

Social crisis of higher education institutions and health training for the market

Crise social das instituições de ensino superior e a formação em saúde para o mercado

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ABSTRACT This article discusses academic productivism to the detriment of the socially engaged performance of university professors and their reflexes in the training of subjects. Timely theme at a time of serious political and institutional crisis that threatens social security and the right to health in Brazil. This situation invites the social actors of education to reflect on the role of the University for Citizenship and the social sense of what it produces.

KEYWORDS Capitalism. Universities. Health human resource training.

RESUMO *Este artigo discute o produtivismo acadêmico em detrimento da atuação socialmente engajada de docentes universitários e seus reflexos na formação dos sujeitos. Tema oportuno em momento de grave crise política e institucional que ameaça a segurança social e o direito à saúde no Brasil. Situação que convoca os atores sociais da educação e da saúde à reflexão sobre o papel da universidade para a cidadania e sobre o sentido social do que ela produz.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE *Capitalismo. Universidades. Formação profissional em saúde.*

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Preamble on an instigating scenery

An institutional crisis without dimensions in the recent history of democracy in Brazil, as of the parliamentary coup of 2016, tends to compromise the right to health and the quality of life of the population. In this scenario, social justice suffers against the brazilian juridical tradition, with regard to secondarily popular interest (ASSIS ET AL., 2016). The actors who operate the logic of the minimal State are organized in all strata of society and find refuge for their ideological (neoliberal) options also in the university. It is an acute signal to emphasize that the less favored classes, that access the university, need an emancipatory formation, to the detriment of the traditional model that characterizes teaching, research and extension under the logic of the market. The expansion of higher education in Brazil, between 2003 and 2013, makes this debate unavoidable.

According to the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC), the offer of undergraduate courses increased from 16.505 options to 32.049 in this period, representing a growth of 94%, in both the public and private sectors, notably, in the Northeast region (BRASIL, 2015).

The model of teaching and scientific production, under the aegis of the market, helps maintain, with regard to health as a social achievement, a skeleton without meat, a structure divergent from the proposed emancipatory model. Never education and health have required so much intertwining so that the right to citizenship will succeed in Brazil (RIBEIRO, 2007; SANTOS; SILVA, 2013).

At this point, the MEC proposes to reflect on the humanizing role of the Federal Institutions of Higher Education (Ifes), to the detriment of what the market undertakes.

The new institutional design adopted by the Ifes must be sufficiently sustainable, anchored in humanistic foundations, that do not bend to commercial interests alone, to face

the tension of this period. (BRASIL, 2015, P. 49, FREE TRANSLATION).

How should the university 'act' against the loss of fundamental rights of society (social, labour and social security)? Obtaining answers implies understanding the contemporary morphology of work, whose matrix is situated in the economic model, marked by rhythm and meaning, inside and outside the academic universe.

Morphology of work: from Lafargue to the productivist academy of the third millennium

In the text of Paul Lafargue, written in prison, in 1883, one can observe the marks of the current intellectual production in keeping with the nuances of dogmatic thinking about work. Today, production for production, alienating in terms of global sustainability and geopolitics, would retain some trace of what was observed in the XIX century in France?

In our society [french], which classes love work for work? The peasant owners, petty-bourgeois [...] move like the mole in their underground gallery and never straighten to look with pleasure on nature. (LAFARGUE, 2003, P. 22-23, FREE TRANSLATION).

The actors do not perceive the 'nature' in its interlines, nor the social phenomena that can circumscribe it. This is a productivist attitude; technical, functional, devoid of a social reason. It always occurs that the intellectual worker 'loves work for work', despite the dehumanizing ideological content embedded in the production of knowledge under such perspective.

Paul Lafargue, in his time, in a critical posture, led through the galleries of France a

turtle by the collar. He let himself be carried by the cadence of the animal, having the view of the surroundings. According to this author, it was good to take such animals to walk as a protest against the current organization and work process (LAFARGUE, 2003). What has changed in the way of producing? Time-movement control (taylorism) was added to polyvalence (toyotism) and the structural unemployment was increased.

Currently, the new morphology of work in the public sector, manual or intellectual, is characterized by the flexibility of rights, availability and constant adaptability, a situation reinforced by the rarity of public tenders. Academic productivist pragmatism converts the teaching/learning and research/publication processes into a formal matrix of self-reproduction, without proper sociopolitical and meaningless contextualization (ZIZEK, 2015). There is a tragedy in health training, as Jaime Breilh (2015, p. 537) warns:

They are universities that ask: what production, how to support production, how to solve the issues of institutional power. It is a contract science, *à la carte*. It is an institutional demand science of power. In the field of public health this is a tragedy.

Although they denounce ‘injustice’, most health professors have not been carved for transformative political action. They set themselves in the condition of workers of education, to ‘model’ the new health workers, minimally ready to respond to the demands of the market. They reproduce the political given, in an ‘aulic’ posture, in the conception of professor Darcy Ribeiro (2007).

The academy has a role in the development of society. It cannot refrain from social conflicts, without prejudice to its own survival. As Zizek (2012, p. 16) points out, “radical change is never triggered by the poor, in order to create an explosive disorder”. Therefore, who speaks for this ‘poor’ if the public university, also maintained by this

‘poor’, does not do its part? Will clientelistic politicians or the partisan judiciary (ASSIS ET AL., 2016), who submit social desires to private interests, fulfill this role?

Not in vain, the structural trait of this objective reality is discussed:

The general trend of global capitalism is toward a greater expansion of market dominance in combination with the progressive closure of public space, reduction of public services (health, education, and culture) and increased authoritarianism. (ZIZEK, 2015, P. 128, FREE TRANSLATION).

The academy needs to review the concept of ‘urgent work’, urgently. Lafargue’s turtle invites for a worldview where ‘laziness’ takes on another meaning: the necessary time for the maturation of ideas. An animal that overcame environmental catastrophe for 340 million years would be just a lazy or awkward species simply because it walks slowly? Would an anti-hegemonic teacher/researcher, then, be? It is imperative to know how to produce with quality, without leisure, in the condition of the human, in a society where to grind people is the predominance. Such perception is a premise for the achievement of the minimum autonomy advocated by Freire (2008) and that qualifies the training in any area of knowledge. In the current scenario, the teacher/researcher hardly perceives himself/herself as a marketplace, and, conditioned, denies his/her own humanity:

I like being people because, unfinished, I know that I am a conditioned being, but, conscious of the incompleteness, I know that I can go beyond it [...] I like being people because, as such, I finally realize that the building of my presence in the world, which is not done in isolation, free from the influence of social forces, which is not understood outside the tension between what I inherit genetically and what I inherit socially, culturally and historically, has much to do with myself. (FREIRE, 2008, P. 53, FREE TRANSLATION).

The logic of capital evokes ‘apt’ subjects, with well-punctuated curricula, however, without any integrative historical notion, with no commitment to public affairs or class struggles, despite some living the life they asked of God because of these struggles who despise and even fight. What is at stake is the way in which the academy (mis)treats inequalities and democracy in the Country. So, in the context of the training of health actors, which citizenship is intended to be structured? The one that ignores the social determinants of the health-disease process?

What freedom does the teacher have that does not mention the social misery that gets sick and kills?

Now, a sick man is not free who does not have the means to treat himself, the man put on the street because he cannot pay his bank loan. There is, thus, a paradox that individual freedom, on whose behalf any intervention by the State is rejected, is impeded by the unrestricted freedom granted to the market and to business. (TODOROV, 2012, P. 106, FREE TRANSLATION).

In contrast, pulsating university energy wears out in bureaucratic and curricular conflicts. There is little discussion about the role of the State or the market in the definition of the university teaching model, which generates competition and causes mental suffering. It is known that mental disorders are present in the context of the universities of the world and of Brazil (BERNARDO, 2014; DUTRA, 2012; LIMA, 2013).

Values, methods, techniques and behaviors are reproduced, in a professorial approach endowed with ‘self-sufficient’ knowledge, in the scope of the ego, but impotent as to social utility, perceived in an emancipatory dimension of others (SANTOS; SILVA, 2013).

It is an academic space of uncritical formation of the workforce for the market, converted into a devastating territory of mute bodies, deaf minds and blind souls, produced

in the course of the Brazilian teaching-learning. There is, therefore, no sense in speaking of ‘school without a party’, as a teaching model to be constructed, but only legitimized, because it has already materialized as a mechanism of domination.

The didactic counter-hegemonic response/action of the students

It is known that teachers-researchers are complaining about academic productivism (LEMONS, 2007). Apart from them, in the face of the capitalist offensive against public universities, students appear, also, as counter-hegemonic social actors. It is also the students who carry on the streets of the world the struggle for the emancipation of societies subjugated by the rules of the market. They starred in Occupy Wall Street and the ‘Arab Spring’ (ZIZEK, 2012).

In Brazil, there is a similar picture of the resistance of the student movement to the minimal State and its repercussions on the quality of education modeled by the market logic. In 2013, manifestations in Brazil demonstrated the desire of the students to break with the prevailing political-economic structure and the search for the guarantee of relegated social rights. This position of resistance is not new. Almeida (2009) points out that, historically, the student movement centralizes its demands for improvements in public services, among which, transportation, education, health and safety, the main sectors affected by flexibilization and precariousness introduced by neoliberal policies.

In Bahia, there were student manifestations with similar objectives and that gained visibility through social networks. The movement of the ‘black shirts’, in Vitória da Conquista, in September 2016, was emblematic (*figure 1*). University students from the Multidisciplinary Health Institute of the

Federal University of Bahia (UFBA) dressed in black and took the 'mourning' for the mental discomfort caused by the academic model of training.

It was the collective questioning about the type of 'success' obtained in the academic life, modeled according to the market demand. The same market which, paradoxically, does not open space for young people, in defending the 'downsizing' and polyvalence in the production of goods and services (ANTUNES, 2007; ZIZEK, 2012).

This scenario reflects a hegemonic attitude in education (results-based business model), when the university should elect in the educational process the formation of subjects capable of acting proactively in overcoming social health needs, which goes beyond a focused professional in the technical and biomedical model. This model does not correspond to the eternal urgency of a Brazilian Sanitary Reform, whose premise is political participation and the quality of life of the population (PAIM, 2008).

Figure 1. Photograph. Students of the Health courses protest against the teaching model in Federal University of the interior of Bahia



Source: Collection of the researcher.

Note: Public image provided by students of the movement.

Students more aware of their emancipatory role react. They want to be proactive; they know that the unemployment that awaits them is not a detail. It is an essential strategy in the spread of inequality in the world of work. It could not be different:

A whole generation of students have almost no chance of finding employment in their area,

which leads to a mass protest; and the worst way to address this gap is to subordinate education directly to market demands – if not for another reason, this is because market dynamics make university education 'obsolete'. These non-employable students are predestined to play a fundamental organizing role in future emancipatory movements. (ZIZEK, 2012, P. 15-16, FREE TRANSLATION).

Unemployment is a strategy of capital to maintain its reserve contingent and, more than that, to impose on employees the fear of not working, flexibilization of labor rights and the polyvalence of ill-health (ANTUNES, 2007; BREILH, 2003). It is for this market that the university forms its students. It is this ethic that influences researchers, whose 'scale' production often does not reflect the diversity and needs of Brazil.

In health training, reading to memorize has been an effective means of reaching notes, not always learning. Thus, to believe that one is 'going well' with the pedagogy of submission to the conventional is self-deception. Attitude that compromises the formation of critical health actors and, consequently, the achievements in the fields of health and education, with imminent risk of collective unhappiness.

Blissfully, self-deception has boundaries. "Obviously, there are limits to what we are capable of making us believe. As the poet says, 'it is difficult to have visions eating shit'" (GIANNETTI, 2008, P. 113, FREE TRANSLATION). If, for health, there is the *economía de la muerte*, characterized by various inequities (BREIL, 2015); and if, for contemporary society, one has the economy of social inequality (PIKETTY, 2015), academic apathy, in the face of the democratic crisis and the loss of rights to health and life, would correspond to the reproduction of an education for injustice, an education for death, not always for self-deception, and often for an ideological choice.

The university should be the space of the manifest disquiet of students, teachers and technicians and of whom more compose the university life. Thus, one cannot do without an engaged education and a research socially committed to the emancipation of the subjects. Paulo Freire (2008) warns that there is no problem in restlessness, bustle, claim or vitality. For him, science must understand this well, and the teacher/researcher must have the good sense to admit that he/she will not always be right in the face of his/her certainties. He says:

I have pity and, sometimes, fear, of the

scientist who is too sure of security, master of truth and who does not even suspect the historicity of his/her own knowledge. (FREIRE, 2008, P. 63, FREE TRANSLATION).

For Freire (2008), all knowledge is historically and socially determined. It is understood, then, that there are not only good intentions on the part of the one who teaches. There is an ideology in full swing in the process of teaching, that frees or oppresses. That promotes change or perpetuates inequalities. The university, for that reason, is a space of social disputes.

It is worth asking: what is being done in universities, through education, to ensure health in the streets and in deliberative or strategic spaces as a universal right in Brazil? Is it enough to 'teach' and 'produce knowledge' in enclosed spaces so that the university fulfills its role as an institution that fosters the development of a society? Inquiries like these cannot ignore the social needs for answers, simply because the policy action is outside the lesson plan or the individual research project. Moreover, it is impossible to deny the educational nature of political doing, as well as the political character that permeates the act of educating. Relevant assertive, when the anti-SUS forces try to impose a depoliticized school pattern and a brainless, productivist, vulnerable university to the offensive of the private sector and, consequently, unhealthy (LIMA, 2013).

Depoliticization, pleasure and death in the productivist model

Observing what is happening in the world helps to understand Brazil, where social and labor losses are evident after the impeachment of 2016. Todorov (2012) analyzes the global offensive of capitalism, now about recent democracies, which should not be underestimated by academic world:

These are just a few of the examples that evidence the frightening corrosion of democracy in the contemporary world. Citizenship is increasingly threatened by the pernicious combination between cynicism of traditional politicians and, international financial treaties, indifferent to the true yearnings of society, and the rise of populist movements on the right and left. (TODOROV, 2012, P. 18, FREE TRANSLATION).

Todorov (2012) and Zizek (2012) emphasize the symbolic nature of capital, which is transmuted into a religious creed before which acceptance (by common sense) takes place without any questioning, while democracies are demerited:

Global capitalism undermines democracy. This question is fundamental to understand the cynical functioning of ideology: unlike the period in which ideological-religious sentimentality concealed the violent economic reality, today the violent ideological cynicism is that it covers the religious core of capitalist beliefs. (ZIZEK, 2012, P. 138, FREE TRANSLATION).

Not reflecting on the ideological content of what is done in the condition of educators/researchers is a position, at least, conniving with the social injustice that the dismantling of the Unified Health System (SUS) evidences. A capitalist offensive against the SUS, without a counter-offensive from academia, foreshadows the bankruptcy of emancipatory thinking and an unprecedented social catastrophe.

The neglect of the social determinants of health, in research or in class, forms a mixture of indifference or aversion to the set of knowledges that seek to explain, apart from the preferred theoretical models, inequalities that need to be overcome, if we are to speak of an academy committed to the best morbimortality profiles.

The recovery of the collective struggle for sanitary reform involves, inevitably, the

reformulation of the theoretical-practical model of teaching and the transforming nature of scientific research, as well as the management of work that enables the autonomy of those who build and rebuild health on a daily basis. A utopian struggle implies a rupture with the proposal of universities that provide 'skilled' workforce to meet the logic of factory productivity, when society needs critical and autonomous health workers, involved with reality and more active from the point of view of propositions and the integration of multiple fields of knowledge, without which no health promotion is promoted. (SANTOS; SILVA, 2013, P. 217, FREE TRANSLATION).

As part of the aforementioned political crisis, the dismantling of the SUS expects from the university world a commitment beyond factory-academic productivism. A reassessment of the prevailing political/pedagogical stance for health training is urgently needed. The anthropologist and professor, Darcy Ribeiro (2007, p. 89), reaffirms the ideological nature of teaching: "The futility of university research is almost total from the point of view of the choice of political choices". On the state of alienation that can affect the teacher-researcher, the author says that

the intellectual living away from it all, isolated in the academic circle, understands nothing, stays in his/her self-sufficient fatuity, believing that he/she is the source of all knowledge. (RIBEIRO, 2007, P. 89, FREE TRANSLATION).

In this context, the analyses of Lemos (2007) point to a crisis of identity of the workers that results in an uncritical attitude towards the new forms of work organization. It is when "man becomes object of his own work [...] becomes inferior and slave to the object" (LEMOS, 2007, P. 31). In this web, both the political and scientific functions of the university are adrift. The author explains:

The University today cannot fully fulfill its

political purpose, of exercising critical creative thinking, nor can it be an institution fully geared to the practical skills required by the market. It is apparently in a 'no man's land', but highly coveted by the dominant economic power, since it represents increasingly a high-profit business [...]. (LEMOS, 2007, P. 75, FREE TRANSLATION).

In this direction, Chauí (2001, p. 56) states that

the University is structured according to the organizational model of the big company, that is, it has the income as an end, the bureaucracy as a means and the laws of the market as a condition.

She explains that university fragmentation occurs on several levels, with taylorism as a rule.

It is drawn up, with the support of the State, a neo-liberal university that expresses itself in 'academic capitalism', discussed since the 1990s by Slaughter and Leslie (1997). Nowadays, the concept of academic capitalism, with an emphasis on bibliographic productions, is taken up by Bernardo (2014) in his study on the repercussions of productivism on the psychic health of public university teachers in Brazil.

Productivism and polyvalence in academia, which alter the meaning of work, can be factors for the psychic illness and suicides of university professors, not just students. It is known that the demand of productivity results from the organizational model of work on which the teacher has no mastery. This, in turn, when it does not get sick and kills, enslaves and alienates. In this regard, it is advised that:

[...] the university in a rhythm of productivist barbarism is the best place to transform ideas of self-destruction into an effective act, because in it reign competition, individualism, envy, bonfire of vanities, symbolic violence, etc. [...] among teachers-researchers

narcissically constituted as a group of 'scientific capitalists' (sic), whose dominant position aims to reproduce students in series, dominated and believers in the theoretical system. That is, in this environment does not have much space for the student or independent teacher. (LIMA, 2013, P. 82, FREE TRANSLATION).

Three teachers from a state university in Bahia committed suicide at an intersection of less than seven months, between 2014 and 2015 (MELO, 2015). In an almost identical interval, another researcher from the same university was awarded by the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (Capes) because he could produce 40 articles in one year. Contradictions at the core of the academic universe require the actors on the scene to identify factors that generate pleasure and, at the same time, suffering and death in the academy (LIMA, 2013). Lemos (2007) observes another aspect of this paradox when referring to a 'race' for the publication of scientific articles. There is an increase in teacher productivity and, in contrast, the stagnation of knowledge.

The works are published repeatedly, with small modifications or are works developed in a hurry without a greater maturation which determines mass production, mass production, with loss of quality. (LEMOS, 2007, P. 77, FREE TRANSLATION).

It is possible to glimpse, in the social relations of production in the university, a web of conflicts characterized by the interface between the taylorist model, marked by fragmentation and alienation at work (CHAUI, 2001), and the toyotist organization, typified by the flexibilization of rights, polyvalence and constant adaptations, according to the productivist aegis (ANTUNES, 2007).

In this direction, the hallucinatory process of capitalist production escapes the mastery of the teacher and will rebate on what should be the object of his/her attention, the pupil:

The productivism of the university [publisher/perish/'publishes or perishes' epidemic among professors-researchers] and university narcissistic individualism have been infecting students, generating in them high anxiety, stress, triggering psychic disorders, panic of not handle with jobs and proofs, fear of being judged as intellectually incapable by colleagues and teachers, bullying etc. ('Do not let this university, or some people who are in it contaminate you as they did with me' said Luiz Carlos de Oliveira, 20, a Philosophy student at the Federal University of São Paulo - Unifesp, before hanging himself). (LIMA, 2013, P. 81, FREE TRANSLATION).

This is a good context for socially engaged scientific questions (and intimate reflections). Very different from asking (now) what is the effect of adrenaline on the circulatory flow of a hamster, when the heart of the world's most universal health system (SUS) is stopping, right on the sidewalk of the faculties of medicine, nursing, pharmacy, biotechnology, psychology, nutrition and many others. Compromising situation of the right to life of millions of people, and the actors remain concerned about the 'prize', as conditioned as the employee of the month of a shoe factory, who can, at the cost of sweat and blood, achieve a sales goal to have his smiling picture hung in the production shed for thirty days. What are these values? Where will they take us?

Continuously, there is talk of the need to produce articles for the progression in the academic trajectory. Either do or die! Nothing against academic production; however, the underlying model of this production is not neutral (FREIRE, 2008; RIBEIRO, 2007). For the productivist, the root, motivation and necessity of curricular leisure is unknown, and how much leisure serves the maturation of thought or as a fascinating incubator of guiding questions, socially and politically potent.

While the SUS is agonizing, the university,

in its womb has, so far, given birth to capitalism, the children of the market, a work force deprived of the social, instead of citizens aware of its class identity. A model still functionalist, visible in the poem dedicated to the epidemiologist Jaime Breilh:

What about now, Breilh? [...]

- a) The day does not pass - it works.
- b) The worker does not think - he works.
- c) Man does not live - he works.
- d) The digital point - controls, watches and punishes.
- e) Work! [...]. (SANTOS, 2015, N. P., FREE TRANSLATION)

Final considerations

In this functionalist (instantaneous) context, the academic must resist the temptation to become a producer of 'noodles'. It is necessary to mature ideas, to experience them, to test them and to discuss them in some depth, in the light of a socio-political and economic context, usually, oppressive. It takes time (leisure) and interest to recognize other areas of knowledge, that contribute to the understanding of the world around us and the social phenomena that affect us.

Life in society will always charge the invoice of the choices. The SUS is already charging. Whether gentle or irascible; colluding, silent, or engaged; if they are productivist or socially committed to the destinies of the population, all this will return in the form of losses or social conquests. And if time is enough to produce hundreds of things, like machines, it is always insufficient to reverse, politically, the rhythm of the destruction of social rights in progress in Brazil and in the world. The crisis of the university is the crisis of thinking. Threatened thinking (in crisis) contributes to forming individuals alienated from the scenario where they interact. ■

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