaseCleaning 2 "institutional evaluation"	90
DatabaseCleaning 3 "self-evaluation"	35
DatabaseCleaning 4 "assessment"	139
Total	820

Table 2: Keywords

Source: Research data (2021)

Your detailed explanation of the final stages of the filtering process provides a clear understanding of how the final portfolio of articles was determined. The rationale behind focusing on the period after 10 years of SINAES implementation offers insight into the strategic approach of the study. To further enrich this section, consider discussing the criteria used for determining the alignment of articles with the research theme based on their titles and objectives. Additionally, sharing some reflections on the challenges encountered during this phase and how they were addressed could provide a more comprehensive view of the research process.

The subsequent filtering stages focused on defining the typology and temporal scope. The typology was narrowed down to journal articles. The temporal scope was set for the period after 10 years of SINAES implementation, from 2014 to the first semester of 2021. This decision was based on the observation that the production on self-assessment in HEIs was directly linked to the establishment of the national system's norms; hence, the focus on the decade following the system's implementation. The process necessitated another round of duplicate removal due to the regrouping from the database cleanings, culminating in a pre-portfolio of 386 articles.

These 386 articles were then transferred to an Excel spreadsheet for research control and categorized by the year of publication. The next step involved reviewing the titles to ensure their relevance to the research theme. Titles that aligned with the research theme led to a review of the articles' objectives in the abstracts, resulting in a final selection of 98 articles. Out of these 98, 26 were experiences from other countries; it was decided to reserve these for future research. This left a final portfolio of 72 articles.

Given that the research ultimately utilized four databases, each with its own metrics for impact factor (Web of Science produces the Journal Citation Reports - JCR, and Scopus produces the Scimago Journal Rank - SJR) or borrows from another (when the journal has a JCR, Scielo incorporates it into its metrics), or lacks a metric altogether, it was necessary to define a metric common to all selected journals using the same principle for impact factor.

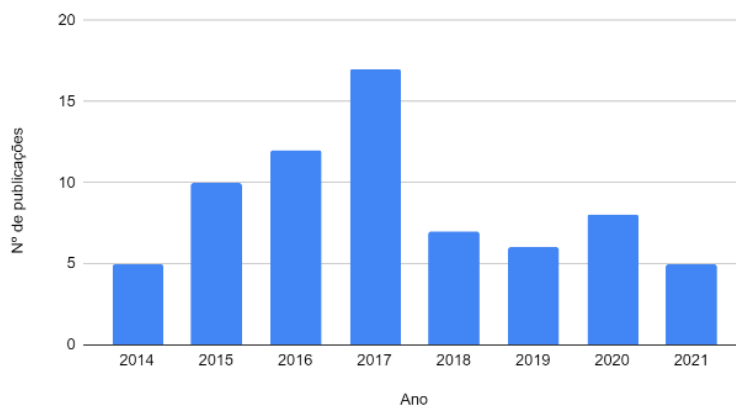
The bibliometric index used by Google Scholar, the h5 median, was chosen. According to the H-index definition, which calculates the balance between the scientific production's productivity and the number of citations and is already provided for journals, this was a constant for all journals and followed the adopted principles. For articles that had JCR and SJR, the comparison with the h5 median did not show discrepancies. The publication dates of the articles and the number of citations, also obtained from Google Scholar, were included in the same spreadsheet. During these procedures, 2 more duplicates were identified, which occurs when articles are indexed differently across various databases. The data collected in the previous step were transposed to the supporting Excel spreadsheet and the InOrdinatio equation was applied to establish the ranking of the articles.

Author and date of the article	Number of Citations	h5 Median	Ranking
Aguiar (2016)	87	28	112,028
Bearman et al. (2016)	65	57	90,057
Barreyro, et al. (2014)	71	39	86,039
Verhine (2015)	47	34	67,034
Pereira, et al. (2018)	28	54	63,054
Fuller, et al. (2015)	36	83	56,083
Falqueto, et al. (2020)	9	92	54,092
Baas, et al. (2016)	26	65	51,065
Petrassi, et al. (2021)	1	28	51,028
Brito, et al. (2021)	0	34	50,034
Fernandes, et al. (2021)	0	34	50,034
Magalhães, et al. (2021)	0	34	50,034
Ribeiro, et al. (2015)	30	34	50,034
Cavalcanti, et al. (2021)	0	12	50,012
Nunes, et al. (2017)	18	34	48,034
Pereira, et al. (2020)	2	37	47,037
Brunstein, et al. (2015)	26	83	46,083
Felix., et al. (2017)	16	34	46,034
Pinto, et al. (2016)	21	34	46,034
Costa, et al. (2020)	0	34	45,034

Table3: Ranking by formula In Ordinatío
Source: Research data (2021)

This stage was carried out simultaneously with step 6. It's worth noting that it's important for the researcher to be logged in through their institution's platform CAFe - Capes, or VPN of their institution, as not all articles have open access. For this analysis, the first 20 articles out of the 70 selected for the portfolio were considered. This sample size was deemed sufficient for the objectives of this paper. However, in the graph of production by temporal distribution, all 70 were considered, without the use of the ranking equation. The definition of the temporal scope was not a random choice; the delimitation after a decade of SINAES was opted for as a key marker. It was considered, and the research confirmed, that this decade was a period of system consolidation and the establishment of public policies in relation to higher education assessment.

Distribuição temporal dos artigos selecionados



Graph 1: Temporal Evolution of Research
Source: Research data (2021)

The literature review aimed to categorize the articles into constructs, combining elements that highlight the possibilities for dialogue with other productions, and then the central discussion was emphasized. In doing this exercise, four articles were considered misaligned with the theme, as can be seen in Table 4.

Article	Constructs	Discussion
Bearman et al. (2016)	Assessment as a methodology for teaching	Improvement of Teaching Practice
Fuller, et al. (2015)	Assessment as a methodology for teaching	Assessment Culture
Baas, et al. (2016)	Methodology, Instruments, and/or theories applied to assessment	Consensus in the debate among assessment researchers
Fernandes, et al. (2021)	Assessment as a methodology for teaching	Influence of Assessment on students

Table 4: Articles Misaligned with Institutional Assessment

Source: Research data (2021).

The next step in the review was to determine whether the research theme was central to the discussion or a component of the debate, which we classified as indirect alignment. The vast majority of articles fall into this category, which makes sense when we consider that the topic of institutional assessment has been part of the debate since the beginning of the system, but self-assessment not directly as an institutional practice.

Article	Constructs	Discussion
Aguiar (2016)	Public Policies in Higher Education tied to Governments	Assessment and Regulation within the same System and hostage to Government policies
Barreyro, et al. (2014)	Public Policies in Higher Education tied to Governments	Assessment and Regulation within the same System and hostage to Government policies
Verhine (2015)	SINAES Reflections	Assessment, Regulation, Government policies
Pereira, et al. (2018)	Course Assessment - ENADE, accreditation and others	ComparativestudyBrazil - Portugal
Falqueto, et al. (2020)	Methodology, Instruments and/or theories applied to assessment	Improvement of Strategic Planning
Magalhães, et al. (2021)	SINAES Reflections	Assessment, Regulation, Government policies
Ribeiro, et al. (2015)	SINAES Reflections	Assessment, Regulation, Government policies
Cavalcanti, et al. (2021)	Course Assessment - ENADE, accreditation and others	Relationship between Assessment x Quality
Nunes, et al. (2017)	Self-Assessment, Institutional Assessment and Internal Assessment Commission	Social Responsibility of Assessment
Pereira, et al. (2020)	SINAES Reflections	Course Assessment - ENADE, accreditation and others
Brunstein, et al. (2015)	Public Policies in Higher Education tied to Governments	Sustainability in Assessment
Felix., et al. (2017)	Course Assessment - ENADE, accreditation and others	ComparativestudyBrazil - Portugal
Pinto, et al. (2016)	Methodology, Instruments and/or theories applied to assessment	Meta-Assessment

Table 5: Articles Indirectly Aligned with Institutional Assessment, Institutional Assessment Appears as an Integral Part of the Debate

Source: Research data (2021).

The three articles we consider to be fully aligned are case studies on self-assessment. In these three examples, the central theme is self-assessment and, consequently, institutional assessment as a practice. Considering the history presented on SINAES, self-assessment is a process for institutions as a practice that is more recent, which justifies the research methodologies and the number of productions.

Article	Constructs	Discussion
Petrassi, et al. (2021)	Self-Assessment, Institutional Assessment and Own Assessment Commission	Methodology, Instruments and/or theories applied to assessment
Brito, et al. (2021)	Self-Assessment, Institutional Assessment and Own Assessment Commission	Methodology, Instruments and/or theories applied to assessment
Costa, et al. (2020)	Methodology, Instruments and/or theories applied to assessment	Tool for self-assessment of courses

Table 6: Self-Assessment, Institutional Assessment is the Central Theme

Source: Research data (2021).

5. Conclude Remarks

The research presented was able to depict, through its methodology, a profile of the scientific production on the theme of institutional assessment and/or self-assessment in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). It demonstrated a prevalence of institutional assessment discussions as part of broader debates, not as the central theme of substantial production. The selection within the temporal scope from 2014 to 2021 indicated a decline in production and sampling, prompting a series of inferences for future investigations. This trend aligns with the theme of this work when considering that educational policy is influenced by various social, economic, and political realities.

The choice of methodology can be both an ally and a limitation; while it guides research, establishes criteria to be adopted, allows replication, etc., it can also confine the research, as the procedures dictate actions. Thus, replication of the research exploring other databases and/or using Proknow-C is recommended. The sample obtained from the research demonstrates the theme's influence within the context of broader discussions in larger fields, such as SINAES itself. It shows the importance of the topic, as it enters into many discussions of higher education. It represents a research gap, a niche to be explored, or a limitation in the results of this work, induced by the entry in the search for keywords or in the selection of articles. It is crucial to note that situating the research in the discussion is a step that enriches the possibilities for dialogue. Self-assessment represents a research hiatus, particularly from a strategic perspective and not merely methodological or as a tool for institutional assessment. Given the significance of the topic, the unfolding and expansion of this review are warranted in future scholarly works.

The decline in research output could potentially signal a need for a reevaluation of the direction and focus of academic inquiries in this area. The results suggest that institutional assessment often emerges in relation to larger systemic and policy concerns, rather than as an isolated focus. This trend points to the possibility that discussions of assessment are being overshadowed by more dominant issues within educational policy discourse or that the field is reaching a maturity that requires new innovative approaches to reignite scholarly interest.

Moreover, the methodological orientation of this review opens avenues for a broader, more inclusive approach to the study of assessment in higher education, proposing that future research could benefit from a more interdisciplinary approach or from the inclusion of alternative research frameworks. The relative dearth of studies centering on self-assessment practices, particularly those with a strategic dimension, underscores a critical area for future research. This gap suggests a need for a more profound understanding of self-assessment's role in institutional improvement and the ways it can contribute to the strategic objectives of HEIs. Consequently, the present work points toward the value of developing a nuanced understanding of self-assessment that transcends its functionalist applications, viewing it instead as integral to the strategic management and transformation of higher education institutions.

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