



METAMORFOSES OF BRAZILIAN HIGHER EDUCATION: FROM "ELITE FORMATION" TO "RAMPANT PRAGMATISM"

Interview with Afrânio Mendes Catani

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In early 2019, the Pro-Rector of Graduate Studies, Research, and Innovation of the Fluminense Federal University (PROPPI/UFF) launched another announcement of visiting professor. Jorge Nassim Vieira Najjar, then Coordinator of uff's Graduate Program in Education, came to us excited by the news about the possibility of having the presence of Afrânio Mendes Catani, Full Professor of the Faculty of Education of the University of São Paulo (USP), who was retiring.

With the endorsement of the collegiate, we did the registration and we were waiting for the result of the popular edict - which usually brings important researchers from various areas to reinforce the master's and doctorate courses of the institution. The positive news was not a novelty, due to the extensive and qualitative curriculum of our then candidate. But it corroborated one of the main characteristics of the late Professor Jorge Najjar: the intense dedication he always made available to honor the numerous positions he held, inside and outside UFF¹.

¹ Jorge Nassim Vieira Najjar, Full Professor at UFF, died on 08/19/2020. In addition to relevant institutional performance, as Director of the Faculty of Education and former coordinator of our Graduate Program, Jorge Najjar had effective recognition for his significant academic production, his own engagement in the struggles for public education and his effective zeal with institutional management activities beyond the walls of the university – especially as a member of the Municipal Council of Education of Niterói (RJ) and, more recently, as a member of the State Board of Education of Rio de

It is in honor of him, therefore, that we dedicate the transcription of this interview with Afrânio Mendes Catani – who, to our honor, has just renewed his contract for another year as Visiting Professor of the Graduate Program in Education at UFF.

In this conversation, of almost four hours duration, the central theme was around the metamorphoses that occurred in the Brazilian higher education system, which according to the specialist has four fundamental institutional milestones: the creation of USP, in the 1930s, focused on the formation of São Paulo's elites; the university reform carried out by the Military Dictatorship in the late 1960s, which marked a first movement for the expansion of so-called Brazilian federal universities, with the aim of adopting the departmental model of the American university; the enactment of the National Education Guidelines and Bases Act (LBDEN) of 1996, during the government of Fernando Henrique Cardoso, which aimed to update our higher education system to the privatist prerogatives of a project of integration of the country to transnational globalization; and, finally, the educational policies of the governments of Luís Inácio Lula da Silva, who with a view to configuring a new movement to expand enrollment in Brazilian higher education, sought to combine initiatives that met both the interests of the private education sectors, as well as the prerogatives of civil society movements that act in defense of Public Education. "Due to the continental extension of Brazil, as well as the intense conflicts resulting from the interests of such diverse agents, all these 'reforms' were not effectively completed – but somehow produced as a result the scenario that we have today. Scenario, it should be said, that it is not the best, since we currently live, in Brazilian society, a kind of ultraconservative, anti-scientific and undemocratic 'counterreform', which has been putting in check the few, but important, advances that we have achieved in the field of higher education in recent years", said Afrânio Mendes Catani, who initiated this dialogue telling us a little of his professional trajectory.

Janeiro. Also noteworthy are his work in several educational entities, such as the National Association for the Training of Education Professionals (ANFOPE), the National Association of Education Policy and Administration (ANPAE) and the National Association of Graduate Studies and Research in Education (ANPEd).

1. Good afternoon, Professor. Before dealing directly with the main subject of this interview, which is articulated with the theme of the issue of our magazine *Movimento*, which concerns the transformations that have occurred in our higher education policies, we would like to hear about your professional trajectory. How did this transformation of a young bachelor's degree in Public Administration into an expert and recognized sociologist specializing in educational and cultural issues?

— First of all, I would like to record the pleasure of returning to contribute to *the magazine Movimento*, which I have done there for the 2000s, in an article with Mario Azevedo, a then mentor who was Vice-Rector of the State University of Maringá (PR). Especially now that I am as Visiting Professor of the Graduate Program in Education at UFF. About the question, iníci osaying that I was raised in the interior of the State of São Paulo, in the city of Piracicaba, which is 150 km from the capital. My father, son of Italian immigrants, was a professor and became professor of Analytical Chemistry at the Luiz de Queiroz School of Agriculture, the famous Esalq. Created in this environment, in the phase of choices of continuity of schooling, I saw that there was no pending for the so-called scientific field – which was what marked this region. Differently, the closest we had was a Social Sciences course in Rio Claro (SP), which is about 50 km away, but to be honest, no one knew very well what this was – even confused with Social Work. Finally, almost all young people from here went to the area of Agronomy, Engineering or Dentistry, which were strong areas there. And I convinced my father, with some resistance, to leave home talking about the course of Business Administration that existed at the Getúlio Vargas Foundation (FGV-SP) – which he imagined, with some reason, to be something close to the Economy. In this way, when I was seventeen years old, I went to live in the capital. But i wasn't enrolled yet. I did some courses and took the entrance exam. I ended up entering to do Public Administration, a free course at the time. And it was lucky, because it resembles a State School, French or American type. And, therefore, in it there was a very powerful Department of Social Sciences in the field of Sociology. I took classes with Maurício

Tragtenberg, Sergio Miceli, José Carlos Durand and Vilmar Faria, for example. And not only that. In the legal area, I took classes with Eros Roberto Grau, who came to be Minister of the Supreme Federal Court, and with Celso Antonio Bandeira de Mello, great name of Administrative Law. And already in the second semester I started to act as a monitor, which already demonstrated that my path was not to be an administrator, but that I would act in the public area, but otherwise. I was a bourgeois little boy, but I had a colleague who came from the simplest extracts of our population, and he told me something that translates well this experience: "Getúlio Vargas taught us to speak". I've even written an article about it. In high school, as it was called at the time, it was terrible. We were in the middle of military dictatorship, and the only possible participation was to be quiet and take the tests. FGV-SP, on the other, followed the North American system that had the famous participation score. I had the tests and work, of course, but everyone was forced to do seminars and therefore forced to make guesses. Four years of experiencing this model allows a great tracheo, we end up learning in the marra. A complement is that we were in São Paulo, with great cultural offer, especially cinemas – a habit I worked with my father, still in the countryside, since Piracicaba, despite seeming a cultural environment "suffocating" for a profile like mine, was a relatively developed city. In the capital, of course, this cultural *habitus* has expanded, and others have been developed, such as learning foreign languages. And it was in the monitoring, with Sergio Miceli, that I started my studies on Pierre Bourdieu. I even had the opportunity to be hosted by Miceli in France. Thus, a boy who had hardly ever left Piracicaba ended up in Paris. He came back, and I ended up staying there. On my return, finishing the course at FGV, I started my Master's degree in Sociology with Professor Gabriel Cohn at USP. This movement, from people from other courses to the Social Sciences, was not uncommon. Even if there was some resistance from those who made the most traditional way. It is interesting to note that the dissertation was based on the history of Brazilian cinema, having discussed a lot with Paulo Emílio Salles Gomes, the greatest Brazilian film critic at the time. I had a scholarship from the São Paulo State Research Support Foundation (FAPESP), which articulated with a discipline of the School of Communication and Arts (ECA-USP), where I studied some

subjects. And that's where I arrived at sociology at USP, with the reception of Professor Gabriel Cohn. Then, as a professor, as was very common in that period, I completed, in 1992, my training in the area with a doctorate in Sociology, under the guidance of Professor Heloísa Rodrigues Fernandes – again with a research on Brazilian cinema. Parallel to this training process, with regard to the professional trajectory, I started working as an hourly teacher at FGV-SP itself, at the same time that I started writing for several places, to supplement income. And then, in the early 1980s, I went to the campus of the Paulista State University (Unesp), in Araraquara, in the area of School Administration, to collaborate with Professor Jorge Nagle. In the mid-same decade, I made a contest for the State University of Campinas (Unicamp), in which I stayed a short time. Soon after, I came to the School of Education of USP, where I retired last year. One final point to consider is that the fields of knowledge were not so difficult. We were, in fact, very intuitive and curious, since there was a small intellectual division of labor – which allowed a great interdisciplinarity. Today it is different, since we can not read or what comes out in our central area of research – which denotes the need for intense specialization. They were different assets, in which we had more time for training, to acquire a higher broth of culture. Today, the requirement of curriculum and production are higher for entering the labor market, in any domain.

2. By your answer, we observe that you are not only a researcher of the transformations of Brazilian higher education, but also a witness of the changes that the Brazilian university has undergone in recent decades. It also speaks of a very important period for the structuring of Brazilian higher education, which is soon after the so-called University Reform of the Military Dictatorship, which occurred in 1968. In one of your writings, you state that this reform, despite having suffered the influence of the departmental model of the American university, it was not fully successful. What did she actually mean? ²

² LIMA, Licínio; AZEVEDO, Mário Luiz Neves de; CATANI, Afrânio Mendes. The Bologna Process, the evaluation of Higher Education and some considerations about the New University. *Evaluation*, Campinas; Sorocaba, SP, v. 13, n. 1, pp. 7-36, mar. 2008.

— To talk about it, we will have to go back a little, since I consider that there are four historical and institutional moments that demarcation the main metamorphoses that occurred in the Brazilian higher education system: the creation of USP, in the 1930s; the university reform you cite, carried out by the Military Dictatorship in the late 1960s; the National Education Guidelines and Bases Act (LBDEN) of 1996, during the government of Fernando Henrique Cardoso; and, finally, the educational policies of the governments of Luís Inácio Lula da Silva. Due to the continental extension of Brazil, as well as the intense conflicts resulting from the interests of such diverse agents, all these "reforms" were not effectively completed – but somehow produced as a result the scenario that we have today. Scenario, it should be said, that it is not the best, since we currently live, in Brazilian society, a kind of counter to ultraconservative, anti-scientific and undemocratic reform, which has been calling into check the few, but important, advances that we have achieved in the field of higher education in recent years. But let's go back to each of them, based on a bibliographic reference that I will use in my course this semester here at UFF, which is the work of Professor Luiz Antonio Cunha, one of our greatest experts on the subject. In summary, the model that Brazilian society tried to follow is a predominant mixture of two aspects: Napoleonic and Humboldtian. The first comes from the post-revolutionary French experience, based on Napoleon Bonaparte's mistrust of the universities of the Old Regime, seen as remnants of the ancient state order that survived the French Revolution. And what does he do? Something from which fgv experiences are resulting: the creation of professional schools. We thus have a university system that persists, alongside a system of professional schools – the great *écoles* studied by Pierre Bourdieu, which form the professional elites of the nation. As is the case today, in France and Germany, for example – where many prefer to have power in a French state-owned company than higher salaries in a multinational. Concrete examples: the Higher Normal School, the School of Mines, the School of Bridges and Paths. Rather than what the Portuguese administration does in Brazil, when the Royal Family came in at the beginning of the 19th century. The point is that, here in Brazil, institutionalization did

not take place in a complete, robust way. Our structure remained stable, as evidenced by the permanence of the Chair until 1968, which was extinguished by dictatorial reform. Extinct, but somehow persistent in practice in various faculties, such as Medicine and Law, in which there are still very clear domains of certain people and groups – who work, in departments, as if they were Chairs, where everything that comes out of "my laboratory, I am the author". It is what Charles Wright Mills will call, in the 1950s, in the United States, "Academic Statesmen" – people who do, of course, relevant works, but who, after that, become administrators of true research complexes. Taking a leap, and then returning, is what we have today, for example, in the area of medicine, with electronic journals, with short articles and a very large number of authors. Everything came out of "my lab", it's there, but what counts is the first and second names, which were the ones who actually did the research, and the last one – which is the Statesman's. The university in Brazil was slow to consolidate, perhaps by our cultural characteristics. A late economy that was perhaps the last in Latin America to worry about having a university degree. Est the late implementation of the university spirit ends up weighing in the "frying of eggs". Even USP, at its beginning, was just a building, some classrooms, a collective room of teachers and a secretariat. The expansion – with architecture and adequate housing, especially laboratories – is slowly occurring, according to the emergence of institutes and future campuses. Also, following the North American trend, according to Jean Baudrillard, spaces conducive to reflection and studies, due to the removal, but little conducive to protests. It was, in the end, the scheme of Portugal: Court in Lisbon; university in Coimbra. In the case of USP, it is worth remembering, that the initial premise was that every student went through the *mater cell*, which was the Faculty of Philosophy, Sciences and Letters - which ended up not happening. Medicine, for example, never made it to campus. Law remained close to the courts. And, engineering has only recently come, the Polytechnic School. In any case, USP, created in 1934, was an educational response of the Bourgeoisie of São Paulo to its successive political defeats – which did not correspond to its economic power. They sought to affirm, as Florestan Fernandes and Claude Lévi-Strauss have said, that the model of domination based only on "the doctor, the lawyer

and the engineer", was not working. We would have to have a fourth element: the Social Sciences. And the most complete model of this fourth element was being implemented in the capital of São Paulo itself, which was the Free School of Political Sociology (ELSP), created in 1933 – which was inspired by American sociology, of quantitative brand, based on probing techniques, such as the *famous Survey*, which would be, in theory, more able to capture reality. Initially, one of the highlights was the election poll conducted by Donald Pierson. In the case of USP, returning a little, we try to articulate this Napoleonic model of professionalization with the Huboldtian, germanic base, which aims to articulate teaching, research and extension – which, in essence, aims at achieving a university integrated with society. It is good to remember that USP was not the only attempt of this nature. We had other initiatives in Brazil. And, even, I believe that there was a little more success at Unicamp, which began its activities in 1966, through the work of the doctor Zeferino Vaz, and at the National University of Brasilia (UNB), created in 1962, at the initiative of anthropologist Darcy Ribeiro. The main meaning, at least initial of them, was the connection with the respective communities, a university integrated to the collectivity. Zeferino had a phrase that defined this purpose well: "What is university? Brains, brains and brains that interact with society." On the other hand, USP, whose size, in terms of enrollment, is the sum of Unicamp and Unesp, ended up getting closer to the North American model than the European model – even if we think about the sizes, differentiated, of the metropolises of each region. And what did Unicamp get? To be a university that combines well, including in number of students, undergraduate and graduate. On the other hand, UNB turned out to be, it can be said, but inclusive – following the tendencies of the federal, even more contemporaneously, with the pioneering adoption of affirmative actions in forms of quotas. The fact is that, as I said, Brazil is a continental country and, although we welcome this so-called diversity of models, in quantitative terms the growth was slow and below our needs. In fact, what we have is a hybrid, in which so-called professional schools operate within the universities themselves. And this is undoubtedly due to the university reform carried out during the Military Dictatorship, which expanded federal units throughout several regions of the country.

3. We know that this expansion occurred linked to an authoritarian national development project, as it could not fail to be in a dictatorial cycle. However, it seems that this state-based structure, instead of gaining a resignification for a period of re-democratization, ended up becoming functional. From our point of view, the public university, after occupying an important place as a locus of democratic resistance in the 1970s, maintained some legitimacy in the following decade – which is proven by its recognition during the Constituent Process of 1987-88. But soon after, already in the government of Fernando Collor, elected at the end of 1989, a constant and radical liberalizing threat came over her. This, in the educational field, indicated the need for a more effective action of the State in Basic Education, while in Higher Education a greater space would be opened for the private sector. Does that line of reasoning make sense?

— Yes, it does. This issue goes back, even, to the very harsh perspective that Professor José Goldemberg (former Rector of USP, who held the position of Minister of Education, between 1991 and 1992, in the Collor government) had of the federal system of higher education. He said, in short, of course, the following: "We have, in Brazil, half a dozen universities. The rest are great schools. And we have, therefore, to centralize the resources on those who actually do research." Paulo Renato de Souza, Minister of Education of the Fernando Henrique Cardoso government, between 1995 and 2002, will take this to the last consequences. For example, he implemented the Teaching Stimulus Bonus (GED), which aimed to stimulate a larger workload in the classroom, to the detriment of research and extension. An appeal, it should be said, that it would not be incorporated into the salary – and that it was also intended to discourage the strikes. It should even be said that there was great uptake since there had been no salary adjustments for a long time. But the important fact is that, somehow, this mischaracterized the university model that seeks a balance between teaching, research, and extension. The FHC governments, in fact, adopted other hardening measures, reducing hiring even in the event of vacancy. Somehow, it is how

well defined another important scholar of science, Professor Carlos Roberto Jamil Cury, speaking of Idben's role in 1996, said that she ended up "updating" the structure of Brazilian higher education to the international scene. But, from my point of view, in a form of internationalization, unfortunately, subordinate and unautonomous. It would be an "evaluated autonomy."

4. In your text already mentioned, analyzing what was happening at the time, you went so long as to state: "In the 1990s [...] state and higher education reforms had orthodox liberalism emulated by the World Bank as their theoretical framework." And that, "at the beginning of the 21st century, any movement of university reform that is intended to be implemented in the world, among other inspirations and references, is obliged to mention the Bologna Process". And you defined it: "Higher education as a public good, assuming a social dimension and democratic public policy, appears considerably neglected in the Bologna Process." How did this process go through the debates on Brazilian higher education in the 2000s?³⁴

— The Bologna Process is, yes, a watershed. And, for the record, this article, written with two friends, generated a lot of controversy, being perhaps one of my most cited texts. But the trends, incremented by this document, are previous. A few years before its publication, I participated in a table at a congress, in which were Pedro Krotsch, a deceased Argentine professor, sociologist Luiz Antonio Cunha, and Juan Carlos Campbell Esquivel, a retired professor at the Catholic University of Valparaiso (Chile). The theme was about the relationship between the public and the private in Education.

³ Check previous note.

⁴ Bologna Process is the best-known name of the Bologna Declaration, an agreement signed in 1999 by education ministers from several countries in Europe in the Italian city of the same name. The document initiated an articulation process aimed at facilitating the movement of graduates between the countries of the European Education Area – which required an adaptation and standardisation of the contents, formats and funding of university courses. On the subject, check, for example: SILVEIRA, Zuleide Simas. Conceptions of technological education in the reform of higher education: purposes, continuities and ruptures (1995-2010). 445f. Thesis (Doctorate in Education) - Faculty of Education, Fluminsense Federal University, Niterói, 2011.

And Cunha, at the time, wrote an article that has a very happy title: "The public and the private: a frontier in motion". Until then we knew the limits of this border: public, which was free; private, which was paid. And in general, in the context of higher education, the public was better than the private. In particular, the private occupied, we cannot deny, with more excellence some niche markets. The border begins to move when evaluations begin. Even with the members of many rectors who were previously against any proposal for control. But as the results come out good, they change their posture. Professor Krotzsch, who ran one of the most important academic journals in Argentina, *Pensamiento Universitario*, said that the relationship between the public and the private began to become *blurry* – that is, blurred. And Campbell presented the Chilean framework, in which there were good institutions both in the private sector and in the public sector. But with an aggravating factor: none with gratuity. In the Brazilian case, the public sector significantly dominates graduate school – with a large and complex evaluation system, which is based on research funding agencies and peer regulation. Which has ensured a certain quality. What operates at this level is, in fact, the control by evaluation, through a series of indicators – especially those of publication in scientific journals, with an increasing demand for internationalization. And a kind of one-way internationalization, based on the predominance of the English language, on the illusion that the works will be read by a supposedly larger audience. And these criteria ended up, therefore, going through public tenders – with this type of publication gaining more relevance than teaching skills and outgoing activities. And, as is the case out there, what comes to prevail is the profile of the "Academic Statesman", as Wright Mills already said, when he analyzed the American scenario of the 1950s – which, currently, are true managers of research funds, including, as a case I met in England, through the hiring of graduate students to teach in the place of the teacher, so that he, in short, researches. If he doesn't, he won't survive in the academic system. On the other side of the end, there are young graduates, newly graduated, super-graduated, who need to teach in various institutions to survive. It is as the British sociologist Michael Burawoy defines: The American universities become business organizations, with two main characteristics. First, everything is charged, starting with tuition. Second,

salaries vary according to teacher productivity. Another effect is budget cutting policies, which flatten the salary base and employment contracts become temporary. Also, as I said, with the hiring of graduate students in precarious situations. And those who still have longer contracts, end up not being able to advance in the career. Finally, as has also happened in Brazil, all other peripheral activities – safety, transportation and, among others, cleaning – have outsourced contracts, whose companies, in general, care little about labor issues. This is what we're watching happen here, in the country. Budgets are now frozen when not diminished. Thus, the nature of our work (in research, teaching and extension) is transformed. If you invest, for example, in the production of individual books, you make a wrong path. The incentive is for you to publish in already qualified journals – in some areas, including having to pay. If possible, with resources from funding agencies, to have more legitimacy. Another complementary data is that this organization of business type ends up making students a kind of workforce subordinated to the most qualified teachers, since their research projects need to be anchored, in a kind of umbrella, to the research program of the advisor. It is, in the end, a process of professionalization that casts the scientific field, reducing the space for innovation and divergent thinking. In graduate programs, for example, it only tells the evaluation what is done with its students. Leaving aside other forms of production that involves different ways of articulation and partnerships. From my point of view, it is a violent process – which even stimulates competition practices that do not guarantee academic quality, such as the dubious co-authorias in various texts that are generally the fruit of an individual (although well-oriented) research.

5. In this historical journey, by its analysis, it seems that the said university autonomy ends up being greatly compromised. A process which, also according to its assessment, expressed in the text already mentioned above, has not changed substantially in the PT governments. What are the continuities and discontinuities, in the field of higher education, between the FHC and Lula governments?

— In fact, there is a lot of continuity, some distinctions and certain ambiguities. For example, the case of the Program to Support Plans for Restructuring and Expansion of Federal Universities, which became known as Reuni. If, on the one hand, there was great opening of universities without proper planning, to meet political clientelism and diverse interests, on the other hand, the inclusive relevance of creating courses and careers in remote places where there were no opportunities for qualified access to higher education cannot be denied. But one thing still little investigated is the period leading up to the beginning of the PT government, when there were interesting debates about the public policy proposals that could be implemented when Lula assumed the Presidency of the Republic. One of them, for example, headed by the political scientist Wanderley Guilherme dos Santos, who represented, unless mistaken, the group that would go to the Ministry of Science and Technology, had very interesting ideas, based on very reliable economic calculations, of strengthening the research carried out in public universities. But, the ideas that prevailed were those of Professor Fernando Haddad, who would become, after Cristovam Buarque and Tarso Genro, the Minister of Education. Generally speaking, he argued that the greater possibility of expanding access, at low cost, would be for private institutions, whether community or confessional. This is where the University for All Program (PROUNI) was configured, which enabled the expansion of vacancies with resources from the tax waiver mechanism. In numerical terms, it cannot be denied that it was, rather, a successful project of inclusion – including the advent of economic and ethnic-racial quotas. But in the end, the major beneficiaries were the "diploma factories", which were able to make a lot of money – even though quality private institutions such as pontifical institutions, confessionals and good-level communities could also be encouraged. But in the end, it ended up favoring the commodification of higher education. Lula himself did not admit criticism of PROUNI, even criticism itself. Which is a questionable position, since, after all, the role of academia is, yes, to criticize public policies, regardless of our ideological and partisan positions. It is as Max Weber has said: the intellectual is an unarmed prophet, stretched by the state, to criticize the state itself. But no power likes that very much. And I've always been critical in this sense, of

collaborating to make policies better. Also because it is not possible to deny that, in the short term, access mechanisms like this are important to reach the unassisted, especially those who have had a low quality basic education, who can there, in this experience, improve qualification and life. This exists in much of the world, including the developed one, and which is generally called post-secondary education. This can and should exist, as well as Distance Education itself (Distance Education), also very stimulated in the period. But not, from our point of view, as a priority public policy for higher education, as Professor Haddad thought – who, not without a certain reason, considered that investing resources, without due consideration and without proper control, in federal educational institutions, would be a waste of public resources. He regarded them as "bottomless bags", due to excessive, almost automatic demands, for salaries and progressions – which invariably result in strikes and stoppages. Hence, it is also born that the afore mentioned Reuni was born, as an attempt to refer this issue.

6. In a text of 2005, you come to consider PROUNI as a radicalization of the Fund for Student Financing of Higher Education (FIES) – an old public policy, created still in the Military Dictatorship, which had been reformulated by FHC, but which was also strengthened under Lula. You even stated that by trying to combine citizenship and privatization, the then government ended up strengthening private institutions, even contrary to the current National Education Plan (PNE). He added: "Some currents are broken that prevented access to higher education, but there is no more than a fear of second-class citizenship to the contemplated. In addition to the questionable quality of the courses offered, the beneficiaries will have access to a privatist teaching and guided by the lack of conditions that guarantee their permanence until obtaining the diploma". Looking back to the past, it may be even difficult to imagine that any party, whatever it was, could give up a government mechanism with such political, electoral and institutional power. In this sense, it is worth highlighting another dimension of continuity between the governments of the PSDB and the PT: the

claim that it would be possible to regulate this educational market, through the National Council of Education (CNE), for example.⁵

— Many researchers, including myself, who participated in a group at the National Association for Research in Education (ANPEd) on the subject, pointed out that these control mechanisms would not work. We did not deny, as I said, the inclusive dimension of these actions, but we pointed out that the private contingent is not satisfied with the limits. In the current scenario, with the correlation of hegemonic political forces that we have, this is even more evident. If, at the beginning, the concern was still noble, linked to the formation of elites, currently what vige is a rampant pragmatism. Just look at the commercials. I saw yesterday on television: "Take your course without leaving home. It's only \$99.00." It is very difficult today, this type of offer to suffer some brake on the evaluation and control bodies. In the PT governments, the list of enrollments, in undergraduate, between public and private were maintained. There was an acute expansion, by the mechanisms we have already pointed out, but there was a balance in the relationship, causing the percentage of participation between public and private to be parked. In recent years, we have even seen a decrease in the total number of students – due to the economic crisis, which is expected to worsen with the pandemic we are experiencing. But the trend, in the resumption, is a greater participation of the private sector. At the present juncture, it will be very difficult to contain the privatist lobbies, which represent very strong financial groups – with great capacity for influence over the current government. And my criticism, recalling what I have already said about what I think of the role of the intellectual, in the sense pointed out by Weber, is that it is the great historical bottleneck: several policies of governments, many even good, have not turned into state policies. This demonstrates a great fragility of our, political and societal.

⁵ CATANI, Afrânio Mendes; GILIOLI, Renato de Souza Porto. Prouni at the crossroads: between citizenship and privatization. *Critical Lines*, Brasília, v. 11, n. 20, p. 55-68, Jan./Jun. 2005.

7. In this scenario, of unbridled pragmatism, as you say, in an increasingly unscientific social environment, is there room for the survival of a Humanian model, albeit hybrid, of university?

— Even today the public sector concentrates many so-called scientific careers. The private sector, on the other, invests more in so-called professional careers. The only career that has a certain balance is Medicine – with large public schools and expensive private schools. The tendency is that the courses that have market are strengthened, not only by reducing state investment, but also because competition, private, by the resources of the public fund will tend to increase. In the Brazilian graduate program, which is of excellence, the tendency is for gratuity to remain, even with a slightly higher participation of the private sector – which can only be charged in some areas where there is effective demand. In the area of Education is that we have a relative exception, with great participation of the private initiative – forged, even, with several retired professors from state universities. In the area of cinema, for example, where I have also worked, private participation is more robust than in others. That is, using Professor Cunha's metaphor, the boundary between public and private will continue to move. It will have differentiated impacts according to the areas and courses. But the tendency to privatisation will gain more and more strength – if there is no change in the social and political conjuncture that we are living. But I doubt very much that this can happen in the short term, since the conservative or reactionary forces have proved to be very actionable – even attacking minimally civilizing public policies, such as affirmative action. And not only attacking public higher education, but, in some cases, adopting strategies of generational formation – as demonstrated by the most contemporary studies of sociologist Maria Alice Nogueira, with which I have organized some research on the work of Pierre Bourdieu – which do not dispense with what can happen in Brazilian higher education. These elite contingents, including university professors, are preparing their children to attend undergraduate schools that specialize in niche markets, such as fgv or INSPER, a famous são Paulo business school. Or, as a complement, attend graduate school outside the country. The tendency, for this audience, and also

for some analysts, is that public universities look like French university institutions: they will remain at a good level; but not of excellence. Even by the sad assumption that there will be a fall in quality by the public that begins to enter due to the so-called affirmative action policies. The process, of course, is not irreversible. It will depend on what we can do, internally and externally, to maintain the excellence of what we have in graduate studies and also on the so-called less valued courses – including in the field of Education, Pedagogy and other degrees. Taking advantage, contrary to what some believe, even the strength of the new population contingents that have entered and are still entering our courses, whose status as a teacher, despite the proletarianization process, is greater than the labor markets that they could once achieve. From my point of view, we will live the reclassification of some courses, with a potential positive repositioning of their clientele. Not that I am optimistic, not least because our career will remain under attack – especially for the kind of internationalization, as I said, subordinate that we are adopting. And our category is still in a much more reactive than affirmative posture. But we will have to learn to deal with this situation to find ways of resistance and, more importantly, overcoming. One challenge is to make what we do inside and outside the university more visible. Not that we have to adopt common sense views on teaching work. But explain the particularities of our profession. Some of the closest people, who are not from the area, ask me, "Oh! But you don't show up on campus." I explain that I am not a caretaker – that it is a noble but different profession that requires physical presence. And that my research develops in the daily life of society, in various spaces. And that, even, something unusual in other areas, much of the resources I need to work are outside the university – including in my home, in libraries, in digital files, etc. Perhaps the new media will make this more evident, making dialogue, which is difficult, become more profitable. In some way, the current coronavirus pandemic has allowed a greater dissemination of scientific work. We will see if this trend will hold.

8. And how could we improve the dialogue between the university and the rest of the population?

— This is articulated with what we have just talked about. It is very difficult for our population, which has poor access to Basic Education, the understanding of the scientific way of working and the necessary corresponding investment. And, also, with what I have already said about the reclassification of some courses, with a potential positive repositioning of their clientele. Bourdieu has a very interesting expression to define people of simple origin who can, by opportunity, fiber and competence, enter environments previously not intended for them. They are people, and here goes in a free translation, which are "results of the commoner effort". And somehow these people end up fitting, on some merit, to say, into the "self-fulfilling prophecies" of the education system – which often benefit students from more "aristocratic" backgrounds. The challenge of this contingent is to act in the new environment in a more democratic way – to do as fgv did with some of my colleagues, from more modest backgrounds, teaching them to speak. After all, the university is a transformative experience. And thus fulfilling the function of denaturalizing the ideology of the gift – of the achievable self-fulfilling destinies. Questioning, therefore, the contradictions and inequalities existing in the differentiated educational offerings put to the various social classes. It is, in the end, the synthesis of Bourdieu's own educational sociology, when he stated: more than one, between two young people of the French bourgeoisie, goes to university; less than two, among a hundred young working class, manages to get to university. Which is socially terrible, since these selection mechanisms are heavy. And the young workers' families who go, will suffer greatly. Most of them will still enter professional universes that demand less cultural capital. But it is from this group, perhaps, in the Brazilian case, that some forms of action can come that makes the best defense of the public university – even if we keep in mind that social mobility is slow. It's more a generational issue than an individual one. On the issue of gender, for example. Maybe my daughter's grandchildren are the real witnesses to the struggles we're fighting today. Just as we are witnesses of struggles that preceded us. Hence the importance of being attentive to the real Brazil we face today. An extremely harsh reality, in which we watch a shocking unscientific spirit, based on a retrograde moral

agenda and unrepublican religiosity, which makes us wonder: where are we going to end up? Our role in this scenario is to disseminate scientific thinking – not forgetting that, somehow, we are always behind. And in increasingly difficult working conditions, they harvest us because it is not part of the calculations of "academic profitability" in force. In the case of graduate school, sometimes we end up being tougher on us than the system itself.

9. Speaking of Bourdieu, here is one last question, but that, in addition to articulating with the issue of the expansion of higher education, the central theme of the interview, is also in line with the interests of these interviewers who toil in the field of Sociology of Education, in which the respective French thinker is a great reference. How can we attract new readers to the Bourdieusian universe – which, we know, is considered quite airtight and difficult?

— This question reminded me of the times when I was a research assistant to Sergio Miceli. In a discipline on Durkheim, the students turned to me to ask the teacher for a "new" path to the author's understanding – since direct contact with his texts was not being very beneficial. Hence he recommended to us the reading of *empirical foundations of sociological explanation*, of the master Florestan Fernandes. Well, the concrete fact is that the students decided to go back to the originals of the French author. After all, Florestan had several qualities, but his sociological texts, we can say, are not so easy, at first contact. What is certain is that this is a difficult question to answer, since it varies a lot of the type of teaching work and the student's repertoire. Thinking about it, even by doing, with your permission, a self-propaganda, is that we launched the Bourdieu Vocabulary.⁶ It was a tremendous challenge, but I believe, modestly, that it helps a lot. Bourdieu is an author that we, when we start to have contact, do not know very well where to start. Almost all his texts are written with many references, based on a practical epistemology that is very proper to him – and

⁶ CATANI, Afrânio Mendes; NOGUEIRA, Maria Alice; HEY, Paula Ana; MEDEIROS, Cristina Carta Cardoso. *Bourdieu Vocabulary*. Belo Horizonte: Authentic, 2017.

therefore, at first glance, very airtight. For example, you cannot dialogue with it if you start from a very broad generic premise, such as the notion of "last instance." No, if the description of a phenomenon begins already with some explanation of "last instance", it is because one does not need to explain anything else. It is necessary to analyze and understand the mediations that may even result in something that is called "last instance". And our Vocabulary *helps* right there, since it tries to identify a certain order in the constitution of the terms of Bourdiesian sociology. And we used a notion that he liked very much, based on the philosophy of Ludwig Wittengenstein, of using concepts as a "toolbox" for the understanding of social reality and also of the author's own work. There are also some new commentators who draw very interesting maps. One of them, which I indicate, is José Marciano Monteiro, released last year, which is a beautiful introductory reading. In the field of educational research, a good tip is a small essay by Tomaz Tadeu da Silva, who is in the book *Terminal Identities*.⁸ And there he makes a similar warning to what I did earlier. Those who arrive at university with a finalistic motivation, as it is not uncommon in Pedagogy, will have a great disappointment. Bourdieu is somehow discouraging in this sense, since he is very skeptical of the possibility of a strictly militant sociology. I remember a student who, at the beginning of one of my courses, said to me, "I'm not going to do this course because I don't like the author." I asked why. She said, "I prefer [Antonio] Gramsci." Understanding the issue, I tried to argue that the two authors – extremely important – are different. One was a great political activist who produced seminal reflections, in a given context, without empirical research – that is, taking his practice as his own object. And the other has always been an academic who based his epistemological assumptions on analysis of concrete issues, taking the various historical subjects as "objects" – although with the care of not objecting to them in an aprioristic theory. They are different paths of knowledge production, not necessarily self-cancelable. Maybe they can be complementary. I've had a lot of dialogue, but it didn't work. The girl's gone. And not just her. But I'm so sure you've got a good class. It is that Bourdieu is really very

⁷ MONTEIRO, José Marciano. *10 lessons on Bourdieu*. Petrópolis (RJ): Voices, 2019.

⁸ SILVA, Tomaz Tadeu da. *Terminal Identities: transformations in pedagogy policy*. Petrópolis (RJ): Voices, 1996, chapter "Bourdieu and education"

disamer to the perspective, common in our area, that through a long (sometimes not so much) learning process opens the way to a collective, or even individual, process of emancipation. It does not give because the very production of knowledge, from the Bourdiesian perspective, needs to be contradicted, criticized, and known. This requires a "fiber" of self-criticism that can put into that our militant trust. From my teaching experiences with Bourdieu, including extension actions for a larger audience of educators, what I realize is that his work allows, in the end, a very deep self-analysis of our own practices – and of the structures that condition our subjectivities. It hurts a lot. It could be the beginning of an emancipation process. But you don't guarantee it. And Bourdieu applies this to himself, especially when he speaks of his family origins and his own trajectory – of isolation and loneliness. Up close, when we stop to analyze, you realize that Bourdieu was never a happy person. He has always been a dissatisfied person and has always been displaced, in conflict with himself and others – a person, this is known, difficult to live with, including with his collaborators. In fact, he discovers the illusion that the academic environment is a special place, separate from the world, as an exclusive *locus* of virtue. But returning to the subject, one can start with his classic texts, but there will be a lot of difficulty, by the type of writing adopted. A good way out, perhaps, is to start with his last texts, the so-called combat writings, such as *Contrafogos* – in which he practices a posture of scientific⁹ dissemination more adjusted to the public. Anyway, this will always depend on the type of audience, which is what will determine the paths that can alleviate difficulties and resistances. Even taking into account the quality of the translations, which are quite varied. Finally, one last tip: avoid making condemnations to the author – and this is not just about Bourdieu – from the current context. Every author is a person of his time. And that should be taken into consideration. And Bourdieu, like everyone else, has his doors closed. But in the end, his work remains powerful for the unveiling of the contradictions of our education systems and unequal production of cultural capital. It is worth it.

⁹ BOURDIEU, Pierre. *Counterfires: tactics to confront neoliberal invasion*. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 1998.

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