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REFLECTIVE THINKING: BRAZILIAN UNIVERSITY SCOPE IN PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

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Abstract

This article aims to analyze the scope of the Brazilian university as a builder of new knowledge, when using reflective thinking as a means for the social-ethical issue inclusion in professionals' formation. The exploratory bibliographic research seeks to analyze three challenging aspects for the Brazilian university: 1. turn it into an effective place of creation and criticism; 2. promote the construction of knowledge applied to the local reality; 3. counterbalance the mercantilization of academic teaching. The results demonstrate that enabling the training of professionals with high social and ethical values is of great importance for the development of higher education in Brazil, however, for this to be truly applied, a restructuring in the way of teaching and learning is necessary. It should be based on the reflective thinking applied in technological, legal and educational research. The conclusions express that universalizing knowledge is directly interconnected with the research and teaching relationship. Research cannot be far from the act of educating reflexively. By moving away from research, the university discards the opportunity to position itself as the center of human development and as an instrument for the reconstruction of innovative knowledge, ethics and reflection.

Keywords: ducation in Brazil; higher education; reflective thinking; professional training; mercantilization of academic teaching.

1. INTRODUCTION

In Brazil, being a thoughtful, creative, and collaborative individual is not always viewed favorably. In some situations, it can instigate doubts, responses, outrages, or concerns. For some teachers, researchers, politicians, businessmen, among others, it can be considered inappropriate, especially when they involve Brazilian social and ethical issues.

In traditional Brazilian Educational Institutions, a hierarchical way of making decisions often prevails, divided into various instances of power, which centralize actions, and paralyze the initiative of good pedagogical practices. Thus, we begin to understand that the Brazilian academic environment, which should be the place of discussion, debate, and dialogue, is also the place of power disputes, prey in its research spaces with little collaborative and transdisciplinary vision.

In recent years, other factors even influenced the practice of Brazilian higher education. These include countless laws promulgated by the Brazilian Ministry of Education, the peculiarities of public or private Higher Education Institutions, the current professional market that is increasingly globalized and competitive, in addition to the influence of international parameters that impact research on the teachers and, for their part, in teaching, which are often disconnected from reality [1]. These factors, directly or indirectly, influence and guide the reorganization of teaching in the country, seeking the continuous structuring of curricular matrices, program content and new teaching and learning methodologies.

All these questions are fundamental to understand Brazilian higher education [2]-[5]. To contribute to the debate, this article aims to present and discuss the social and ethical training of Brazilian professionals [6], based on reflective thinking in higher education [7], [8]. Also highlighting the importance of asking oneself about what professional we want for the future and instigating new research on higher education in Brazil. In this context, some relevant questions stand out to discuss: What do we expect from higher education in Brazil? What is the importance of training professionals with social and ethical commitment? How to teach with the current advances in communication and informational technologies? Why shouldn't research be separated from teaching? What is the need to train thoughtful, creative, and collaborative professionals?

It should be noted that this article does not pretend to cover the entire breadth of the debate or to cover all the specificities about the teaching / learning of Brazilian higher education. Rather, to present an overview of the reflections led by some authors on the importance of training, in Brazil, of research, reflective, creative, and collaborative professionals with a social and ethical vision. To meet this challenge, the article presents and discusses the fundamental aspects of higher education in Brazil, emphasizing three external factors: a) The university as a locus for reflection and creation; b) The university as a builder of knowledge; c) The commercialization of education, which influences the new way of teaching and learning in Brazilian universities, seeking reflection and collaboration in a society that experiences the constant advances of society.

1 METHOD

For the discussion on teaching at the Brazilian University and the construction of new knowledge, seeking teaching and research for the formation of a social and ethical professional, this exploratory bibliographic research was divided into two stages: (a) bibliographic review and concepts; (b) analysis and interpretation.

In the (a) stage of review of literature and concepts, the understanding and interpretation of concepts addressed by authors such as Anísio Teixeira in Education in Brazil [5]; Cipriano Luckesi in Going to university: a methodological proposal [9]; Darcy Ribeiro in The necessary university [4]; Florestan Fernandes in Sociology in an Era of Social Revolution [10]; Milena Serafim in The process of commercialization of higher education institutions: a panorama of the debate in the US, in Europe and in Latin America [11]; Pierre Bourdieu in Homo Academicus [12]; Roland Corbisier in Formation and problem of Brazilian culture [2]; Valdemar Sguissardi at the State Public University: between or public and or private / mercantile [13]. Documents and interviews from the Latin American Episcopal Conference were analyzed [14].

In stage (b) analysis and interpretation, the information collected in the bibliographic review was analyzed and understood in a deeper way, which allows its correlation, presented in the next section.

2 RESULTS

The challenges for the consolidation of the Brazilian university as a builder of new knowledge, through the extensive use of reflective thinking as a means for the inclusion of the socio-ethical issue in the training of professionals are great. As [15] points out, reflective thinking skills are decisive in a complex world that represents constant challenges.

It is extremely important for the development of higher education in Brazil to understand current educational theories, especially new instructional strategies, seeking to consolidate the performance of professionals, in their various areas, in Brazilian society. A transdisciplinary vision [16], [17], with an emphasis on improving the quality of life of human beings, rethinking its action on society as a whole [18], and mainly on social and ethical issues are equally relevant.

However, the research showed that it is not enough just to understand contemporary educational strategies on teaching-learning. Other factors, especially external, significantly influence this process.

In the sequence, three aspects identified in this research are discussed, which constitute the great challenges of the Brazilian University today: (a) transform the university into an effective place of creation, conception, criticism and reflection of reality; (b) promote in Higher Education Institutions the construction of knowledge applied to the context and the reality in which they are inserted; and (c) balancing the commodification and commodification of academic education, so that they do not harm student education.

a) University as a locus for reflection and creation

In traditional Teaching Institutions, a very hierarchical way of making decisions often prevails, divided into various instances of power, which centralize actions, and paralyze the initiative of good pedagogical practices. In this type of relationship, obedient, passive professionals who carry out their activities without questioning the current habit are prioritized. This type of thinking can be good and valid for many professionals who prefer not to commit to the development of a country and a better and more just society, however, for many professionals and future

professionals, this is not the ideal of life. This can be confirmed by the demonstrations that have taken place in Brazil in recent years, which shows that the Brazilian people are reflective, questioning and answering.

This analysis ignites a heated discussion, which began in 1984, with the launch of the book *Homo Academicus* by Pierre Bourdieu [12]. In this work, the author analyzes, based on considerations about the French university field, the university system from the point of view of symbolic power and its symbolic violence. It is a critique of the academic field, nevertheless based on explanatory approaches that offer limits to criticism for the sake of criticism and imposes the force of a critique supported by methodology and a sociological vision that knows the limits of the «intrinsic force of the true idea».

In the second chapter entitled "The conflict of faculties", [12] he argues that the position occupied in a field is linked to cultural capital. The conflict of Higher Education Institutions (IES) is established by the "monopoly of thought and legitimate discourse on the social world", based on the same "science of order and power", in which teachers seek the rationalization of established order and, on the other hand, they do not pretend to order public things, but rather "think them as such, think what the social order is".

The author raises the enormous obstacles that some must face to transform the dominant order, as well as the difficulties to survive in a struggle that is "all against all", and in which agents are interdependent and, at the same time, competitors and clients, adversaries, and judges to determine its truth and value.

The big question in this book is to understand that the academic world, the place of discussion, debate, and dialogue, is also the place of power disputes, imprisoned in its micro-spaces of research and action. [12] shakes up the structures of the scientific field and removes teachers and researchers from their comfort zone, forcing them to rethink their beliefs and academic goals.

It is not intended to judge the choices, even because different opinions must be respected, and it is known that it is through these differences that humanity develops. In other words, a society without differences is a society without information.

Enabling the training of reflective, creative, and collaborative professionals is of the utmost importance for them to commit to social and ethical development in Brazil. However, for this to really apply, it is necessary to restructure the way of teaching and learning [19] - [22]. This new way of teaching and learning, seeking reflection and collaboration in a society that experiences constant advances in communication and informational technologies [23], must be understood as a need for change in the short and medium term.

These changes must be seen in a positive way, by students and teachers, in the way of learning / teaching and, above all, by institutional managers in the way of managing and directing this new way of teaching / learning in the Institutional Development Plan, of the Institutional Pedagogical Project and the Course Pedagogical Project, thus involving the various institutional instances aimed at the training of reflective, creative, and collaborative professionals.

The change cannot come only from one side, but from the alignment of all the actors that belong to the Higher Education Institution (IES), to resume the true objective of the University, which is to universalize knowledge.

b) Construction of knowledge applied to reality

Before an educational system and the university in particular, our reflection is proposed in search of understanding the current reality of our university. In this sense, it seeks to build a university that is a builder of new knowledge, and not a mere reproducer of imported information to "professionalize" new cadres. In this way, the university assumes a role as the protagonist of rethinking society, it becomes a privileged place where reflection and criticism about reality are cultivated, thus generating valid knowledge, supported by scientific bases [9].

In this sense, if we analyze, in Brazil, Law 5.540-68 of the university reform with reference to higher education, it is verified in the first article that "higher education has as its objective research, development of science, letters and arts and the training of university-level professionals". In the article according to, the Law also highlights that "higher education inseparable from research will be taught in universities and, exceptionally, in isolated establishments, organized as institutions of public or private law".

In fact, as pointed out [9], in Brazil, more than in the Latin American countries colonized by the Spanish, the process of cultural transplantation, always related to the interests of the colonizer, conditioned the existing functions of the university. During a good period, techniques and cultural resources were imported without a more acute reflection. In these terms, [5] said that: in the Brazilian university, in addition to preparing professionals for liberal and technical careers that require a higher-level training, there has been a very fluid concern with the student's initiation into life intellectual. Hence, it can be affirmed that, while safeguarding the professional empowerment aspect, the Brazilian university failed to truly establish itself as a research institution and transmitter of a common national culture, nor did it manage to become a center of critical consciousness and creative thinking.

Regarding the position of intellectuals in a changing society, [10] he wrote that "the controversy between those who defend the 'participant intellectual' and those who postulate the 'neutrality' of intelligence is based, sociologically considered, on a false dilemma. There is no "neutral" intelligence, nor could it exempt any cultural production of man from some state of "participation".

Higher Education Institutions and, especially their teachers, cannot exempt themselves from the co-responsibility of building the knowledge necessary for social progress, just as they cannot be mere spectators of currents of thought from other cultures, which are often totally disconnected. of our sociocultural context.

Along this same line of thought, the alert issued by the ISEB [2] can also be highlighted when it said that: mentally colonized, the Brazilian intellectual as he used, without transforming them, the finished products of foreign industry, so he also thought, without transform them, with the ready ideas that came to him from outside. Lost in the "others," his culture was reduced to erudition, that is, to the bookish knowledge of other people's cultures.

The validity of this affirmation is noted up to the present time, in the contents of disciplines that in nothing changed this situation. Without proper reflection, without being able to interpret their own history and their real needs, teachers naively adopt knowledge that does not apply to our reality, nor to the different realities present in a continental country such as Brazil.

Another thinker of Brazilian education, [4], also found that the university has limited itself to being an organ of repetition and dissemination of knowledge elaborated in other realities, and that it has contributed little to national integration, because of an analysis critical of our reality.

The university that does not take on this task of reflecting critically and continuously on the historical moment in which it lives, on the project of its community, is not realizing its essence, its characteristic that specifies it as such a critique. This means that the university is par excellence, concrete reason, institutionalized intelligence, hence, by nature, critical, because reason is eminently critical [9].

In line with the theorists, it highlights that the functions of the University that exists in Brazil, even after said political independence, continue to be one of absorption, application and diffusion of human knowledge, the result of the intellectual activity of the large technical centers, scientists from developed nations. Our university schools, at best, keep their clientele informed of the results of research developed on problems of other realities, and not of those emerging from the needs and challenges of our nation and our people [9].

c) Commodification of education

Some attempts to discuss a real university in Brazil are valid until today. This attempt can be seen in the Latin American Episcopal Conference [14] which stressed that we have a uniform education at a time when the Latin American community has awakened to the richness of its human pluralism; passive, when the hour has already struck for our peoples to discover their own being, full of originality; It is oriented in the sense of sustaining an economy based on the desire to "have more," when Latin American youth demands "to be more," in the possession of their self-realization through service and love. Secondary and higher-level training often sacrifices human depth in the name of pragmatism and immediacy to adjust to the demands of the labor market. This type of education is responsible for placing man at the service of the economy and not of it at the service of man.

Analyzing and understanding these attempts to discuss the true university in Brazil, which have occurred a long time ago, is essential to question what is desired from the future of our education

and, above all, to understand the relationship between financial benefit and education in contemporary times.

Recently Pope Francis, on a visit to Brazil, questioned in an interview about the relationship between financial benefit and education. He [24] declared that the Church, 'advocate for justice and defender of the poor in the face of intolerable social and economic inequalities, who cry out to heaven' (Aparecida Document, 395), wishes to offer its collaboration in all initiatives that mean an authentic development of the whole man and of the whole man. Dear friends, it is certainly necessary to give bread to those who are hungry; It is an act of justice. But there is also a deeper hunger, the hunger for a happiness that only God can satisfy. There is no true promotion of the common good, nor a true development of man, when the fundamental pillars that sustain a nation, its intangible assets, are ignored: life, which is a gift from God, a value that must always be protected and promoted. ; the family, the foundation of coexistence and a remedy against social disaggregation; comprehensive education, which is not reduced to a simple transmission of information in order to generate financial benefit; health, which must seek the integral well-being of the person, including the spiritual dimension, which is essential for human balance and a healthy coexistence; security, in the conviction that violence can only be overcome by changing the human heart.

When Pope Francis says that integral education is not reduced to a simple transmission of information to generate financial benefit, all of us must stop and think: What is the education we want? What do some Higher Education Institutions think of the future of education in the country, which primarily seek the return of financial benefit? Do we just want passive professionals who work to generate more financial benefit for corporations? Is education a product? Do we want to build knowledge or live under the shadow of the most developed countries? How to stimulate alliances and research in our country?

It is important to highlight that currently one of the most economically profitable sectors in Brazil is the education sector. Studies on commodification, commodification, and academic capitalism demonstrate how knowledge and training are directed at the utility of the market, the "great" interlocutor of the university, with the imperative of the knowledge economy. For [13] a simple panoramic look at the quantitative expansion of private institutions, notably for profit, and the enrollment in these institutions, as well as the slow but steady reduction of state investments in public universities, with respect to GDP, from a random sample of rich and poor countries, will provide strong evidence that the university and, by extension, higher education are undergoing profound changes, that this dilemma - public or private / commercial - occupies a central place.

The current reflections on higher education as a public good or as a private good, and consequently, the discussions that imply the state / public versus private / commercial opposition are found in the light of a Brazil tormented by corruption and in political restructuring.

At the moment, the backdrop for mass literacy campaigns, for the construction of technological or polytechnic schools, for the incentive for everyone to have access to the maximum knowledge and qualification is the idea that knowledge, science and education are not reduced to, nor can they be essentially, any merchandise or commodity (rivalry and excludability), but they are fundamentally a public, collective good, the result of human solidarity or exploited labor in capitalist relations of production, a good that does not wear out, does not deteriorate, but, on the contrary, grows and multiplies through individual and collective use and becomes an essential part of the human rights of citizenship [13].

In this sense, it is necessary to reaffirm that higher education should not be defined as an enterprise of training knowledge guided by the laws of the market. It is necessary to reflect on the future of higher education in Brazil, mainly on the quality of teaching / learning applied by some institutions that are entitled "higher education".

Among the various discussions on Higher Education Institutions in Brazil, are also analyzed some of the main transformations that the Brazilian university has undergone over the last decades, with emphasis on the set of three processes that are connected by the Neoliberal rationality: the emergence of academic capitalism, the genesis of innovationism and the intensification of productivism in research [25].

In an environment in which reflection, critical thinking, beauty, and play are necessary –even for the university's civilizing mission to be viable– the productivist imperative, ideally, would not find fertile ground to prosper. This, however, is not the reality: the image of the university that we have

today is no longer so distant from that of a hypothetical graphic in which printed materials are produced and whose production, in terms of volume, is even more important than the very content that it conveys, or the social effect of the ideas that it disseminates [25].

In a large part of the Brazilian private universities, a business vision is increasingly focused on production, for the student as a client and above all with a focus on financial return, leaving the quality of teaching / learning only as a possible differential for market competition. This focus on production can be seen, for example, in the demand to produce articles by teachers / researchers of these institutions, prioritizing the quantity and not the quality of said articles.

The debates regarding the change that occurred in Latin American higher education systems address, above all, the incidence, and effects of two processes unleashed in that region. The first refers to the commercializing and utilitarian tendency of the public university, as a result - it could be said - of that which took place in the central countries. The second is related to the commoditization process of private education, in terms of the expansion of private universities. Consequently, these are the topics most discussed in the literature dedicated to higher education in the region [25].

Taking for granted that the commodification process is rooted in the foundations of world higher education and especially that of Brazil, the question that makes us reflect is how to offer quality private education if the financial benefit is considered much more important than the education?

While other sectors of society do not manifest themselves, the confrontation will depend largely on the academy itself. Bearing in mind that the university is not a monolithic block, the hope is that groups of researchers can grow, together with the awareness of social movements, and resist this process of commercialization that has been engendered in the foundations of world higher education [11].

It can be verified that the teacher / researcher, based on the training of their students, plays a fundamental role in restructuring a new way of understanding the current commercialization of higher education in Brazil. It is essential that these teachers stimulate their students in reflective, creative, and collaborative technical exercises, seeking the inclusion of the socio-ethical issue in the training of professionals.

3 CONCLUSIONS

It should be noted that we want to produce knowledge based on a lived reality, and not only on stereotyped and predefined criteria by different cultural situations and alien to those we currently have. In this context, the validity of any knowledge will be measured in the proportion in which it can, or not, make the concrete reality better and more deeply understood. For this to happen, it is obviously necessary that the teacher is always well informed of reality, and of his area of specialization, through study and research, so that he can provide his students with concrete topics for reflection, problems and sources of studies, creative and original proposals, derived from the incessant critical observation of reality. Causing the development, potential for critical reflection of the students, the teacher becomes a motivator of knowledge. In this way, it is no longer a university in which one knows, and many do not, but one in which many know something and want to know more. In short, we want a university in Brazil in which, in addition to consuming knowledge, teachers and students choose to create and produce it. The relationship between educator and learner is always in the process of mutation. One must continually think about this relationship and, above all, about the way in which instruction can contribute to the development of teaching and learning.

In this sense, enabling the inclusion of the socio-ethical issue in the training of professionals is of great importance for the development of higher education in Brazil, however, for this to be really applied, a restructuring in the way of teaching is necessary. and to learn. This new way of teaching and learning, seeking reflection, creation and collaboration within a society that experiences constant advances in communication and informational technologies, must be understood as a need for change in the short and medium term. The change cannot come only from one side, but from the alignment of all the actors belonging to the Institution of Higher Education, with the aim of resuming the true objective of the University, which is to universalize knowledge.

Universalizing knowledge is directly interconnected with the relationship between research and teaching. Research cannot be separated from the act of reflective education. By moving away

from research, the Brazilian university discards the opportunity to position itself as the center of human development and remain as an instrument for the reconstruction of innovative knowledge, ethics, and reflection.

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