

Historic Challenges of Inclusion: Institutional Characteristics of Two New Federal Universities in Brazil

Manuel Tavares ,
Eduardo Santos

ABSTRACT :This paper is a reflection on the new university models that emerged in Brazil from government of Luis Inácio Lula da Silva (2002-2010), continued from the former government of Dilma Rousseff. In our view, they represent a “transgression” in relation to the classic models of the university and a national response against the hegemonic lines of power (conceptual and political) of a wider process of reconfiguration of higher education in the contemporary world. We take as case studies for this debate the federal universities of *Fronteira Sul (UFFS)*, based in Chapecó, Santa Catarina, and *Sul da Bahia (UFSB)*, based in Itabuna, Bahia, because they are institutions that assume commitments with the ecology of knowledge (Santos, 2004; Benincá, 2011) and with the omnilateral cognitive democracy (Romão, 2013), which places the university at the service of historically oppressed populations and promotes the inclusion of other territories, cultures and epistemologies. In their founding documents both institutions claim the condition of radically democratic and strongly inclusive universities, as well as proposing a focus on regional integration. We defend the claim that such models are close to a popular perspective of higher education, from the point of view of its institutional and curricular matrices or their inclusion policies. This text is guided by the analysis of data collected with research professors of the project “Monitoring the Popular University in Brazil,” developed by the Program of Graduate Studies in Education, University Nove de Julho (PPGE-Uninove).

Keywords: popular education; higher inclusive education; cultural and epistemological diversity; regional integration; Federal University of Sul da Bahia; Federal University Fronteira Sul

I. Introduction

The prevailing public policies in Brazilian Education, overall, has deepened the excluding attribute of its higher education national system, which produces a reality that privileges the elite and excludes the disadvantaged social groups. The university as institution was belatedly established in the early 21st century¹ and shaped with paradigms of classical Western universities (humboldtian, napoleonic and American) and their respective educational practices since they regulated by a single logic and rationality model. The universities appear to reproduce a colonization process on the social imaginary, sustained nowadays, in times of neoliberal globalization and national systems internalization, by the coloniality of power² and knowledge (Mignolo, 2010; Quijano 2000). On this trajectory, contributing for the maintenance of a geopolitical knowledge put into view by conceptions and interests from the wealth accumulation system center parts.

This is largely due to the adoption of institutional models that disqualify other intellectual production methods, the irreducibility towards the model of hegemonic rationality and the historic political inattention of national governments on the essential process of inclusion at this level of education. However, the implementation of new universities during presidents Lula da Silva and Dilma Rousseff’s governments display institutional characteristics of strong commitment to the inclusion of: i. new social segments previously excluded from this

¹ It is important to note that in Brazil the institutions of higher education are classified according to academic organization: universities, university centers, colleges and federal institutes. The division differentiates, among other elements: the higher or lower commitment to institutionalized research (opposed to ‘teaching institutes’), the universality (offering courses on the three main fields of knowledge), and by the pedagogical and administrative autonomy (in which colleges do not savor). The academical organization ‘university’ has in fact been late established in the country –first third of the 21st century, although, according to Cunha (1980) the same can’t be said of the creation of other higher superior institutions.

² Although engendered on the concept of colonialism that refers to a structure of domination/exploitation the concept of coloniality is more profound and lasting. In Quijano’s perspective (2000), coloniality is one of the constitutive elements of the worldwide pattern of capitalist power, and it is sustained on the imposition of an ethnic classification of the world population as a foundation block for power, operating in each sphere means and dimensions- materials, and subjective- of everyday social existence and societal scale. Coloniality and modernity are associated as constitutive axis of world power pattern until the present day.

level of education- those proceeding from public schools, indigenous and quilombola population, organized groups from urban and rural social movements; ii. an epistemological perspective that intends to incorporate other knowledge that are not strictly qualified as scientific, iii. new territories that allow a decentralization of higher education institutions from city centers. This inclusive ‘shift’ that goes beyond the access to university places, by itself represents a change on the public policies that had set the higher education historically developed in Brazil, which is supported by the creation of new federal universities guided by the perspective of regional integration (new territories, new social and economical arrangements, other educational arrangements), new knowledge (epistemological habilitation), new cultures (inclusion of ethnic and social diversity).

From a methodological perspective, this paper adopts a qualitative approach based on analyses of official documents from two federal universities: Universidade Federal da Fronteira Sul (UFFS) and Universidade Federal do Sul da Bahia (UFSB), along with interviews with members of their higher administration, a member of the peasant women movement for the previous and, members of the indigenous and quilombola communities for the latter. We present here the research that are being produced on the “Brazilian Popular University Observatory” (2013-2016), developed by the Researchers of the Program for Graduate Studies of Education at Uninove (PPGE- Uninove), on the governmental platform for development called Capes-Obeduc.

With an expositive point of view, we establish the theoretical debate and present some official data that reflects the inclusion process on higher education of the last decades, highlighting the period of 1995 and beyond, a moment of bigger political stability with the return of direct elections on a national level, while worldwide there was a spur of hegemonic globalization and the wide impacts of geopolitical and geo economic changes.

Furthermore we present the institutional characteristics that we consider distinct from the two new institutions, UFFS and UFSB, which implements a strong inclusion policy of the popular governments of Lula da Silva and Dilma Rousseff³. That, within a perspective of regional integration using statements collected in interviews with members of the senior administration, and public data from these universities.

Thus, we present in this paper the elements of the institutional matrix that characterizes the studied institutions. This model proposes the mission and more ample objectives, and sets the territorial, pedagogical and economical context. Thus, the political position must correspond with its principles beyond an organic relationship; it must also correspond with its corporate surroundings.

And if these new universities have a distinct institutional project, the epistemological foundations that guide their actions will also be distinct. This happens especially due to the focus on inclusion and educational proposal grounded in the principles of popular education. The main categories we used in this study were: regional integration, inclusion (in the three mentioned dimensions) and popular education.

In the end we establish final considerations, justifying the institutional rationality that encourage these new federal universities and point out the challenges they have in implementing their inclusion projects on practical aspects mentioned here.

II. University and Knowledge Production

The university is a historical-social creation that assumes the mission to, on one hand, mold human beings and produce knowledge, and on the other, be a critical instance of itself and society. Therefore, besides being an engine of social and economic development upheld by the society, and an engine for historic and social formation, at some point.

The institution “university” was a key element for the proliferation of European and Western civilization values, the hegemony of experimental science and the course how knowledge has been constructed worldwide. Knowledge occupies, today, a central spot on production processes. In the actual economic and productive model the most important factor stopped being the capital availability, labor and raw material, and is now the intensive use of knowledge and information (Bernheim & Chauí, 2008). The international corporations have on their board a Chief Knowledge Officer (CKO), responsible for the supervision and management of knowledge inside the company’s organization. Hence, the central position of higher education institutions as strategic site of citizen formation, beyond the reproductive goals of the wealth accumulation system.

It is the advantage of knowledge centrality and information technology that represents the differential standard of higher education institutions and respective societies. However, being inaccessible for every social group becomes an exclusion criterion of knowledge appropriation for millions of people. Once knowledge appropriation became “a wealth and power pillar of nations” (Bernheim & Chauí, 2008, p.7) and attribute for economic and financial power it has been accessible only for the “rich breed”, while inaccessible for the “poor breed” and all those who have been historically marginalized, vilified and exploited.

Rooted in a “scientific” perspective of modernity, the academic community in the North and in the South denies and excludes all perspectives that do not fit the scientific criteria imposed by modernity. Colonial and

³In another paper, we have compared the different theories orientations in governments FHC and Lula da Silva, based on the conceptions of equality and equity. Santos, E. & Silva, Mauricio in the references.

neocolonial in its essence, these criteria not only prevented human and social sciences to establish themselves in its epistemological and methodological particularity, but also establish a breach between scientific and other knowledge –artistics, and empirical knowledge (Freire, 1996) – for not recognizing ontological, and perhaps academic dignity.

Knowledge, a world heritage, should be an emancipation factor and widening factor of democracy, but instead becomes one main exclusion factor. Cognitive injustice is the other side of social injustice. The called knowledge and information society is governed by an excluding logic –the market, mainly the financial market – that transforms knowledge into assets– what is likely an objective of the World Trade Organization (Haddad, 2008; Warde & Haddad, 1998), and prevents community, civil society, and social movements from participating as fundamental pillars of regulation, promotion of information and necessary knowledge of cultural and social life.

In our time the questions of university and higher education involve on one side the uncertainty about university tasks inside contemporary societies, its internal organization, regulation forms and the relationship with political, economic and financial power centers, and on the other the inclusion of new audience to what and how the knowledge is provided, the bond between teaching, research, extension, innovation and more recently, internalization.

What unsettles and concerns us is the inclusion of diversity in the university, in all distinct dimensions: cultural, epistemological and territorial. We are guided by these following questions: how do these institutions act to incorporate emergent and insurgent rationalities, other epistemologies and territories that result from the clash of different cultures? How can they mold students for scientific research and for the critical exercise of citizenship by incorporating different speeches, in particular the popular speech? To propose such matters means to identify, at a first look, the directives and express objectives in the institutional documents that are characterized in new tasks for public institutions of higher education.

Relying on some proposals and theoretical analysis (Bernheim & Chauí, Santos, Romão, Quijano and Mignolo), we defend the thesis that the classic model universities, given their commitments with economic and financial power and the educational recommendations of multilateral organizations, by the rigid and compartmentalized structure to organize their activities teaching and the degree of colonialism (Quijano, 2000) that invades the dimensions of power and knowledge, have not demonstrated the ability to include different knowledge and promote emancipatory multiculturalism and, much less, interculturalism.

The universities that have been created in Brazil intend to show that there are other world perspectives, other languages to cultural expression, different ways of learning and knowledge production. It is by doing this that they reveal and incorporate creative possibilities related to various cultural traditions, enhancing the institute of popular sovereignty. Under another political and institutional characterization, they try to answer to the populations' problems and needs, locally or regionally, and represent an instrument of social inclusion and political emancipation, as defended Anísio Teixeira⁴ The proposal of social inclusion, especially, in curriculum matrices, cultural and epistemological diversity, which also implies territorial diversity since these new institutions are concentrated in places that lacked higher education offers, such as the countryside. By doing this, universities may even contribute for a global reorder of production and knowledge steam, clearly reordering the geopolitics of global knowledge.

One of the key-elements of this higher education policy is the space for social movements and oppressed segments of the class struggle to participate with objective of creating a quality public university. This participation promotes a popular dimension not seen in classic universities, and it is due, among other things, an organic relationship with the social movements. Chauí describes it this way (2003, p.14):

The partnership with regional and national social movements may be valuable for society to guide the path of the university, while at the same time the institution would offer reflexive and critical elements for the action and the development of these movements.⁵

If the university endorses social groups' liberation practices that have been historically ignored and oppressed, it would constitute itself popular. This status would also be assured with the capability to incorporate all expertise under the hegemonic knowledge. Then promoting interculturality, or how Santos (2004) would put, the ecology of knowledge; strengthening a legitimate public science with the cognitive democracy being omnilateral instead of unilateral, as Romão& Loss (2013) argue.

⁴Anísio Teixeira was a scholar and Brazilian educator that, among many actions and political activities, worked for the foundation of a national public system of education. The Brazilian organization more productive in studies and research of education in the country carries his name.

⁵Fragment translated by the authors.

We understand that cultural diversity and the inclusion in all levels of education constitute a source for innovation and creation, besides being, obviously, a human rights matter. Thereby, based on the presented reasons, we defend the construction of new models of higher education, with the commitment of curriculum matrices and pedagogical practices that can reach the universalization of knowledge. It is worth finding new models that are rooted locally and regionally in order to answer the demands of the population. Not only to resolve the immediate problems of citizenship, but to make sure there will be a future for other population and territories, and achieve the appraised new models: interdisciplinarity - or transdisciplinarity. As we will see in the research data that is the path administration from UFFS and UFSB intend to take, even though there is so many struggles for wide inclusion in higher education.

III. Inclusion Challenges

Along with the globalization process there is a significant increase of enrollment in higher education globally. Since this level of education has been considered an important stage for leading individuals to be prepared to meet the contemporary production demands, it is at this level that markets and societies have a more significant knowledge of economical competition and citizenry insertion. The expansion in the higher education enrollment has been demonstrated by government agencies and multilateral organizations. "The number of students enrolled worldwide has multiplied by more than a six fold from 1960 to 1995, reaching 150 million by 2007" (Garcia Guardilla, 2013, p.23).

Latin America (Spanish Caribbean included) has not been absent from this expansion process, having increased the number of enrolled from a little less than 6 million in 1985, to more than 17.5 million in 2007, reaching a coverage area of 37%, eleven points more than the global rate of 26% (Garcia Guardilla, 2013).

In Brazil, this expansion movement also had its moments: by the late 1960 when the military government proposed reforms on higher education⁶, along the 1990's with Fernando Henrique Cardoso's terms (1994-2002) and the reforms under the neoliberal agenda. These reforms happened because of a growth on private supply, not due to the number of enrollment in the public universities — truth is that from a baseline of 1.4 million students accounted in 1980, it was only in the year of 2002 that the number of enrollments surpassed the 2 million barrel. On the following Lula da Silva and Dilma Rousseff's government, a continuous rise of enrollment in the private sector sided with a rise of the public education numbers coming from the inducement of a more decisive policy of expansion of the federal government. Data from the Higher Education Census (MEC/Inep 2013) show that enrollments doubled from 2002 and 2012, going from 3.5 to 7.0 million students, and that in the same period, the public sector was responsible for a 74% increment. Nonetheless, Brazil still has an insufficient index of enrolled students, in spite of being all the social and economic importance given to the higher superior universe in the 21st century. Recent data (MEC/Inep, 2013) show a very low schooling rate, 30% in gross numbers and 15.10% in liquid, which represents a low access for the young (18-24y.o.). The percentage is within the global average (26%), a low number when compared to the African countries and parts of the Asian continent.

It is undeniable that under the impulse of public policies toward the tertiary sector of education, the historical series show that recent policies managed, under a third world trend of expanding enrollment, to widen the access to higher education in the country. It was, however, covered by institutional models that we denominate "classic" and under the promotion of student loan and scholarships from private institutions⁷.

There is yet much to do in order to have better numbers in access and continuity period of a vast public in higher education, the country has followed the widening path seen in the whole world, although with some delay. So far it seems that the policies of indirect support to the private sector will remain (the sector holds more than 80% of HEI and more than 74% of enrollment), along with the expansion of public universities and vacant positions in the federal sector (respond for more than 50% of enrollment in public area, today) and the creation of federal institutes which focus is on technologic formation.

It is now up to define policies that have impact on the quality of the activities that compose the mandatory triad of the university: teaching, research and extension; and that include a larger number of students, support their

⁶The higher education reform happened in this period with the advising of the *United States Agency for International Development (USAID)*, following the American model "suggested" by the Atcon Report (1965) and adopted by the MeiraMattos Report (1968).

⁷We refer to the Financial Aid Fund (FIES), created by Law 10,260 of 2001 public line credit for the payment of fees in private HEIs (<http://www.brasil.gov.br/educacao/2015/03/porta-Brasil-reune-informacoes-sobre-fundo-de-financiam-estudant>), and the University for All Program (ProUni), created by Law 11,096/2005, which offers total and partial scholarships to study in the same type of institution (<http://www.brasil.gov.br/educacao/2015/01/lei-do-prouni-completa-dez-anos-1>). The first program reached in 2015, almost 2 million students; the second program celebrates, in the same year, ten years of implementation and the granting of 1,497,180 scholarships.

stay in the universities but also policies that take in other groups of society and their portions of what has been left out of the academic walls. And at last, establish policies that incorporate these cultures and popular knowledge to the scientific knowledge field. These new federal universities –founded during the Lula da Silva and Dilma Rousseff’s governments try to answer this challenge, which most significant characteristics we try to show from UFFS and UFSB’s cases. For the Brazilian higher education study, alike the Latin American, the theoretical and political orientation that drives us:

[...] puts, from the alternative forces of the counter-empire, the problem of constructing the foundation of a movement that sustain the autonomous action of the movements and democratic governments of Latin America [...] a true constituent New Deal [...] that] organizes itself around an overcome of the dependence process, structuring the interdependence among the world-economies and the movements of the proletarian liberation, indigenous and anti-racial on the planet and the democratic government. (Negri & Cocco, 2005, p.189)

Decisively, Romão (2014, p.98) implies that “the unfulfilled promises of globalization towards social justice and democratization brought up reactions around the globe that highlighted the need for alternatives to the hegemonic globalization, or at least an alternative for a way out [...]”.

Under such circumstance the questioning and critical condition that bares the social and political conscience – what constituted the historical mark on the institutional model of higher education called “university” – gave place to an allegedly scientific conscience, without considering that science is one argument of what is real and not the only true, legitimate and competent argument (Chauf, 1989). In this context the produced scientific speech asserted as university monopoly, stepping aside of the contextual problems that are (or should be), always, the starting point for knowledge production. As Boaventura Santos (1987) refers, the scientific knowledge, excluding the social contexts, has become abstract, and therefore, could settle as universal and nearly absolute. In this process the colonial heritage remains as a major obstacle to the establishment of practices that conform to epistemological and counter-hegemonic paradigms, guiding institutes of higher education to institutional projects that aim at truthful public science, under the epistemological perspectives of democracy and social justice, or in Romão’s language (2013), an omnilateral cognitive justice.

The experiences that surge in Brazil and other Latin-American countries seem to indicate a social and epistemological justice settlement; what would consecrate a quality education for all- strategic objective of any education proposal that entitles itself as popular. To illustrate, we present two specific cases that assert a popular perspective and move forward toward the way to produce emancipatory knowledge: the Universidade Federal da Fronteira Sul– UFFS (Federal University of South Border) in the city of Chapecó, Santa Catarina, with six *campi*, and the Universidade Federal do Sul da Bahia – UFSB (Federal University of South of Bahia), in Itabuna, south of Bahia and two other *campi* on the state.

Policies referred to assert themselves in institutional projects control over the creation of these universities and, as consequence they overflow in the constitution of curriculum matrices with different epistemic orientation. Based on the presented reasons we defend the building of different models of higher education which institutional matrices, curricular and pedagogical practice may compromise with the universalization of knowledge.

We postulate, as a hypothesis, that the formulation and creation of these new institutions, guided by the concepts and practices of popular education, emerge as a national response to the processes promoted by multilateral organization as ‘recommendations’ to political, economic and military hegemonic centers (Haddad, 2008; Pereira, 2014; Robertson, 2012, among others) and seek to set up higher education systems in a perspective that fits their reproductive interests.

The answer- that comes in the form of a government policy, but not yet as a state policy⁸, may be evidenced, for example, by the Popular Education Reference Framework Document for Public Policy (Brazil, 2014), produced

⁸We do not work here with the classic idea of the State as sole bearer of the monopoly of force in the power triad: executive, legislative and judiciary; neither in the idea of a Democratic state of law, seen as the contemporary political feature with more efficiency (if not the only one) to deal with the contradictory process in political action within a class society; it also doesn’t enthusiast us the leftist revolutionary spirit of theses that do not understand processes democratization and accumulation of forces. We are rather affiliated with the theoretical formulations of Gramsci Amplified State. For this topic, see Carlos Nelson Coutinho in “Democracy as Universal Value” and the postscripts of this paper, that brings the following update: “It is not the concrete form that democracy institutionally assume at a certain time that represents the universal value, but the process in which the politics socializes and progressively proposes new forms of socialization of power. I understand democratization, ultimately, as something that implies full socialization of power – which, incidentally, is a key moment of the Marxian conception of Socialism. Not just the property socialization but power socialization.

by the Secretariat General of the Presidency, through the National Social Coordination Bureau and the Department of Popular Education and Citizen Mobilization, and synthesized a posteriori by some core political values to governments for the period 2002-2014. This type of document induces government policies in a popular perspective, also impacting higher education, alongside with more strategic initiatives of educational planning and setting goals and strategies for the sector, as examples, the national education conferences and the National Forum of Education that produced the national education plans and postulate the creation of a national education system. (Brazil, 2014)

Such movements imply moving towards distinct proposals of institutional matrices, strengthening universities' missions and projects that operate more fiercely in the direction of incorporating other discourses (other social segments and cultures), enabling them to the field of epistemology without circumscribing them to strict limits of traditional and peripheral cultures, considered unscientific; to promote active inclusion policies for minority social groups (quilombolas and indigenous), excluded majorities (egresses of public school) and areas without any prior higher education (the countryside and 'urban'⁹ areas).

IV. The New Universities and the Diversity¹⁰ Inclusion: Collected Data Dialogue

UFFS and UFSB foundation documents express political and institutional projects (Institutional development Plan, Foundation Letter and Statute) and pedagogical project (Political-Pedagogic Project), some principles and dimensions that guide the commitment to popular education¹¹: inclusion (cultural, epistemological and territorial), curriculum innovation and regional integration. It is possible to synthesize both universities projects with the concepts of regional integration and inclusion. The first because it represents a political option that intends to fulfill the education gap that many places of the country had, and relate it to local/regional development projects that try to incorporate the population in the economic and social development; and the latter because it intends to materialize and result the dimensions of the epistemological inclusion, that judges the scientific honor of the excluded or subordinated speeches/cultures, using a distinct program and a double direction extension concept; of cultural inclusion, once they work with and for the identities and culture diversity and propose to incorporate them in their pedagogic planning. These principles and dimensions postulate the democratization of knowledge, being in the common learning construction, the research extension, by the dialogue conducted with social movements and communities, in their appliance towards social majority issues, without prejudice for search and excellence, and focusing their efforts in territories divided from institution this type. Among the set of principles defended in their matrix, we would like to highlight those that we consider innovators when compared to classic universities: plurality, cognitive justice (or omnilateral cognitive democracy), sustainability, interdisciplinarity.

Such principles and dimensions postulate the knowledge redemocratization, either in building a shared learning, in research and extension, through dialogues established by social movements and communities involved, either in its application to social movements' issues, without prejudice if searching for excellence, and channeling of territories deprived to such institutions. Among the principles defended in its institutional matrices, we emphasize those that we consider innovative in relation to classic universities: plurality, cognitive justice (omnilateral cognitive democracy), sustainability, interdisciplinarity.

Consulted the foundation documents of these universities, it was verified that from the outset they have been constituted as *multi campi* – 6 *campi* for UFFS and 3 for UFSB – they were also conceived for economic, social and cultural integration of regions, respectively: three non-central regions in the south of the country for the first and the south region of Bahia for the latter. In an overview, the regions have in common an economic depression, the occupied territory by traditional people or by land reform settlements, agribusiness siege, cultural influence of traditional universities and organized social and consistent political movements.

Exactly what the “so called real socialism” did not do. And with that, it failed.” (<http://brasilsocialista2012.blogspot.com.br/2012/04/democracia-como-valor-universal.html>- 19.09.15)

⁹ The neology was used by Gilberto Freyre In “Reurbanization: what is it?” (Recife: Massangana, 1982) from the original ‘urban’. Defined as the combination of values and styles that mark certain region.

¹⁰ In this item, we promote a dialogue between the political-pedagogic references that both the authors and the institutions use and the discussions and documents done during our research. To reference them we will point out the institutional origin - UFFS or UFSB - whenever they are not explicit.

¹¹The definition of popular education within the university would, alone, become other text. In this we refer, mainly, to the principles related to access and retention, recognition of and exchange with popular knowledge and acceptance of cultural, epistemological and territorial diversity. To know our definitions and theoretical uses of the concept of popular education, applying them to the universities we refer to two earlier publications, namely: Mafra, J.; Romão, J.E.; Santos, E. (2013) (Eds.) Popular university - theories, practices and perspectives. Brasília, DF: Liber Book; and *Lusophone Journal of Education*, n. 24, 2013 Dossier: “Paulo Freire and Higher Education”

UFSB was founded in 2013 in the South Coast, first land on the discovery of Brazil and South of Bahia State. It is a region in which strategic investments were predicted both regionally and nationally, such as The East-West Railway, South Port, industrial poles and Technologic Park. The region has more than 20 million inhabitants and the following social-educational characteristics:

Underprivileged students only have condition to study in public schools, there is no other in such remote area. The city of Mucuri, to use it as an example, is one thousand kilometers away from Salvador, capital of the state of Bahia. In the region there are 18 thousand egresses of school, that to find only 1,400 on higher education, most of all with a different approach and no impact on the regional development (UFSB – interview).

Therefore its foundation is result of a diffuse, although organized, resistance and cultural demands of indigenous, afro-descendants and peasant segments that live in the surroundings.

In UFFS it was the same way, however stronger, because of a more organized presence and influence of social movements and sectors linked to demands for land reform, access to land, and victims of a dam.¹² This institution, created in 2009, was implemented in the Mesoregion Great Frontier Mercosur, covering more than 400 municipalities of the southwest of Paraná, west of Santa Catarina and northwest of Rio Grande do Sul. The university mark its mission –always in reference of the Mesoregion- based in three aspects: higher education for development, professional qualification and social inclusion; education, research and extension guided for the interaction and integration of referring cities and states; and the development of the integrated regional, which searches for a “reversion of the centralization of urban areas along the coastline that is in course today”¹³.

The same integrative perspective is clear in the speech of pro tempore Dean of UFSB:

Since the implementation committee was formed in January 2012, we traveled almost all the cities and towns in the region, presenting and debating the proposed model. More than 80 meetings and public hearings were made, visited nearly 100 schools for two years, talking to teachers, students, indigenous chiefs, community leaders and NGOs, but also business people, politicians, intellectuals. When installed the University Council, and we made sure to do so in the three seats, we hold the community representatives on an equal footing. We have students, settlers, indigenous, quilombola, executives, politicians, businessmen, farmers, environmentalists, trade unionists, all as honorary members of the main collegiate institution, but it will also evolve into a board itself, with most of the community. (UFSB, interview)

From that regional integration in areas that had low offer of university education and abundant presence of socially oppressed groups, the two institutions have taken from the beginning, commitment to the plurality of knowledge produced throughout history by different human groups; with the full democratization of all forms of knowledge, enabling access and social appropriation of such knowledge, essential conditions for human development and social justice, as well as essential to regional integration in development processes: “We want to build an university of excellence that can assert in a local, regional, national and international level as a different university from the point of view of construction of knowledge of both culture and knowledge inclusion that were historically subordinate” has said the Dean of UFSB: “our intention with the decentralized structure is to broaden the offer of higher education, overcoming the territorial exclusion.”

Beyond that, the UFFS speech mention, explicitly, the concept of sustainability, a wide set of principles and practices - individual and collective – that rethink and try to surpass the current development model and, “promote dynamics that prime social justice and responsible and compassionate relationship between the human being and nature” (Trevisol, Cordeiro & Hass, p.41). Quite similar is the concern expressed in UFSB regarding the institutional treatment to the contemporary and urgent issue of environment, properly inserted in a concept of sustainable regional development:

This university is committed to contribute to regional development in individual, social, political, economic and environmental aspects. Therefore, it articulates with all representatives of various sectors of society through a balanced pattern of relationship with nature, on a local and global scale. (UFSB, statute, 2013)

The UFFS from its institutional matrix presents itself as a popular and public university: “We want to bring the people to the university, allow access to higher education to the population who never had this type of opportunity, a university committed to the advancement in arts and science and with better quality life for

¹²About the mingling between social movements and the struggle movement for the establishment of the University at the Mesoregion of Southern Border we suggest the work of Benincá (2011), listed in the end.

¹³www.uffs.edu.br

everyone”, said the Dean. This reflects the opinion of a representative of social movements who fought for more than fifteen years for the creation of a university in the region: “We want the university to recognize the popular knowledge and, for our own knowledge, that have been marginalized throughout history, to have the same epistemological dignity as the scientific knowledge”. (UFFS, interview)

To defend a popular university is not to defend a poor university, if not to provide, among other aspects, that those who once were left aside have access and are able to participate in the construction of academic knowledge. In UFSB the critical and politicized speech of the present Dean shows clearly the same political and pedagogic option:

The French culture has taken much influence in our higher education during the 19th Century, throughout the Empire period. The university today has its roots even more twisted with the university reform of 1968, performed by the military regime. It is a steady organization, fragmented in faculties, schools and departments that make it elitist. The most wanted courses have their vacancies filled by youth of the middle or upper class who had financial support in order to be prepared, in general expensive support, and able to secure approval in the entrance exams. None of this matter to a project like ours, to create a university of popular roots, for the society, with a strong mark and open to the globalized world. (UFSB, interview)

These declarations of intent (truly, institutional missions) do not run out in the inclusive rhetoric of an official document: they materialize with the incorporation of popular sectors to the strategic management of universities. In UFFS, one of the significant competencies in these sectors: “Art 36 The Strategic Social Council will have the competence: I. To analyze and evaluate the social, economic, cultural and educational impact of UFFS in the South Border region[...]” Regarding UFSB the political spirit is the same, as it is the name of Strategic Social Council: “This council is an advisory body that will strengthen the university in the discussion of its overall policies and global expansion plans of teaching, research, creation, innovation and extension”.

From the planning rhetoric to implementation of action it is effectively about sharing the power, providing institutional space of monitoring for the social movements, and allowing the amalgam between global thinking and local action, between the theorization and concrete practices.

In terms of teaching methods, these models seek to establish a genuine break with traditional education, promoting interdisciplinarity, dissociation of knowledge and commitment to the relationship between theory and practice, in order to meet the challenges of building new geopolitics of knowledge. Thus, from the curriculum point of view, there are in UFFS three areas: the common, the related and the specific. Each of them has objectives well defined. The first refers to the set of courses taken by all students in all undergraduate courses and aims to provide appropriation of scientific knowledge that can promote their blossom as human beings capable of intervening actively and critically in any context socio-professional.

In institutional agents perspective, this option “reflects not only the comprehension that public education must be guided at all levels by democratic arguments, as well as curricular justice, meaning that the curriculum organization cannot correspond to true cultural ghettos” (UFFS, interview). The associated domain is expressed in another set of subjects that reflects a knowledge frame that connects with various courses, without, however, having an exclusive character of just one or the other. The responsible for this, affirm that this domain “aims to promote interdisciplinary, intercultural and gather elements that promote curriculum integrations, once it does not exist in any traditional university” (UFFS, interview).

The specific domain is related to curriculum components of certain areas of knowledge and materializes in courses, seminars, workshops and complementary curricular activities. Current managers’ evaluate that “provides a thorough study of knowledge in a particular area and allows the student to decide on part of the curricular path wanted to perform.” (UFFS, interview)

The curriculum is designed based on interrelated activities and the crossover of influences and different fields. UFSB, on the other hand, on regard of the curriculum frame crosses Napoleonic , professional elite and state formation – the Humboldtian, research university, focused on the development of the free spirit (specially the elites) it adds the American model that is firmly stuck in the instrumental rationality of markets, in order to propose a hybrid curriculum, although strongly inclusive and organic. The speech of the current president of the University explains quite well the relations between ideological and political criticism of the traditional university models and curricular arrangements that put up the political-pedagogical options of this institution:

The model that we are implanting in UFSB – University Schools integrated with Interdisciplinary Bachelors – could be described as a proposal to unite the best of the two models, avoiding some of the problems in them. Therefore, a three-year bachelor referred to Bologna’s model that demands three year previous to all professional formation and academic course, with a curriculum structure open to the students’ choices, therefore close to the United states and Canada’s schools. Choosing this model is a way to encourage the opening to interdisciplinary and ethnic diversity, besides providing quality, flexibility autonomy, mobility and social

commitment in pedagogic practices of a more integrated to the modern framework of a Brazilian university, we assume the rescue of the university institution as a culture institution. (UFSB, interview)

Again, in the case of UFSB's, there are various educational and cultural objectives that intersect and that are able to achieve with the introduction of 12 colleges: rescues the local identity and culture; incorporate and enable a brand new territory regarding the ability to leverage a cultural equipment and produce intelligence and critical mass; establishes a more safe and organic crossing from high school to university and promotes the epistemological humility, as suggested Paulo Freire (1996).

A schematic summary puts the curriculum in action from the following matrix: organization in cycles with progressive modularity and independent certification for each cycle, optimization of equipment, facilities, resources and personnel; educational pluralism and intensive use of digital technologies for teaching and learning, all according to fieldwork research by Romão (2014). It is worth noting that university schools are founded inside of the quilombola and indigenous communities.

The curricular matter, the training path advocated in the pedagogical planning of the universities in study, the curricular flexibility and the autonomy of the subject student are consistently being articulated to the theoretical and political foundations that give support. They do not, in principle, distinct to any other models; if only promote a savage and cannibalistic reading of Brazilian modernism, in the 1920-1940's, repudiating those who express an elitist perspective¹⁴.

In the University of Bahia: "From Anísio Teixeira to Paulo Freire the distinction between teaching, research and extension sounds to me poor, superficial and unjustified. It might be more correct to speak of hybrid acts, such as, action-research, research-creation, research-formation, research-trans-formation, learning-trans-formation [...] (UFSB, interview). We understand that such political-institutional projects, from the characteristics here shown represent innovation in the perspective of a new inclusion, an inclusion of new cultures, epistemologies and territories.

V. Final Considerations

The contemporary university is marked as a dispute space between different formation projects and distinct interpretations regarding its own social function. The several higher education and university models that coexist reveal, precisely, the strategic dimension of the teaching and higher education institutions, either regarding the economical development of societies, or regarding the inclusion of new audience, new cultures and knowledge, which traditionally, were excluded from the university. With the democratization of access, the university is now composed by diversity and plurality of subject; in this perspective, the university belongs to the distinct processes of political, social and cultural conceptions.

This millenary institution is part of a pluriverse, crossed by political, social and economical forces with different objectives. Its function is to think its country's position in the world and in the region where is situated, along with forming citizens in an integration perspective of all cultural and epistemological diversity there is in society. As referred the interviewed of the researched universities, it is about inserting the popular knowledge to the universe of academic production providing them epistemological dignity. To build a university with strong popular roots, and at the same time, open to a globalized world is one of the features and challenges of the models we analyzed. Articulating these challenges is to question knowledge and integrate it in more complex levels that surpass the scope of each discipline or science. The models of classic universities that were imposed in Brazil and in Latin America, generally, made it possible to move toward a political culture, legal, social and educative own characteristics, from a pluricultural matrix that characterizes the identity of almost all regions around. (Mato, 2008). People and their culture were put aside, to the borders of society, resulting in silenced cultures and epistemologies, oppressed, and away from the social cultural construction processes.

The higher education experiences that happen in Brazil, in which we refer to two cases (UFFS and UFSB), might constitute a true laboratory of ideas, propositions and institutional practices, that charge the national systems towards a active and multicultural citizenship (Torres, 1998) that embraces everyone, no discrimination of population or community, cultures. Taking in consideration the institutional matrices of both universities regarding the principles of inclusion and cultural diversity, it is possible to predict a new relation between scientific knowledge and others coming from cultural multiplicity and transitions between knowledge models. As affirms Boaventura Santos (2008, p. 43), "the organization and the ethos in the university were shaped by the scientific knowledge model. Throughout the last decades we have seen changes that undermined this model and pointed out to the urgent need of another model, designating this transition through the passage of university knowledge to the pluriversity knowledge.

¹⁴ We believe this is a topic for another article. To clarify, we are criticizing world-class universities here and taken as a counter-model to the present institutions. Given their elitist vision of university training and attempt to rival up research and teaching disregarding the potential of extension socio-politically.

According to the speech of the interviewed in both institutions the new universities signal, from their institutional matrices, the construction of another knowledge model, more inclusive and whole. We can, effectively, stand by a construction of “pluriversity” knowledge.

It is in this multiple contradictions context, that comes from secular colonization and neocolonization, and yet internal colonialism that kept the political matrices of domination, that these new higher education models are emerging and establishing confronting the traditional models. The challenges that the new universities confront are, doubtless, gigantic, considering the need of resistance of a hegemonic model that enters globalization through the neoliberal rationality – which by the way serves as foundation for the knowledge that reproduces and perpetrates. It is important that the walk that new universities started do not get stuck in “university ghettos” in the periphery and semi-periphery of the university system.

The obstacles to the construction of other higher education model –more equalitarian, including diversity and contributing for the well-being- are closely tighten to a history based on colonial and neocolonial inherited schemes, of obstructions and denial of any process that tear up a past of western-centrism and coloniality of power, of economy, of knowledge, of being, of sexuality, of gender (Mignolo, 2010), reflections of the extension of the colonization process.

Certainly, the term of guiding principles, legal and constitutional framework based on historical and cultural specificities and contextual realities arising from them in a fundamental step in a complex and slow process to change paradigms towards a more democratic and inclusive higher education.

We give an alert, for ourselves even, that relates to institutional and political principles, beside its operationalization: we know well that a simple note, in a document or official statement – hereby as sources – of a more inclusive higher education policy do not guarantee its recognition; but also we know of the pretension to change formation practices as a institutional policy that points the direction to tread, which display modes and corresponding legal bureaucratic mechanism –you must have a project!

It is up to other stages of our research collate concrete, political-administrative and political-pedagogical practices in developing these institutions with what initially designed and proposed documents and official speeches, here registered by the main institutional characteristics of two new Brazilian Federal Universities.

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