





Between Cordoba and Bologna: The REUNI and the Contradictory Expansion of the Brazilian University

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ABSTRACT

The study analyzes the process of recent expansion of Brazilian higher education in its contradictory movement of massification of access and precariousness of public institutions. To this end, it investigates, in the light of historical-dialectical materialism, the Program to Support Restructuring and Expansion Plans of Federal Universities (REUNI). Throughout the text, it is demonstrated that, although the REUNI guarantees access to higher education to students belonging to the poorer classes of Brazilian society, it does so by submitting to the demands of international capital and its logic of hastiness and impoverishment of academic education. Finally, it is concluded that, although it cannot be denied that REUNI intensifies the expansion movement of higher education in Brazil - and, in this respect, it is close to the legacy of Cordoba - it is closer to the so-called Bologna Process and the consequent commercialization of the educational service.

KEYWORDS

Higher education. REUNI. Cordoba. Bologna.

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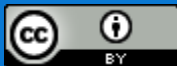
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Entre Córdoba e Bolonha: O REUNI e a Contraditória Expansão da Universidade Brasileira

RESUMO

O estudo analisa o processo de expansão recente da educação superior brasileira em seu movimento contraditório de massificação do acesso e de precarização das instituições públicas. Para tal, investiga, à luz do materialismo histórico-dialético, o Programa de Apoio a Planos de Reestruturação e Expansão das Universidades Federais (REUNI). Ao longo do texto, demonstra-se que, embora o REUNI garanta o acesso à educação superior a alunos pertencentes às classes mais pobres da sociedade brasileira, ele o faz submetendo-se às exigências do capital internacional e à sua lógica de aligeiramento e empobrecimento da formação acadêmica. Por fim, conclui-se que, ainda que não se possa negar que o REUNI intensifica o movimento de expansão da educação superior no Brasil – e, nesse ponto, aproxima-se do legado de Córdoba –, ele está mais próximo do chamado Processo de Bolonha e da consequente mercantilização do serviço educacional.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Ensino Superior. REUNI. Córdoba. Bologna.

Entre Córdoba y Bolonia: El REUNI y la Contradictoria Expansión de la Universidad Brasileña

RESUMEN

El estudio analiza el proceso de expansión reciente de la educación superior brasileña en su movimiento contradictorio de masificación del acceso y de precarización de las instituciones públicas. Para tal, investiga, a la luz del materialismo histórico-dialéctico, el Programa de Apoyo a los Proyectos de Reestructuración y Expansión de las Universidades Federales (REUNI). A lo largo del texto, se demuestra que, aunque el REUNI garantiza el acceso a la educación superior a alumnos pertenecientes a las clases más pobres de la sociedad brasileña, lo hace se sometiendo a las exigencias del capital internacional y a su lógica de aligeramiento y empobrecimiento de la formación académica. Por fin, se concluye que, aunque no se pueda negar que el REUNI intensifica el movimiento de expansión de la educación superior en el Brasil – y, en ese punto, se acerca al legado de Córdoba –, él está más prójimo al llamado Proceso de Bolonha y de la consecuente mercantilización del servicio educativo.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Enseñanza superior. REUNI. Córdoba. Bolonha.

Introduction

In 2018, the centenary of the University Reform of Córdoba is celebrated, an event carried out by the Argentine student movement whose reach is beyond the space and time in which it took place (DIAS, 2017).

When he arises “against an administrative regime, against a teaching method, against a concept of authority”, as he emphasizes in his Manifesto of June 21, 1918 (ANDES, 2018), the university youth of Córdoba laid the foundations for what we know, today as access of the popular classes to higher education, student participation in university management, closer ties between university and society, academic freedom, among many other elements that are now part of academic life in different regions of the world.

In Brazil, especially with regard to the ideal of democratization of higher education, the legacy of Córdoba attempts to echo from the end of the 1960s when, in a climate of repression, physical, moral and intellectual coercion, the student movement demanded the concretization of a university reform whose ideals, even if unconsciously, were identified with the agenda defended in Córdoba half a century ago. As Graciani (1982, p. 19) points out:

The demands of the student movement generated, therefore, diverse expectations in the sense that the University Reformation would take to the democratization of the teaching opening the doors of the university for all the classes; would allow a general and unrestricted autonomy in the didactic financial sense; would establish programs and curricula in line with the country's development; would extinguish the chair of life that provided exaggerated power to the professor in relation to the majority; and would allow greater participation of teachers and students in deliberative organs, with proportionality criteria.

However, the university, thought by the military government in the "University Reform of 1968", was directed towards the rationalization of resources, materializing a model of university within which there is no room for an effective process of democratization of higher education.

Entering the 21st century, more specifically during the government of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, we experienced in Brazil the resumption of this expansion of higher education, which was mainly achieved through the Program for Support to Restructuring and Expansion Plans of the Federal Universities (REUNI).

In this article, therefore, we set ourselves the challenge of analyzing this process of expansion of Brazilian higher education in the light of the centenary of Córdoba, considering that the democratization of education was one of the most important legacies of the Argentine university movement, a public good.

However, as we make a study of the REUNI from historical and dialectical materialism, we try to highlight the contradictory process in which it is inserted, demonstrating that this program is now approaching the ideal of democratization of higher

education inherited from Cordoba, now represents the materialization in Brazil of the so-called Bologna Process. This process, also called the Bologna Agreement, consists precisely of a set of actions linked to higher education in Europe, settled and agreed upon by the European Ministers of Education in the Bologna Declaration of 19 June 1999, whose aim was “[...] to increase competitiveness in the European Higher Education System” (BOLONHA DECLARATION, 1999).

A careful reading of the Bologna Declaration, which institutionalizes the new organization agreed by the European ministers for higher education in Europe, shows that this agreement of standardization of European education was carried out in the perspective of Europe reorganizing its system of higher education to make it more competitive in the new global order (BARREYO; ROTHEN, 2006, p.957). In this scenario, university production, be it science and technology, or skilled labor, has become a central element in the process of globalization of capital (SGUISSARDI, 2008; SILVA JUNIOR, SGUISSARDI, 2013).

The European countries signatories to the Bologna Agreement adopted the following actions for the construction of this common space of higher education in Europe:

1. Adoption of a *system with academic degrees of easy equivalence*, also through the implementation of the Diploma Supplement, to promote the employability of European citizens and the competitiveness of the European System of Higher Education.
2. *Adoption of a system based essentially on two main phases, pre-degree and post-degree. Access to the second phase should require successful completion of the first phase studies, with a minimum duration of 3 years.* The degree awarded after completion of the first phase should also be considered as an appropriate level of qualifications to enter the European labor market. The second phase should lead to the degree of master and/or doctor, as in many European countries.
3. Creation of a credit system - as in the ECTS system - *as an appropriate way to encourage student mobility in the freest way possible.* Credits may also be obtained in contexts of non-higher education, including lifelong learning, provided that they are recognized by the participating universities.
4. *Encouraging mobility by stages in the useful exercise of free movement [...]* (DECLARATION BY BOLOGNA, 1999, emphasis added).

In Brazil, the influence of Bologna was initially driven by the New University Nova project, which sought to homogenize or at least reduce the differences between this level of education in the country and Europe, and thus facilitate student mobility between the two. In this sense, this project proposes:

[...] a radical transformation of the academic architecture of the Brazilian public university, aiming to overcome the challenges and correct [a series of] defects. In this way, it is intended to construct a model compatible with both the North American Model (of Flexnerian origin) and the European Unified Model (Bologna process) without, however, signifying submission to any of these university education schemes. The main change proposed in the curricular structure of the university is the implementation of a three-cycle higher education system (UFBA, 2007, p. 9).

In 2007, the launching of REUNI, there were four universities in the process of implementing this project: the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA), the University of Brasilia (UnB), the Federal University of Piau  (UFPI) and the Federal University of ABC (UFABC)

(LIMA, et al, 2008). However, the proposal for curricular reformulation in three cycles, according to the European model of the Bologna Process, was too radical for it to be immediately adopted by all federal universities. Therefore, REUNI arises, incorporating elements that are part of the New University project as a measurement or a possibility for such an implementation to take place (LIMA, et al, 2008, p. 23).

Thus, while Córdoba, at the beginning of the twentieth century, ruled higher education as a public good and, therefore, as a state responsibility, Bologna, in the year 1999, outlines strategies for the commercialization of the educational service through the subordination of educational institutions the demands of the global order of capital.

It is, therefore, on the basis of the dialectical principle of contradiction that we will analyze here the recent expansion of higher education in Brazil, demonstrating that, although this process does in fact make a historical movement of rupture, by expanding access to higher education to students belonging to the poorer classes of Brazilian society, it does not fail to subscribe to the logic of continuity, molding itself to the demands of international capital and expanding higher education in a rationalized way through flexible university models that, by dismantling the university in their teaching, research and extension, are part of a mechanism of lightening and impoverishment of academic formation.

The REUNI in the National Context of Expansion of Higher Education

The Program to Support Restructuring and Expansion Plans of Federal Universities (REUNI), a major brand of the Lula da Silva government in relation to the expansion of higher education through federal universities, was a public policy focused on higher education to achieve the established objectives in the National Education Plan (NEP) (2001-2010), in relation to this level of education, whose primary goal was to offer, until 2010, vacancies in higher education institutions (IES) for at least 30 % of the age group from 18 to 24 years old (BRASIL, 2001).

The NEP (2001-2010) begins the diagnosis of Higher Education in Brazil recognizing that “[...] higher education faces in Brazil serious problems that will worsen if the National Education Plan does not establish a policy that promotes its renewal and development” (BRASIL, 2001, p. 31, emphasis added). In the national context, the plan recognizes in its diagnosis that since the military dictatorship there has been a growing presence of the private sector at this level of education:

The participation of private education at the higher level increased especially in the 1970s, as a result of a demand pressure from the "surplus issue". In the last twenty years, the private sector has offered just under two-thirds of the posts in higher education [...]. From 1994 on, the number of students rose 36.1% in private institutions, well above the public ones. In these, growth was 12.4% in federal, 18.5% in state, and 27.6% in municipal (BRASIL, 2001, p. 32).

In the Latin American context, the plan diagnoses the late situation of Brazilian higher education:

In Latin America as a whole, Brazil has one of the lowest levels of access to higher education, even when the private sector is taken into account. Thus, the percentage of enrolled in Brazilian higher education in relation to the population aged 18 to 24 years is less than 12%, comparing unfavorably with the indices of other countries of the continent. *Argentina, although it has 40% of the age group, constitutes a separate case, since it adopted unrestricted admission, which is reflected in high rates of repetition and avoidance in the first years. But Brazil continues to be unfavorable to Chile (20.6%), Venezuela (26%) and Bolivia (20.6%)* (BRASIL, 2001, p. 32-33, emphasis added).

Let us see that in NEP (2001-2010), although reference is made to the progress made by the South American neighbors in the democratization of higher education, Argentina, the birthplace of the University Reform in Córdoba, receives a negative mention precisely for opening University doors to the population in general. Space does not allow us to enter into this problem, but it is at least a question: why high rates of dropout and repetition would have more to do with unrestricted entry into the University than with issues such as the quality of pre-university education and the conditions of permanence of the students in the academy?

The last data present in the diagnosis of Higher Education, and perhaps what most interests in this research, is what concerns the role of the public sector in relation to the rationalization of investments and diversification of the system of this level of education:

As a strategy of diversification, we must consider the expansion of post-secondary, that is, in the formation of qualification in technical and professional areas. *The very modulation of university education, with an intermediate diploma, as established in France, would allow for a substantial expansion of attendance in the current higher education institutions, without excessive additional cost* (BRASIL, 2001, p. 35, emphasis added).

From an attentive analysis of the NEP (2001-2010), it can be affirmed that the expansion of higher education, made feasible through the rationalization of resources, is not a genuine phenomenon of the Lula da Silva government. Its seeds had already been launched under the government of Fernando Henrique Cardoso (FHC), being continued and perfected by his successor Lula da Silva.

In this sense, REUNI cannot be analyzed in isolation, because it is part of a governmental mechanism to expand higher education in BRASIL through its federal universities. This expansion, systematized by the MEC in three phases, should, therefore, make feasible the internalization, the restructuring and the expansion of federal universities to carry out regional developments throughout the country (BRASIL, 2014a, p. 35).

There was, before the REUNI, another program focused on the expansion of federal universities: the Expansion Program of Public Higher Education - SESu / MEC, (2003-2006). This program, between 2003 and 2007, resulted in the creation of 10 new Federal Universities and the creation of 79 university campuses (BRASIL, 2014a, p. 36-37).

This program, which had as its main objective the process of internalization of federal universities, characterized the first phase of the process of expansion of higher education in the Lula da Silva government, known as the Expansion and Interiorization phase (2003-2007). The second phase was Expansion with Restructuring (2008-2012), marked predominantly by the implementation of the REUNI decree of 2007. In this second phase of the expansion process, the internalization dimension was maintained and the idea of restructuring the federal universities was added.

While in the first phase the Public Education Expansion Program was a competitive program, restricted to only 50% of federal universities, because of the 44 existing universities, only 22 were contemplated (BRASIL, 2014a), REUNI was, in turn, a non-competitive program open to all federal universities.

Of the 54 Federal Universities existing in Brazil in 2007, 53 joined the REUNI, which between 2008-2012 promoted the creation of 04 new universities, 69 Campi and 08 academic units (BRASIL, 2014a). The only university that did not join the REUNI was the Federal University of ABC (UFABC) because it had already been created in 2005 from the perspective of the program (BRASIL, 2008, p.4). Although all universities have joined the Program, this was not a harmonious process. Several demonstrations against the REUNI were unleashed in the various federal universities scattered throughout Brazil (ARAÚJO, 2011).

The only requirements for any federal university to participate in this program were for the university interested to prepare a project aimed at the expansion of courses with curricular restructuring to increase the vacancies offered and use the funds from the program only with its expansion process, that is, internalization and restructuring:

Art. 3 - The Ministry of Education shall allocate financial resources to the Program [...] in order to support the expenses arising from the proposed initiatives, in particular with regard to: I - construction and readjustment of infrastructure and equipment necessary to carry out the objectives of the Program; II - purchase of goods and services necessary for the functioning of the new academic regimes; and III - cost and personnel expenses associated with the expansion of the activities resulting from the restructuring plan. § 1 - The increase of resources referred to in item III shall be limited to twenty percent of the cost of university expenses and personnel, during the five-year period referred to in art. 1, § 1. § 2 The increase mentioned in § 1 shall be based on the budget of the initial year of the execution of the plan of each university, including the expansion already programmed and excluding the inactive (BRASIL, 2007a, Art 3º)

We find here some peculiarities of REUNI's policy, since the program was not competitive, eliminating the idea of a dispute between the different universities, through a public notice, to obtain extra money for a project to expand vacancies. Any university that joined the REUNI would have a budget of 20% of the value of its annual budget with expenses of cost and personnel. However, this value, destined for the university, could only be used with a new fact, that is, it could only be invested either in the process of internalizing universities or in extending night courses and / or creating courses in idle spaces, as previously planned in its restructuring and expansion plan, that is, in its REUNI Project.

The Project REUNI of each university should follow, therefore, the guidelines of the Lula da Silva government policy for public higher education based on reduction of dropout rates, expansion of student mobility, diversification of education modalities, revision of academic structure and optimization of the federal universities (BRASIL, 2007a, 2007b).

These guidelines point to another particularity of the REUNI, which is that of expansion with restructuring, proposing that universities develop their Restructuring Plans from the following dimensions: supply expansion, academic-curricular restructuring, pedagogical renewal of higher education, intra and inter-regional mobility institution, social commitment of the institution, postgraduate support (BRASIL, 2007b).

All of these dimensions should be guided by the optimization principle, that is, “by the best use of the physical structure and human resources existing in federal universities” (BRASIL, 2007a, Art. 1º).

In parallel with this process of restructuring and expansion of existing federal universities, SESu has developed a process of regional and international integration of higher education through the creation of universities with a multicampus organization that makes such integrations feasible (BRASIL, 2012).

We can take as an example of regional integration the Federal University of the South Frontier, created in 2009, whose headquarters is in Chapecó, Santa Catarina State, and the Campus spread over two more states: Rio Grande do Sul, with the Campus de Cerro Largo , Erechim and Passo Fundo, and in the southwest of Pará, with the campuses Laranjeiras do Sul and Realeza (BRASIL, 2012).

International integration, according to the MEC (BRASIL, 2014a), was created by universities such as the University of International Integration of Afro-Brazilian Lusophone (Unilab), created in 2010, which maintains exchange activities with Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea- Portugal, São Tomé and Príncipe and Timor-Leste, and the Federal University of Latin American Integration (Unila), which was also created in 2010, with the specific vocation of academic exchange and countries of Mercosur and other Latin American countries, offering courses in areas of mutual interest to the countries of Latin America, especially Mercosur members, in areas considered strategic for regional and international development and integration (BRASIL, 2014a) .

The third and final phase (2012-2014) of the process of expansion of federal universities in Brazil is linked, in addition to regional development, to Special Programs. During this period, four universities and 47 campuses were created. However, this phase was marked not only by the creation of new units, but also by the implementation of specific integration, fixation and regional development policies, such as the Medical Education Expansion Program, the Living without Limits Program of the National Promotion Secretariat (Procampo), in conjunction with the Secretariat for Continuing Education, Literacy, Diversity

and Inclusion (Secadi) and the Secretariat of Vocational and Technological Education (Setec) (BRASIL, 2014a, p. 39).

These three recent moments of the expansion of Brazilian higher education, via federal universities, undoubtedly correspond to an internal need of the country for the improvement of its socioeconomic indexes. However, as we will show throughout the text, the condition of this expansion occurs only through rationality of resources reveals that such a process is beyond the local needs of Brazil and the ideal of democratization of higher education, since it dialogues directly with economic determinations of world order whose dynamism requires, in the developing countries, specialized labor with rationalization of resources.

Brazil and the New World Order: The REUNI in the Neoliberal Context of Expansion in Higher Education

We cannot think of the expansion of public higher education in Brazil, intensified at the beginning of the twenty-first century, via REUNI, as something isolated, that is, as an individual initiative of the country for its internal needs. It is necessary to think of REUNI, as a policy of expansion of public and free higher education, in the socio-political-economic context of global neoliberalism:

The world economy and culture of the 'Academy', organically articulated, have been undergoing structural change for decades. The university, especially the state-owned public that once organized itself as an institution that, in addition to the training of professionals, was concerned with the production of knowledge, extension and provision of services, has quickly become an organization that, in the last decades, offers educational products in response to the direct or indirect demands of the financial globalization of capital. At the same time that globalization points to entrepreneurship and innovation programs, among others, its economic processes tend to destabilize the already very precarious academic and institutional autonomy. This process can also be observed in Brazil, where the economy of recent and ongoing years is changing in a structural way the general higher education of the country, with emphasis on its federal public sector [...]. In the social sphere, official data indicate a tendency for this institution to become a mere enforcer of compensatory policies, while in economic terms it is presented as a new way of entrepreneurship in the production of knowledge and a new way of producing science and technology (SILVA JUNIOR; SGUISSARDI, 2013, p.120).

In the face of the socio-political-economic changes brought about by the new world order, Brazil became, at the end of the XX century and beginning of the XXI century, signatory of several international agreements with multilateral organisms (DEUS, 2008; SILVA JUNIOR; SGUISSARDI, 2013). In many of these agreements, there is a need to expand higher education on a large scale, that is, a veritable mass certification process for the market:

The second half of this century will pass into the history of higher education as the period of its most spectacular expansion: the number of student enrollments on a world scale has multiplied more than six times, from 13 million in 1960 to 82 million in 1995. But this is also the period in which an even greater disparity has

occurred - which was already huge - between industrially developed countries, developing countries and especially poor countries, as regards access and resources for higher education and research. [...] Sharing knowledge, international cooperation and new technologies can offer new opportunities to reduce this disparity (UNESCO, 1998, Preamble).

Unesco rekindles in Brazil the discourse, already defended in the university reform of 1968, to offer "equal conditions" for access to higher education. However, it is necessary to understand what constitutes, in this context, a level playing field for higher education access:

Access to higher education should be actively facilitated by members of specific groups such as indigenous peoples, members of cultural and linguistic minorities, disadvantaged groups, people living in situations of foreign domination and persons with disabilities, for these groups can have experiences and talents, both individually and collectively, that are of great value to the development of societies and nations. Special material assistance and educational solutions can help overcome the obstacles faced by these groups, both for access to and continuity of studies in higher education (UNESCO, 1998, Art. 3º, emphasis added).

From the perspective of UNESCO, providing equal access is only to facilitate groups with a social history of exclusion entering the university, whether public or private, without taking into account the socioeconomic conditions in which these groups are inserted in the current moment of their histories. This data is indicative of the intentionality of policies for the expansion of higher education in peripheral countries. These do not have as their main purpose the social elevation of the individuals affected by them, but rather respond to the new global economic configuration promoted by multilateral organizations such as IMF and WB (SILVA JUNIOR; SGUISSARDI, 2013):

The policies promoted by these collective political subjects of capital - the BM Group, Unesco and, more recently, the WTO - have been guiding a set of economic and political reforms carried out in the peripheral countries of capitalism. In this set of neoliberal reforms, which articulate the restructuring of the productive sphere, the reordering of the role of national states and the formation of a new bourgeois sociability, are inserted the educational reforms carried out in the peripheral countries that crossed the end of the twentieth century and are extended by the beginning of the 21st century (LIMA, 2007, p. 51).

These collective political subjects of capital become "pedagogues", leading the peripheral countries along pleasant paths to international capital toward the maintenance of the status quo, and thus to the unshakable dominant / dominated relationship. Arruda (2011) draws attention to the aspects to be considered in the process of reform of higher education proposed by the World Bank (1995) to peripheral countries, summarized in the document "*Ensenanza superior: las lecciones derivadas de la experiencia*". In this document, the main dimensions of the crisis through which this level of education in developing countries, are analyzed and the elements to be considered in the reform of higher education are analyzed, among other things, in order to overcome this crisis:

[...] a low teacher-student relationship, a need to increase the access of traditionally underprivileged social groups to higher education, combat high rates of dropout and repetition, reduce public spending by students, need to improve the quality of university research, adoption of distance education programs as a strategy to increase the access of disadvantaged groups at low cost (ARRUDA, 2011, p. 97).

From a careful analysis of the aspects that should make up the reform of higher education in the periphery countries of capital, we can see that the World Bank presents the logic that will guide the actions of the Brazilian government in its investments to broaden access to higher education on country soil. Such logic is systematized in a concept present in the general guidelines of the REUNI: the "optimization of resources existing in federal universities" (BRASIL, 2007b). By "optimization of resources", in the context of expanding the offer of free public higher education, one can understand a university that organizes itself in the most economical way possible to be able to attend the maximum of students with the minimum of physical structure and resources humans. It is in this logic, therefore, that we understand the creation of the Open University of Brazil (UAB) and the proposal of the interdisciplinary baccalaureates of the New University Project (ALMEIDA FILHO, 2006).

The idea of optimization present in the REUNI and UAB reveals the double economic direction of the reform of higher education in the Lula da Silva government that wants to expand this level of education in the cheapest way possible to train new workers necessary for the new economic policy adopted by Brazil:

Starting in 2001, research funding started to follow new criteria based on the establishment of priorities in areas of knowledge guided by the country's economic and industrial policy, under the monetary and financial management of the Central Bank [...]. In this way, the CNPq began to establish agreements and calls for inductive research aimed at increasing the productivity of capital and economic competitiveness of the country, while the Ministry of Education was careful to massify certification through programs with high capacity for institutional change, such as REUNI and UAB (SILVA JUNIOR; SGUISSARDI, 2013, p. 128).

The university reform proposed by the Lula da Silva government was, in fact, a strategy of the federal government to prepare, through mass certification, the working class to meet the needs of the national economy in the global context and consolidate hegemony bourgeois in the country, disarticulating the university as a private apparatus of counter-hegemony, for the reformed university must work the new societal relations, thus creating the new collective man:

The reform of higher education, in turn, subjects the production of national knowledge to the guidelines of international organizations, reinforces the neoliberal idea of the non-state public, stimulating juridically and financially the entrepreneurship of higher education, while legitimizing submission from school to business, the dualism between university institutions and educational institutions, uses access to higher education as a compensatory instrument for the historical Brazilian social apartheid, and exacerbates the precariousness of labor relations within this level of education (NEVES, 2005, p. 106).

Thus, the question is raised about the motivations of the Brazilian government for university reform. Carlos Roberto Antunes dos Santos, director of the Ministry of Education of the MEC in the administration of education minister Cristovam Buarque, makes clear the government's thinking regarding the construction of the 21st century university: "we want a university committed to basic education, with the 'Zero Hunger' program, with literacy and so on" (SANTOS, 2014, p. 59). And so on, the university is encouraged to be a pedagogue of the new civic culture of the neoliberal project for the creation of new collective political

subjects, volunteers for the execution of the social welfare policies of the government (NEVES, 2004).

In the secretary's speech, it is explicit the intention of the government to instrumentalize the university, as a private counter-hegemony, by articulating it with the market, transforming it into one of the subjects implementing the neoliberal sociability project of the Third Way:

The Lula da Silva government has been deepening the formation of a new collective man indispensable for the consolidation of the redesigned or recycled neoliberal sociability project. [...] the educational policies that are presented to society by the Lula da Silva administration - the reform of higher education; the Brazil Literacy Program; the creation of the Fund for the Maintenance and Development of Basic Education and Valorization of Education Professionals (Fundeb); the University for All Program (ProUni); the new regulatory frameworks for vocational and technological education; the national continuing training network of education professionals - are part of this broader state strategy of training a new collective man in the national space (NEVES, 2006, p. 84-85).

We can add the REUNI to the neoliberal educational policies, listed by Neves, for the formation of the new collective man. At first glance, such a program stands as a brake on the neoliberal walk of the Brazilian university, because unlike the University for All Program (ProUni), instituted by Law Nr. 11.096 of January 13, 2005, the federal government, through REUNI, turns to federal institutions of higher education to invest in its structures and expand the enrollment offer.

The Neoliberal nature of the ProUni is explicit because the program is clear in affirming the investment of public funds, through exemptions and tax incentives, in private higher education institutions (HEIs), so that these will melt their idle vacancies to the working class.

By establishing, through Decree Nr. 6.096 of April 24, 2007, the REUNI, the federal government defends in its official speech that the restructuring of federal universities is a way of expanding its offer, thereby democratizing higher education. However, the restructuring proposed by the above-mentioned program was not linked to the improvement of physical spaces and the holding of competitions to supplement the teaching staff of universities, but to a new way of organizing higher education with a view to lowering it. This fact is already indicative that the university reform in motion in the Lula da Silva government cannot be analyzed in a univocal sense, since it is permeated by the principle of contradiction:

[...] the reform of higher education must be understood from its contradictory character, which unites, at the same time, marks of permanence and change: the expansion of the access of the working classes to higher education is a matter of the disqualification of this level of education, the maintenance of education as one of the class distinctions is a condition of the changes to be introduced in education systems in the sense of their expansion (CÊA, 2006, p. 45).

It is noted, therefore, that the reformist actions of the Lula government in what concerns to the higher education engender a movement of comings and goings within the

Brazilian universities and of the relations that surround it. This coetaneity of ruptures and continuities is key interpretative for a historical-dialectical materialist reading of the process of expansion of higher education via REUNI, which, in our opinion, lies contradictorily between the legacy of Cordoba and the Bologna recipe. For, as Rodrigues (2011) observes:

The speech reproduced in large part by the leaders of the IFES to join the REUNI has been based on the argument of the democratic extension of the university. However, contradictorily, we have observed that such government policy has contributed to disqualified access to the public university (RODRIGUES, 2011, p. 6).

In this sense, it is understood that the expansion of higher education in the Lula government, via REUNI, materializes a trajectory of ruptures and continuities within the Brazilian society. It is a rupture because, even if it is precarious, there is a significant increase in people who, regardless of class, gender or any other condition, access higher education; and is continuity insofar as it contributes to the neoliberal societal project of the Brazilian bourgeoisie to educate and silence the consensus through the expansion of precarious higher education, that is, optimized through the rationalization of human and physical resources for the popular masses, configuring an unqualified access to the public university, in view of the needs of the financial market.

For Deus (2008), the REUNI is, to a certain extent, materialization of the Bologna Process in Brazil. It is a hegemonic strategy by the Brazilian government to reach the consensus of Brazilian public universities, causing them to engender an extremely quantitative expansion based on the rationality of human and physical resources, rejecting the autonomy of federal universities and subordinating higher education public and free of charge to the demands of the global order of capital:

The type of expansion envisaged in REUNI for the IFES, from the institutional point of view, is not autonomous, since the university will increasingly double to the “world trends” in the Bologna process, promulgated by the OECD and the WTO, which, viewing education as a marketable service and not as a public good guaranteed by the state (and which, under concession, may be offered by the private sector), have been pressing the capitalist periphery countries to open their institutions to the new profitable market for higher education and distance learning, obviously for domestic and mainly foreign entrepreneurs (DEUS, 2008, p. 203).

The expansion of higher education, which took place in Brazil in the 2000s, is strongly guided by the capitalist market logic. Through a mass certification process, via REUNI and UAB, Brazil presents itself, in the new world order, as modern and competitive. Through its universities, it offers the world projects, technologies and human resources, also guaranteeing manpower for the development of the national market within the global context of production (SILVA JUNIOR, SGUISSARDI, 2013). Universities, in this broad context of the global order of capital, have to produce in the market rhythm, for the market and in the market molds:

The reordering and reorganization of Capes and CNPq allowed both agencies to guide research and production of knowledge for capital appreciation, prioritizing innovation projects for the development of new technologies that add value to

products and processes and thus benefit private economic interests. On the other side, through a mass certification process, in higher education, the aim is to train the new worker (SILVA JUNIOR; SGUISSARDI, 2013, p. 128).

According to Silva Junior and Sguissardi (2013), REUNI presents itself as a federal government policy with a high capacity for institutional change and mass certification for the working class. This means that the expansion of higher education, set in motion by REUNI, meets the demands of the new world market that demands workers with a certain level of qualification, even if this worker, now graduated, is not used in his specific area and is employed being underutilized and receiving wages short of their training.

The institutional change is due to the financial and economical character of the policies directed at higher education that undergoes an alteration, acquiring a “more economic status than of human formation in its functions of formation and production of knowledge [...]” (SILVA JUNIOR, SGUISSARDI, 2013, p.136).

With REUNI, the federal government assumes the discourse of expansion, democratization and internalization of public universities. However, as postulated by international organizations, this expansion and democratization must be carried out from the idea of optimization of physical and human resources, revealing its refinement with the neo-liberal orientations of education reform at the service of capital and its order in movement in Brazil.

This idea of expanding the federal university through resource optimization reveals how REUNI is a tool used by the government to adjust education to the needs of the world of capital. An optimized university becomes a “[...] service provider and trainer of the workforce and reserve army to meet the new demands created in the world of capital” (LIMA, 2007, p. 52).

The expression “*Best use of physical structure and human resources*”, present in article one of the REUNI decree (BRASIL, 2007a) and explained in the glossary of its General Guidelines as “Optimization of existing resources in federal universities” (BRASIL, 2007b, p. 24) implies the thought that universities, their technicians, teachers and their spaces are idle and it is possible to increase the offer in the various courses without significant changes in their structures.

Thus, the noun “optimization = best use” is the epiphany of a logic of capital that should govern the relations and directions of Brazilian universities. Optimizing universities means saying that

[...] physical structure and existing human resources are sufficient, just not being well utilized. This is equal to affirming that public universities have physical structure and idle human resources. It is inferred that the best use of the physical structure is the increase of students in the classroom; optimization of human resources is an overload of the teacher's work and increase of class hours, increase of students per class, increase of academic production (CAVALCANTE; SILVA SOBRINHO, 2012, p. 103).

It should not be forgotten, in this context of optimization, that REUNI is part of a neoliberal proposal for university reform operationalized by the Lula da Silva government. The neoliberal logic that permeates the social relations and the conditions of production involved in the plot of this reform has been present in the directives of the Brazilian government since the Fernando Collor de Mello government, deepening in the government of Fernando Henrique Cardoso and perfecting itself in the management of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. The end result is the same: maintaining the order of capital:

The articulating axis of the ongoing neoliberal counterrevolution is therefore the reconfiguration of the class struggle in Brazil, that is, the reconfiguration of the relations between capital and labor, with the sole purpose of making possible new and permanent conditions of capitalist accumulation. This articulating axis is not reduced to the reform of the state apparatus. This statism [...] was resumed in the 1990s, from the identification of the state as one of the central focuses of neoliberal criticism - from the pachydermic State of Collor de Mello to the corrupted, disqualified and centralizing State of Cardoso (LIMA, 2007, p. 95).

In the Lula da Silva administration, the counter reform of the university will find a strong expression and will have the main manifestation of its neoliberal orientations in the two programs that intensified the expansion movement of higher education in Brazil: ProUni and REUNI. In that, as has been said elsewhere, there is a large investment of public money in private HEIs, thus establishing an intense public-private partnership in the provision of free enrollments in private higher education institutions through idle vacancies purchased by the federal government; in this, there is a small financial investment, in view of the goals intended by such a program.

Since financial investment was timid in the face of the daring of the goals set, there is, from the beginning, in REUNI, the idea of "optimizing" the federal universities, because there are spaces that need to be occupied and professionals still with idle time in these universities. Thus, there is a logic that governs and guides the plans for joining REUNI: "doing more with less", that is, the logic of optimization.

REUNI, in presenting its global goal, based on such logic, declares a true dismantling of the public university as we have known since Decree N. 5.540/68, known as the Law of University Reform, which presented the university imbricated with the research. This data is ratified and corroborated by Law Nr. 9.394/96 (Law on Guidelines and Bases of Education), which presents the university as a center for teaching, research and provision of cultural services. The REUNI, by choosing as a global goal the increase in the number of students in relation to the number of teachers to 18%, effectively prioritized the teaching perspective in detriment of the tripod - teaching, research and extension - that constitutes the university:

The overall goal of the Program is to gradually increase the average completion rate of face-to-face undergraduate courses to ninety percent and the ratio of undergraduate students in face-to-face courses per teacher to eighteen at the end of five years from the beginning of each plan (BRASIL, 2007a, article 1º, paragraph 1º).

It is noted, from its global goal, that the REUNI proposes the expansion of a university well centered on the issue of teaching, secondarily both research and extension. This is another aspect that removes the REUNI from the legacy of Córdoba, since the overcoming of a university model based only on education, which enabled the broad development of science (research) and the strengthening of ties with society (extension) was already one of the demands of the Cordovan student youth in 1918.

The General Guidelines of the Meeting directed the universities that thought of joining the Program to draw up their "Adhesion Plans" based on curricular flexibility, rationality (optimization) and innovation, maintaining the necessary quality at this level of education in their expansion process:

In addition to the expansion of access, with the best use and the increase of the physical structure and the rise of the qualified contingent of human resources existing in the federal universities, there is also the concern to guarantee the quality of the graduation of the public education. [...] The quality desired for this level of education tends to materialize from the adhesion of these institutions to the program and its guidelines, with the consequent curricular redesign of its courses, valuing flexibilization and interdisciplinarity (BRASIL, 2007b, p. 5).

The proposal of the Meeting was for each public university to elaborate its restructuring and expansion plans based on the reality of each institution, without a standard model, in order to respect the idiosyncrasy of the same. However, all plans should be governed by the same operational logic - "optimization" - which was translated into the elaboration of "rational", "flexible" and "innovative" curricular proposals, shaping a curricular redesign of the public university.

But also, in this respect, REUNI is not innovative, since its policy finds curricular the foundations of its rational, flexible and innovative organization in the curriculum conception present in the NEP (2001-2010):

Curricula should be appropriate to the transformations of the "globalized economy" and the "information society". To this end, the national government should establish, at the national level, curricular guidelines that ensure the necessary flexibility and diversity in the curricula offered by the different institutions of Higher Education, so as to better meet the differential needs of its clients and the peculiarities of the regions in which they are inserted (LIMA, 2012, p. 634).

As a whole, these aspects allow the Lula da Silva government to carry out the expansion of free and public higher education "at no excessive additional cost", as required by NEP (2001-2010), revealing the dyad that sets in motion the existing dialectical relationship between ruptures and continuities in the process of expansion of higher education: rupture, since there is an expansion of access to public higher education; continuity, the adequacy of the university to the demands of international capital and the precariousness of the conditions of study and work caused by the rationality of resources placed as *condicio sine qua non* to achieve the expansion of access to higher education of the working class.

In fact, this data translates into a university with a curricular and administrative proposal oriented by economic rationality, that is, capable of serving the maximum of students with the minimum of physical structure and human resources. For example, at the Federal University of Alagoas (Ufal), such rationality is expressed in the organization of the curriculum in knowledge trunks, in order to allow the same group of teachers to take on subjects that become common to several courses. Thus, among other aspects, the demand for teachers is reduced, through a public tender, the use of physical spaces is optimized and the work of the technical staff is concentrated.

Weska (2012), when doing a comparative study with the objective of evaluating the implementation of the REUNI at the Federal University of Juiz de Fora (UFJF) in parallel with the Federal University of Santa Maria (UFSM), Federal University of Maranhão (UFMA) The Federal University of Sergipe (UFS), Federal University of Uberlândia (UFU) and the Federal University of Viçosa (UFV), emphasize that all these institutions adopted curricular flexibilization, materialized in the organization of graduations in common trunks by areas of knowledge. Notwithstanding this, the author sees in REUNI a response to neoliberal efforts in higher education that have resulted in the stagnation of this level of education in the public sector. According to Weska (2012), the REUNI would be a path towards the end of the privatization and precariousness of public universities in Brazil, breaking with the country's dependence on international capital.

On the other hand, there are authors who visualize in the mentioned Program a continuity of the educative policies of direction of neoliberal of the Brazilian government (ARAÚJO, 2011, DEUS, 2008; SANTOS, 2016). These authors show that the movement to revise the academic structure of the courses, typical of the expansion engendered by REUNI, was common to all federal higher education institutions in Brazil, either in existing campuses - with the creation of new annual entries and new courses -, or in the new campuses created from this program, carrying out a strong movement of precariousness of the federal universities.

This precariousness, according to the aforementioned authors, is due to the lack of improvement and expansion of the university infrastructure to meet the demands generated by the expansion of vacancies, and, at the same time, the expansion of the physical spaces of the university, the intensification of the work of technicians and teachers, and the consequent decrease in the quality of teaching and disassembly of the university as a locus of research, teaching and extension.

The REUNI, the Precariousness of the Public University and the Strengthening of Private HEIs

Although it was stated in the General Guidelines of the Meeting (BRASIL, 2007b) that a standard model for the expansion of higher education was not being proposed or wanted, all expansion plans of the universities that joined the program should be built under

the logic of rationality, that is, the minimum structure and the maximum potential to meet the local demands of the communities that surround them.

From this logic, there is a growing intensification and precariousness of the teaching work with a strong movement of scrapping of the public universities, while the private ones are being strengthened, improving their physical resources, from the public money invested in the same via ProUni, and advancing in the market with the strong increase of its offer (SGUISSARDI, 2008; SILVA JUNIOR; SGUISSARDI, 2013).

ProUni, on the other hand, makes clear the neoliberal orientation of the Brazilian government in the public-private relationship, since, instead of investing in public institutions, the federal government buys, with public funds and tax exemptions, private higher education institutions to offer them to high school graduates of the public network or full scholarship holders of the private network who wish to enter Higher Education, but have not been able to enter the Federal University and cannot afford to study at a private HEI. This dynamic expresses the submission of education to a capital market movement:

Education is subject to the demands of the profitability of international capital. The hegemonic project, conceiving education as a misguided "public good", defends the following argument: to the extent that public and private institutions provide a public service, it is justified the allocation of public funds to private institutions and the use of funds private institutions to finance academic activities carried out in public institutions, diluting the concept of public and private and presenting the notion of non-state public (LIMA, 2007, p. 52).

This idea can be observed in the Higher Education Census of 2013 (BRASIL, 2014a), whose data indicate how private HEIs have grown in the provision of this type of education since 2005, in the process of expanding higher education.

Private HEIs, to the detriment of public ones, grew intensely thanks to public funding. However, for those potential students who were not covered by government funding, nor can they afford the tuition costs, the difficulties of access to higher education remained.

According to data from the Institute of Studies and Educational Research Anísio Teixeira (Inep), the total number of students in Brazilian higher education reached 7.3 million in 2013, almost 300 thousand enrollments higher than the previous year. In the period 2012-2013, enrollments increased by 3.8%, 1.9% in the public network and 4.5% in the private network. The university students are distributed in 32 thousand undergraduate courses, offered by 2,4 thousand institutions of higher education - 301 public and 2 thousand private individuals. Universities account for 53.4% of enrollments, while colleges account for 29.2% (INEP, 2015).

The General Guidelines of the Meeting bring, in its diagnosis of Brazilian Higher Education, the data of Inep (2005):

According to the 2005 Census of Higher Education, Brazil had 176 universities, of which 90 were public, 52 of which were federal, 33 were state and 5 were

municipal. In that year, the public system received a total of 1,192,189 undergraduate enrollments. The private sector comprised 1,934 institutions, including 86 universities, with 3,260,967 undergraduate enrollments (BRASIL, 2007b, p. 6).

The consultative group of the REUNI, responsible for elaborating its guidelines, in conducting the diagnosis of Higher Education, perceived signs of exhaustion of the private sector in the offer of this level of education and bet in the Program as a lever to expand the offer of vacancies in public education (BRASIL, 2007b).

However, if one observes the data from the census of Higher Education in 2013, it is perceived that the bet was frustrated, the diagnosis of mistaken exhaustion, and ProUni proved to be much more favorable to private institutions than the REUNI went to public, the predominance of private institutions over public institutions and the number of vacancies.

Final Considerations

Throughout this article, we try to analyze the process of recent expansion of Brazilian higher education in light of the centenary of Cordoba, considering that the democratization of education was one of the most important legacies of the university movement in Cordoba.

In this sense, this expansion brings us back to two very precise socio-historical conjunctures. The first one concerns the situation of higher education in Brazil in the context of Latin America: all countries listed by NEP (2001-2010) were colonized by Spain, whose position regarding the presence of higher education institutions in their colonies was inversely proportional that of Portugal. He attempted, through his process of colonization of exploitation, to make it impossible for his colony, Brazil, to communicate with other national groups, with cultures other than Portuguese.

It was not until the nineteenth century, with the arrival of the royal family and its court for the upholstered colony, that the first higher education institution in Brazil emerged. This is a specificity in the context of Latin America, for, since the sixteenth century, the Spaniards created universities in the territories of their colonies, like the University of Córdoba, created in 1621. Thus, at least three centuries of delay in the articulation process of Higher Education in Brazil in relation to the other countries that are closed by Latin America.

The other socio-historical conjuncture that the old NEP (2001-2010) mentioned was that of the military dictatorship. However, according to Naomar de Almeida Filho, responsible for the project New University, this reform was the last initiative to update the academic architecture in Brazil until 2007, the year of the launch of REUNI (ALMEIDA FILHO, 2007, p. 208).

In order to better understand the University Reform of 1968, it is important to point out the conflicts from which it emerged within the Costa e Silva government. In 1967,

through Decree Nr. 62.024, the president in question created a “Special Committee for Student Affairs” under the coordination of Colonel Meira Mattos. The aim was to inspect the student movement and analyze its proposals regarding university reform (PAULA, 2009, p.69). This commission organized a report known as the “Meira Mattos Report” which brings some contributions to understand the historical and political context of this reform and the mediations that can be made with the optimized university model proposed by the university reform of the Lula da Silva Government via REUNI.

The “Meira Mattos Report” points to the need for the MEC to take a market stance against the inadequacy of the way in which higher education was structured to meet the demands of the new social order previously established. In this sense, the report points to the lack of rationality and business organization of the ministry in relation to universities. On the one hand, the issue of surpluses would be linked to an organizational reality marked by idleness in universities and, on the other, by the lack of a centralized policy focused on universities in Brazil. University autonomy would be one of the factors, according to the “Commission”, of the absence of a global policy to remedy the issue of surplus (MEIRA MATTOS, 1967, p. 222).

Meira Mattos proposes, then, as a possible way to solve the problem of surpluses, the curricular flexibilization:

[...] aims to give greater flexibility to the composition of courses and curricula, in order to readjust higher education to the realities of the country. What are these realities? [...] the need to respond to a growing demand, corresponding to the rate of population growth; the imperative of adapting courses and curricula to the demands of national development [...] (MEIRA MATTOS, 1967, p. 224).

Such thinking will be materialized in a proposal of training by cycles, “thus enabling students of a more modest economic level to have access to an intermediate higher diploma ... maintaining the quality of the course” (MEIRA MATTOS, 1967, p. 226). Thus, Meira Mattos proposes, to the less privileged, a superior intermediate formation, formed by a professional cycle.

The proposal of the Lula da Silva government for the expansion and democratization of higher education, through the REUNI, goes back to the idea of Mattos of a curricular organization in cycles, already perfected by the New University Project ", presented in the Dimension of Academic-Curricular Restructuring:

4. Revision of the academic structure seeking the constant elevation of quality; 5. Reorganization of undergraduate courses; 6. Diversification of undergraduate courses, preferably with an advance of early and specialized professionalization; 7. Implantation of curricular regimes and systems of titles that make possible the construction of formative itineraries; and 8. Forecasting of transition models, when appropriate (BRASIL, 2007b, p.11).

Historically speaking, with the legal directives of the 1968 reform that already pointed towards “[...] rationality of organization, with full use of material and human resources [...]”

(BRASIL, 1968, article 11), the REUNI makes explicit in its official text that the expansion of higher education is obstinate to be driven by the logic of optimization, that is, "[...] for the best use of the physical structure and human resources existing in federal universities" (BRASIL, 2007a, article 1º), leading the universities that created new undergraduate courses or reorganized their curricular structures, at the time of their adhesion to the Program, to opt for graduation models in the most economical way possible.

Analyzing NEP (2014-2024), it is perceived that “[...] REUNI is no longer a government policy to become a State policy. The central goals of REUNI are present in the goals of the new NEP for Higher Education [...]” (LIMA, 2012, p. 644). The new NEP presents as aim Nr. 12: “[...] to raise the gross enrollment rate in higher education to 50% (fifty percent) and the net rate to 33% (thirty-three percent) of the 18 (eighteen) to twenty-four (24) years [...]” (BRASIL, 2014b). To do so, it will use as strategies precisely the objectives of REUNI:

[...] 12.1 *Optimize the installed capacity of the physical structure and human resources of public institutions of higher education, through planned and coordinated actions, in order to expand and internalize the access to graduation.* 12.2 *Increase the number of vacancies through the expansion and internalization of the federal higher education network, the Federal Network of Vocational, Scientific and Technological Education and the Open University System of Brazil, considering the population density, the offer of public vacancies in relation to population and the regional characteristics of micro and mesoregions defined by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), standardizing the expansion in the national territory.* 12.3 *Gradually raise the average completion rate of face-to-face undergraduate courses in public universities to ninety percent, offer one-third of the vacancies in evening classes, and increase the ratio of students per teacher to eighteen, through credit utilization strategies and academic innovations that value of the acquisition of higher-level skills [...]* (BRASIL, 2014b, emphasis added).

The seeds of optimization, which had been launched in the NEP (2001-2010), the FHC government, germinated and took root in the REUNI, Lula da Silva government, and flourished in the NEP (2014-2024), the Rousseff government. Thus, REUNI ceases to be a program to reinforce the governmental machinery for the expansion of higher education necessary for the second half of the NEP (2001-2010) to become a guideline, a horizon for the neoliberal paths of education reform of the Brazilian State.

It is noteworthy that the trajectory of higher education reform in Brazil was consistent with the directives of the international organizations of capital (DEUS 2008; MELO, 2011). These directions were incorporated as perspectives for the expansion of the offer of this level of education, adopted as government policy through the REUNI program and transformed into State Policy in NEP (2014-2024).

In view of the above, it can be concluded that it cannot be denied that the REUNI intensifies the expansion movement of higher education - and, in this respect, it is close to the legacy of Cordoba. But the *sine qua non* for this expansion is the optimization of resources and the corresponding flexibility of the academic-curricular structure, thus compromising the democratization of the university in the perspective of education as a public good. This

reorganization of curricular structures occurred, as demonstrated throughout the text, in a large part of the higher education institutions spread across the different states of the Union, in the perspective of what happened in the so-called Bologna Process, organizing their new courses in interdisciplinary baccalaureates or systematizing them in trunks of knowledge.

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