

Recognition and Redistribution Policies in Undergraduate Retention

Maíra Tavares Mendes^{1, 2}

¹Universidade Estadual de Santa Cruz (UESC), Ilhéus/BA – Brazil

²Universidade de São Paulo (USP), São Paulo/SP – Brazil

ABSTRACT – Recognition and Redistribution Policies in Undergraduate Retention. The objective of the text is to analyze the articulation of inequalities arising from the entry of new subjects into university, such as class, race, gender, sexuality and disability. To this end, the text is divided into three parts: 1) conception of student retention as one of the dimensions of access, and therefore an affirmative policy arising from access policies; 2) discussion of the correlated concepts of markers of difference and categories in articulation, and their usefulness in thinking about student retention; 3) the advocating of the need to coordinate redistribution and recognition policies (as of Nancy Fraser's contribution) on student retention.

Keywords: Student Retention. Social Markers of Difference. Categories in Articulation. Recognition Policies. Redistribution Policies.

RESUMO – Políticas de Reconhecimento e de Redistribuição na Permanência Estudantil. O objetivo do texto é analisar a articulação de desigualdades decorrentes da entrada de novos sujeitos na universidade, a exemplo de classe, raça, gênero, sexualidade e deficiência. Para tal, o texto está dividido em três partes: 1) concepção de permanência estudantil como uma das dimensões de acesso, e, portanto, uma política afirmativa decorrente das políticas de acesso; 2) discussão dos conceitos correlatos de marcadores da diferença e categorias em articulação, e sua utilidade para pensar na permanência estudantil; 3) a defesa da necessidade de articular políticas de redistribuição e reconhecimento (a partir da contribuição de Nancy Fraser) na permanência estudantil.

Palavras-chave: Permanência Estudantil. Marcadores Sociais da Diferença. Categorias em Articulação. Políticas de Reconhecimento. Políticas de Redistribuição.

Introduction

The significant change in Brazilian public university due to its expansion and affirmative policies has placed student retention as a central issue for the university. Generally thought of as a policy to avoid dropout, the presence of new subjects at the university has challenged patronizing conceptions crystallized in the term “student assistance”, in favor of a conception of retention as a right to education (in this case, higher education).

Changing the approach from a patronizing perspective to the perspective of realizing a right - to enter, persist and graduate - has challenged visions that think retention only in terms of gift aid. The presence of new subjects in the university, which occurred after the recent expansion in Brazilian public university, has demonstrated the existence of multiple needs. Even in an ideal hypothesis of making gift aids possible for all demanding students, it would not tackle the set of problems that lead students to dropout. Issues related to the articulation of multiple inequalities: class (understood more broadly than just income), race, gender, sexuality and ability have challenged the institution to produce reflections and practices.

My intention with this essay is to discuss student retention at Brazilian university and its relationship with social markers of difference/ categories of articulation. To this end, the text is divided into three parts: in the first I discuss student retention as one of the dimensions of access, and that, therefore, retention is also an affirmative policy arising from access policies. In the second part I present the related concepts of markers of difference and categories in articulation, as well as the intersectional paradigm, and how these concepts can be useful in thinking about student retention. Finally, in the third part, I advocate based on Nancy Fraser’s contribution the need to articulate redistribution and recognition policies for student retention.

University access and retention: articulated inequalities

The meaning of university as an institution has a peculiar ambivalence: at the same time that it intends to be universal, an idea inscribed in the very term *universitas*, it is traditionally an institution focused on a part of society, an elite - from an economic or intellectual point of view. This elitist tradition has been challenged from different approaches: the semantic-conceptual; the institutional purpose, and its student body.

The challenge from the semantic-conceptual viewpoint is based on the argument that the term “elite” is inaccurate, and should be replaced by class or fractions of class. As for the (public) university institutional purpose, the rejection of the elitist stigma is related to its work on knowledge, an institution that is - or at least is potentially - focused on social issues that can be addressed by mobilizing knowledge, such as teacher training, public health or technology research, social

interventions, as well as a whole set of basic investigations that do not necessarily have immediate application at the moment of their elaboration, and that can be grounded on new fields of knowledge. As for the social origins of its students, Brazilian public university has extensive empirical data (ANDIFES, 2019 being the most recent) showing that the vast majority of students at Brazilian public universities come from the poorest social classes, and therefore defeating the arguments of tuition charges as an alleged “justice” criterion, since the vast majority of students would not be able to afford it.

The social composition of Brazilian university has undergone intense changes since educational policies of the expansionist phase (Lula and Dilma administrations), especially as a result of racial quotas claimed for years by Black movements. Established by Federal Law 12.711 in 2012, similar measures had already been implemented by Brazilian universities since 2002, such as UERJ, UNEB, UFBA and UnB, usually by reserving quotas for Blacks among the established quotas for public schools students, which in the Brazilian case can be considered a metonymy for social class¹.

Besides the Quotas Law, the considerable expansion of enrollment via REUNI Program² was also responsible for this change in the panorama, spawning a debate on the effects of democratization through precarization (of infrastructure and especially of teaching work, according to Leda; Mancebo, 2009). The fact is that, by the end of 2010s, the university has a new social and racial composition, with more Black, Indigenous and Quilombola³ students, as well as from lower classes.

The student retention policies gained the status of national policies only as of 2010, with the approval of the PNAES⁴ Program, which indicates priority assistance for students from public schools and with *per capita* family income of up to one and a half minimum wages, criteria that correspond to students eligible for social quotas at entrance exams. The range of actions listed in PNAES is remarkable: student housing; food; transportation; health care; digital inclusion; culture; sports; day-care; pedagogical support; access, participation and learning for students with disabilities, global developmental disorders and high skills. Considering the historical budget restrains for education in general, and for retention in particular, there seems to be a tension between the actions planned and the intent to limit the target public, which leads to a tendency of “focus” policies, or to “manage little money”, focusing the reduced budget on a reduced number of individuals through criteria established by each institution.

Thus, if affirmative policies for access materialized on racial and social (public school) quotas⁵ was a great advance, to treat university access exclusively as entrance is to waste the opportunity to treat retention policies equally as affirmative policies.

I advocate that approaching university access is to address a movement (going from outside the university to inside) in the perspective of a photo. If we consider this statically, we are not able to under-

stand the whole of this process; we abstract what happened before and after the photo was shot. This is why Veloso and Maciel's approach (2015) is so fruitful, as they propose to consider access in three inseparable dimensions: entrance (this picture of the moment in which one passes from outside to inside), but also to capture the continuity of this movement through the dimension of retention, as well as the dimension of the pedagogical quality, which indicates the conditions in which the course is completed.

Inspired by this perspective, I discuss in this text the retention policies as an object of study crossed by social markers of difference or categories in articulation. I believe it is especially urgent to deal with these issues in a context where budget cuts are worsening and even the social relevance of the public university is being questioned.

For these reasons, I argue that public higher education should be considered a right, which is currently at odds with the legal (including constitutional) understanding that limits this right to "individual capacities" (based on the competition arising from the limitation of vacancies), a meritocratic understanding of this right. Quotas, especially racial ones, were fundamental to challenge this understanding, since performance in selection, with minimal variations between quota holders and non-quota holders, is not a determining factor in subsequent academic performance⁶.

The admission of the racial criteria for quotas by the Federal Supreme Court in 2012 was a historic milestone, since it was the first time that the Brazilian State recognized the need for reparation policies aimed at Black people. The subject of the trial was the questioning of racial criteria as incompatible with the principle of constitutional equality. Establishing a criterion for filling public vacancies for higher education - historically limited in number - that presupposes formal equality among those who enter the competition is the ideological operation that translates public higher education as a reward for the merit of the individual, rather than a right.

However, the abyssal differences in the Brazilian educational system, especially if we consider the cleavage between elite training schools and schools for most of the population, reproduce the educational dualism (Nosella, 1991; Mendes, 2016). Moreover, these inequalities have a strong racial component, if we consider that legally the admission of young blacks to Brazilian schooling, including that designed to socialize the most basic knowledge for professional insertion, treated as "rudimentary"⁷, was prohibited until just under a century⁸. Therefore, to deal with access to university in defense of a supposed equality of conditions is to carry out an operation of historical erasure that disregards sediment inequalities from the point of view of race and class. In this way, the meritocratic discourse that is constituted as an opposition to the affirmative policies of reserving vacancies for blacks in access to the university (our version of *colorblind* universalist politics) operates, consciously or not, a racist policy.

After almost two decades of implementing racial and social quotas in Brazilian universities, the fact is that there may be not only a change in the social composition of students at the Brazilian university, but also in the problems addressed academically, in the end-activities and in management. New issues from the pedagogical point of view needed to be addressed, new objects and research subjects entered the scene, which also influenced the university's relationship with the community in the form of extension. As for management, the challenge of making it possible for students who are often the first of their families to access this level of study to remain in the university is a focus of concern that must transcend the individualization of the problem.

These aspects corroborate the need to think about the institution from approaches that take into account more than one axis of inequality. If traditionally in the university the concern to approach inequalities, when it exists, has turned to the theme of social classes, the articulation with the category race, denounced for its physical and symbolic absence in this space of power, has become the focus of denunciation. The efforts of the recently established research field "access to the university" (in full development since the first decade of the millennium) were one of the main responsible for placing the emphasis on the category of race as fundamental for university studies. The way in which quotas are implemented in universities, combining school of origin criteria with racial criteria, has also led to a refinement in the way of thinking about the production of these inequalities in the exercise of the right to education.

Considering the inequalities produced by the articulation of both categories of race and class, especially when it comes to the access to public universities in Brazil, it is to be expected that, when concrete subjects' backgrounds are concerned, there is a continuity of inequalities experienced after their entrance in university. Research on student retention (here considered as the opposite of dropout), especially in the area of Social Work, a field of professional training for those who work directly with the institutional operationalization of this type of policy, has been prodigal in discussing the class aspects that impact on the conditions under which undergraduate courses are experienced by poor students. It can be said that there is a recent research interest seeking to articulate the dimension of race to class in order to better understand - and propose policies - to make feasible the effective right to higher education.

If the recent academic production of the field on student retention has made it explicit that the articulation of class and racial differences has produced particular inequalities among students within the university, it is reasonable to expect that the articulation of other differences, such as gender, sexuality, and disability will produce singular inequalities. Taking these inequalities out from invisibility does not consist of a speculative academic exercise; it is rather a demand from subjects who live in the threshold of dropping out, that is, vulnerability in multiple possible articulations of their condition as subjects (poor

women, young Indigenous people, wheelchair lesbians, Black transgender people, to name a few hypothetical examples). Therefore, thinking about how such individuals manage (or not) to go through their life in university and what institutional policies are destined for them is an urgent challenge for a university that considers itself as democratic.

Markers of difference, intersectionality and articulated inequalities in student retention

Dealing with differences in the discussion about the subjects that enter and remain (or not) in the university demands assuming that there are certain conditions of asymmetry at stake. The concept of “social markers of difference” proposes to “designate how differences are socially instituted and may contain implications in terms of hierarchy, asymmetry, discrimination and inequality” (Almeida et al., 2018, p. 19). This “social institution of difference” takes certain classifications and the meanings produced from them as “natural”, while others are underestimated or circumstantially forgotten.

In this perspective, the idea of a “marker” highlights a certain attribute socially read as distinct/different from another, which goes through a naturalization/normalization process, and constitutes the “different” as its “Other”. If we are dealing with the public university, the process of expanding the presence of Black, Indigenous subjects and/or from popular classes can be read as the influx of these “Others” which not long ago were physically and/or symbolically absent from the university. In other words: the poor, Black and Indigenous people were mostly objects of research rather than subjects who were researchers/producers of knowledge.

Avtar Brah (2006) proposes a set of questions that seek to account for a variety of meanings for difference. I bring here the discussion presented by Brah on the concept of difference as a social relationship, which “refers to the way difference is constituted and organized in systematic relationships through economic, cultural and political discourses and institutional practices” and which “underlines the historically variable articulation of micro and macro power regimes, within which modes of differentiation such as gender, class or racism are instituted in terms of structured formations” (Brah, 2006, p. 362-363). The key question, according to the author, is how difference is defined: is this difference a means of affirming diversity or a mechanism of discrimination? Do they contribute to emancipatory or oppressive policies?

At the university level, the access of those new subjects can articulate these two discursive matrices (and their corresponding practices): the celebration of racial and/or cultural diversity as a value affirmed by the institution that begins to admit this “Other,” while keeping discourses and practices of delegitimization and discrimination, because this “Other” is someone who until recently was not even thought by the university as an epistemological subject.

Although the university may be an institution that celebrates diversity, the current situation of students who are defined as “Others” in relation to race (Blacks, Indigenous, Quilombolas), gender (students who are mothers), sexuality (transgender people), and corporeality (disabled students) is that of inscribing difference as inequality in the exercise of the right to education.

Whilst addressing retention, we are also crossing (or intersecting) these differences to class difference. The idea of intersectionality dates back to the Combahee River Collective, a collective of Black and lesbian women in Boston, which published a manifesto in 1977 (Collective, 1977), affirming its commitment to the fight against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression systems that are intertwined. Crenshaw (1989; 1991) uses the metaphor of crossroads representing racism and sexism, illustrating that Black women are crossed by these two axes of oppression. The author notes that this has led to a marginalization of Black women in both antiracist and feminist movements, advocating the intersectional paradigm as an approach that considers the particularities of Black women, removing them from this invisibility that encompasses structural, representative and political issues.

Hirata (2014), based on Danièle Kergoat’s contributions, uses the concept of the consubstantiality of social relations, based on the critique of the “geometric” notion of intersection that privileges two terms of the relation (e.g. race and gender), or else treats analytically the differences in terms of categories, rather than in terms of historicized social relations. The author identifies as one of the main problems arising from the categories intersectionality/consubstantiality the “variable geometry intersectionality”:

[...] if for Danièle Kergoat there are three fundamental social relations which imbricate themselves, and are transversal, gender, class and race, for others [...] the intersection is of variable geometry, and may include, alongside with the social relations of gender, class and race, other social relations, such as sexuality, age, religion, etc. (Hirata, 2014, p. 66).

Piscitelli (2008), in turn, highlights the idea of categories in articulation as synonymous of intersectionalities, by analyzing how sexuality, gender, race, ethnicity and nationality are imbricated among Brazilian migrants. The author highlights that in the history of feminism such analytical tools have been developed to understand “differentiated distributions of power that place women in unequal positions and, based on knowledge, modify these positions” (Piscitelli, 2008, p. 10).

What these authors have in common is the concern to take into consideration for the analysis of a given “difference” the interactions with others, or, in the terms of Piscitelli (2008), their articulations. By taking these issues into account on my focus of interest, that is, understanding the retention strategies mobilized by marginalized students in the university, I consider diverse elements that influence their ability to avoid dropping out, or their resilience⁹.

These reflections point to the need to complexify analyses that presuppose a direct relationship between dropout and economic problems (understood as financial difficulties), proposing as retention policies a reduced number of (or low-valued) scholarships. It is important to understand class inequalities in a broader sense than the need for income complementation, such as the reduced availability of study time in conciliation with their labour demands (both productive and reproductive labour), symbolic violence in the process of strangement with institutional dynamics, how the feminized dimension of reproductive labour is ignored, which implies an invisibilization of mother students or of the racial component of precarious work that can lead to a delayed insertion of Black workers in higher education.

Without neglecting the importance of scholarships as support policies that enable some assistance to guarantee a minimum of subsistence, analyzing which other policies could make the retention and the graduation of these new subjects possible implies to understand the (structural) institutional mechanisms that lead them to drop out. My hypothesis is that racism, sexism, ableism and LGBTphobia are responsible for processes that lead to more than drop out (whose agency falls on the dropout subject), but rather to institutionalized expulsion (the agency here falls on the institution, not on the student) of these subjects from the university. This requires not only a separate analysis of each of these dimensions, but also of how they articulate, in order to produce reflections on how to make viable retention policies for the concrete subjects who need them.

However, the multiplicity of subjects - and consequently of demands that require recognition coexisting with persistent income inequality - continues to challenge redistributive policies, and challenge to develop an analytical framework that does not treat those issues as mutually incompatible. How can we defend recognition without abandoning redistribution policies?

Recognition and redistribution at the Brazilian university

Nancy Fraser (2002), when analyzing the effects of globalization on policies that advocate social justice, highlights the prominence of culture in this emerging order. She draws attention to the transition from a Fordist to a post-Fordist economy, in which mass production, strong trade unions, and family pay as the norm have given way to niche production, declining unionization, and increasing women's participation in the labor market. The greater visibility of "symbolic" workers, the shift from the centrality of labor to religion or ethnicity in the constitution of collective identities, the intensification of cultural hybridization, are some of the elements that constitute this new condition.

Interested in the effects of this prominence for politics, and therefore with the perspectives of social justice, Fraser (2002) characterizes globalization as a general politicization of culture, especially the struggles around identity and difference, which the author treats as struggles

for recognition. This process occurs in parallel with the decline of class politics, the retraction of struggles for economic equality, the advance of neoliberalism attacking social rights, and the reduction of the horizon for resource sharing (or redistributive politics). Moreover, struggles for redistribution often place themselves as antithetical to struggles for recognition, the latter currently being emphasized to the detriment of the former.

This shift from the perspective of social justice leads to ambivalent perspectives. On the one hand, there has been a broadening of political contestation and a new understanding of social justice beyond the axis of class, including sexual difference, race, ethnicity, sexuality, religion, and nationality - issues of representation, identity, and difference. On the other hand, in the context of rising neoliberalism, these struggles have been placed as the antithesis of struggles for egalitarian redistribution, leading to what Fraser (2002, p. 9-10) characterizes as a change from a truncated economicism to a truncated culturalism: "the result would be a classic example of combined and unequal development: the recent notable achievements on the axis of recognition would correspond to paralyzed progress, if not outright losses, on the axis of distribution". The author then proposes the existence of three threats inherent to the trajectory of globalization, with proposals aimed at overcoming them.

The first threat, which Fraser calls the *substitution problem*, concerns the process in which, in a neoliberalism that wishes above all to repress the idea of socialist egalitarianism, therefore exacerbating economic inequalities, identity conflicts have assumed a paradigmatic character. "In this context, struggles for recognition are contributing less to complementing, making more complex, or enriching struggles for redistribution than to marginalizing, eclipsing, and substituting them" (Fraser, 2002, p. 6-7).

This process requires revisiting the concept of justice, which Fraser (2009) proposes as a "three-dimensional conception of social justice" that contemplates distribution, recognition, and representation. When dealing with student retention, these concerns are quite relevant. If we consider the set of distributive injustices, Fraser (2002) indicates that its quintessence is poor distribution, which encompasses not only income inequality, but also exploitation, deprivation, and marginalization or exclusion from labor markets. Therefore, thinking about distribution at the university level requires thinking about income transfer policies, such as scholarships, which have been subject to constant reductions in number and value, but also about broader issues, such as the right to graduate as a strategy to improve access conditions to the labor market, since a large contingent of Brazilian students from the lower classes are the first of their families to access higher education.

We could also raise issues of distributive policies at the university such as indirect salary - meal aids, housing or rent aids, policies aimed at student health, transportation aids, among others that are in the sphere of reproduction of living conditions.

As for injustices in recognition, these are generated from the subordination of *status* based on institutionalized hierarchies of cultural value. The paradigmatic situation of injustice in this axis is false recognition, encompassing cultural domination, non-recognition and disrespect.

The remedy, therefore, is recognition, also in a broad sense, so as to encompass not only reforms aimed at revaluing disrespected identities and cultural products of discriminated groups, but also efforts to recognize and value diversity, on the one hand, and efforts to transform the symbolic order and deconstruct the terms that underlie existing status differentiations in order to change the social identity of all (Fraser, 2002, p. 12).

Brazilian university history has been based on producing knowledge grounding, or openly affirming colonialist justifications for exploitation, reinforcing the subordination of Black and Indigenous population. It demands a profound process of re-examination in order to move towards recognition justice. In addition to cultural domination, the institution also coexists with systematic situations of non-recognition (as in the case of trans people) and disrespect (of people with disabilities, of mother students). It is also important to highlight the symbolic violence, more difficult to be named and therefore fought, directed at these “deviant bodies” in the institution, underlying these *status* differentiations between students categorized as “normal” and the “Others”.

The revaluation of identities, recognition and appreciation of diversity, changes in the symbolic order and deconstruction of *status* differentiations imply profound institutional changes that lead to the problematization of the university in all its activities. It is not trivial that a significant set of motivations for dropping out fall into so-called “pedagogical problems”, which in addition to the difficulties of keeping up with the disciplines, possibly concern the teacher-student relationship as a moment of cultural encounter/conflict, in which that violence is expressed in a systematic way.

If, in general, students are placed as a subordinate category in the university, either because of their short time in the institution compared to other segments, or because of their infantilization due to generational differences, both factors that are combined with the expansion of the presence of Black and Indigenous people in the student body not yet accompanied by professors; it means that they have reduced capacity for institutional intervention in these situations of injustice that I describe. These processes of cultural domination, non-recognition, and disrespect are, in my opinion, at the base of mechanisms that limit the participation of students in decision-making processes and, therefore, institutional change.

Thus, institutional transformation in favor of greater recognition take up the form of abrupt ruptures (some would say violent), through radicalized struggles as the only means found to make their

voices heard (as in the case of *campus* demonstrations, or Rectory occupations as a method of systematic struggle in the decades of 2000 and 2010 in Brazil). These radicalized actions, however, have not been restricted to advocating justice as recognition policies (directed at racist/misogynous actions of given professors, endorsed openly or silently by the institution), but rather end up mixed with demands for distribution (as opposing the increase of meal values at the university restaurant, against cuts in scholarship number of values, or even the cuts in the university's global budget), taking the form of agendas that indicate precisely this multidimensional conception of justice.

In order to combine redistribution and recognition, Fraser proposes the idea of a common normative measure that includes both types of claims, without reducing them. The author proposes that this measure would be the *principle of parity of participation*, "according to which justice requires social arrangements that allow all (adult) members of society to interact with each other as peers" (Fraser, 2002, p. 13). The author points out that, for this principle to be respected, some conditions are necessary: material resources that guarantee independence and voice, which is limited in cases of economic dependence and inequality; and that cultural value standards respect all participants and guarantee equal opportunities to achieve social consideration. To this end, it is necessary to exclude

[...] institutionalized patterns of value that systematically depreciate some categories of people and the characteristics associated with them. Thus, there are institutionalized patterns of value that deny the status of full partners in interactions to some people - either by placing the burden of an excessive "difference" on them or by not recognizing their particularity (Fraser, 2002, p. 13).

The second problem discussed by Fraser (2002) is the increase in cross-cultural interaction and communication, the acceleration of migration and global media flows that have led to an intense process of fracture and hybridization of cultural forms. If some struggles for recognition have sought to adapt to this growing complexity,

[...] others take the form of a communitarianism that drastically simplifies and reifies group identities. In these cases, struggles for recognition do not foster interaction and respect between differences in increasingly multi-cultural contexts, but rather tend to encourage separatism and the formation of group enclaves, chauvinism and intolerance, patriarchalism and authoritarianism. I call this the *problem of reification* (Fraser, 2002, p. 14, emphasis in the original).

Fraser (2002) argues that a non-identity concept of recognition is necessary to fight this problem. Struggles for recognition have traditionally been seen through the lens of identity, through the claim of cultural recognition of group-specific identity, in response to false rec-

ognition through the depreciation of identity by the dominant group. There is, in this way, a damage inflicted in the sense of the self, whose repair requires recognition aimed at rectifying the destructuring caused by the pejorative image projected by the dominant culture. The members of the depreciated group reject such images in favor of new self-representations, images built by the group itself, in order to publicly display them to gain respect and consideration from society. The success of this operation is what Fraser calls recognition, that is, an undistorted relationship with oneself.

This identity model of recognition has been particularly important in highlighting the psychological effects of racism, sexism, LGBT-phobia and ableism. At the university level, although little theorized, they have been used as tools to expose the hierarchical relations between professors (read as “the institution”) and entrants in what I have called the “cultural conflict of the professor-student relationship”. The idealization of a “standard student” that corresponds to the expectations or even the professors’ previous experiences with students from the pre-expansion period of Brazilian university, crossed by racist, misogynous, and other broadly biased assumptions and stereotypes about deviant bodies, has opened the debate about students’ psychic suffering at the university, motivated even by several suicide events. In this sense, the identity recognition model has provided important contributions to understanding student permanence.

On the other hand, the identity model tends to reify group identities, as well as fail to address intertwined (intersectional, articulated) axes of subordination, as well as their relations with poor resource distribution. These failures lead to a difficulty in approaching simultaneously a policy that addresses multiple axes of injustice. In this sense, Fraser (2002) proposes the idea of a status model, considering that recognition is a matter of social status: what requires recognition is not the identity, but the individual status of its members as full partners in social interaction. False recognition, from this perspective, concerns less the depreciation and deformation of group identity than social subordination, the obstacle to equal participation in social life. To redress this injustice would require to place the member whose recognition has been distorted, for reasons of subordination, as a full member of society.

The *status model* advocated by Fraser places emphasis on the differences in cultural value attributed to the relative position of social actors. When certain actors are seen as inferior, excluded, invisible, “completely others”, that is, are not full members in social interaction, a false recognition or *subordination of status* is at stake. There is a “social relationship of subordination transmitted through institutionalized patterns of cultural value”, which “occurs when social institutions regulate interaction according to cultural norms that prevent equal participation” (Fraser, 2002, p. 16).

An example of how this is reflected in the discussion on student retention policies at the Brazilian university concerns the broader idea of student participation in the institution. Redistribution and recogni-

tion inequalities/injustices would include the requirement to consider students as subjects of the right to participation, which leads to the problem of representation. In general, Brazilian institutions that have made the most progress in recognizing participation have done so in the formal choice of their managers and/or counselors through parity voting, which means that, only for decisions of elected positions, each of the three segments of the institution (students, teachers and administrative staff) has equal weight in the final result of the elections. As the group of students usually outnumbers by much teachers and administrative staff, the consequence of parity by sector is a relative devaluation of the students' vote, and the consequent valuing of the votes of the other categories (for the same final result, each of the workers' votes has a greater weight than that of the students). Even so, in those cases where parity has been achieved for elective positions, which has not become widespread among public universities, the idea of universal voting (each voter within the institution would have the same weight in the final result) or of parity in other institutional decisions, as in representative councils, is treated as a utopian democratic eccentricity.

When students are supposedly considered unable to make decisions about the university, and especially when a hierarchy of values is established that makes certain segments invisible or stereotyped ("the mother who uses her child as an excuse", "the lazy indigenous people," "the angry black woman," "the student who always claims persecution for his gender identity," "the pitied wheelchair user") by means of false acknowledgements, participation is emptied. These tropes are operationalized by establishing an "institutionalized standard of cultural value that constitutes some categories of social actors as normative and others as deficient or inferior" (Fraser, 2002, p. 16). They are denied opportunities to be full partners in society, to participate at the same level, through false recognition.

The status model proposes not to value the identity of groups, but to question the subordination that allows false recognition. That is, "it seeks to de-institutionalize patterns of cultural value that impede parity of participation and replace them with patterns that foster it" (Fraser, 2002, p. 16), counteracting the processes of reification by questioning institutionalized norms about interaction capacities. Adopting this principle of justice within the university requires not only a re-examination of institutional norms, but an understanding of the structural processes that lead to greater homogeneity of the teaching staff compared to the new and multiple composition of the student body in the post-expansion period.

As a third problem, Fraser (2002) raises the question of the "misframing" of globalization. This term refers to the fact that, in globalization, there has been a process of decentralization of the national state as the only context for addressing the struggle for social justice. The author highlights the mismatches of scale, such as the contradiction between transnational flows of economic distribution and national processes of redistribution, or global flows of signs and images, on the one hand, and

local practices of hybridization and appropriation, on the other. Beyond these more easily identifiable scales of justice, Fraser (2002, p. 18-19) also includes other contexts of interaction, such as “labor markets, sexual relations, family life, the public sphere, and voluntary associations of civil society”, each with its own particular forms of understanding of participation, and therefore the need for multiple frameworks for this principle. This implies a multi-framework approach to justice, since

[...] there is no single framework or level of sovereignty that is sufficient to deal with all questions of justice in the context of globalization. What is needed instead is a set of multiple frameworks and a multi-level conception of sovereignty. Consequently, the question of when and where to apply a given framework becomes unavoidable. From here on, any discussion of justice must incorporate an explicit reflection on the problem of framing. For each case, we must ask who precisely are the relevant subjects of justice and who are the social actors among whom parity of participation is required (Fraser, 2002, p. 19).

In light of the student retention obstacles that I have listed in the text, the idea of multiple frameworks for the principle of parity of participation is welcome. It aims at a multidimensional conception of justice and questions the institutionalized hierarchy of social value, requires a profound re-examination of practices at the university, as well as points that the struggle for justice requires both intra- and extra-institutional contestations.

In other words, for the social composition of the university to be effectively changed, ensuring that marginalized students have the right to education contemplated in their multiple difficulties, which include distributive and recognition issues, it is necessary to debate the social function of the university in the context of globalized capitalism. More than recognising the attempts to wipe out social spending and the colonization of business discourse in the field of higher education (which Fairclough, 2001, calls the commodification of discourse), we need the ability (“inventive imagination” in the terms of Florestan Fernandes, as well quoted by Leher, 2012) to redesign horizons for an institution undergoing a profound crisis.

The presence of new subjects within the university therefore poses the possibility of new epistemologies, problematizations and understandings of phenomena already consolidated. This is a potential condition, since while resisting to rethink the institutional criteria that lead to the expulsion (whether or not consented to) of this new contingent of students, the university is allowed to proceed with injustice unquestioned. From this perspective, thinking about student retention brings to the forefront the responsibility of the university as an institution that proposes solutions to the country’s inequalities.

It could be argued that, in the current stage of capitalism, there is no place for this kind of concern, especially in peripheral countries like Brazil. However, experiences “out of place” insist on making themselves

visible, questioning the logic of subordination and inequality, challenging the normative logic of the state, the virulence of global financial exploitation, and instrumentalizing much of the knowledge produced in universities. If the heralds of social spending cuts affirm the financial unsustainability of that locus for critical thinking, it is up to those committed to criticism to demonstrate the human unsustainability of instrumental thinking.

Received September 6, 2019
Approved on September 8, 2020

Notes

- 1 Of course, countless counter-examples to this rule can be raised, especially if we consider the most prestigious public and military schools. However, roughly speaking, the devaluation of Brazil's public services causes the middle class, at the slightest sign of a budget "surplus" or at the cost of great sacrifices, to enroll their children in private schools with the hope of a "good education" (which is quite debatable, unless one considers that quality education means mostly approval in university selection, no matter what ethical values or symbolic violence are naturalized).
- 2 REUNI is the acronym for Programa de Apoio a Planos de Reestruturação e Expansão das Universidades Federais, which stands for Program for Supporting Federal University Restructuring and Expansion Plans. It financed expansion in the student/teacher ratio in Brazilian federal universities from 2007 to the end of President Dilma Roussef's administration.
- 3 Quilombola is the term that refers to someone who belongs to a Black rural community ("quilombo") in Brazil.
- 4 PNAES is the acronym for Programa Nacional de Assistência Estudantil, which stands for National Program for Student Aid. It was a Program designed by Presidential Decree, determining fundamentals for higher education student aids.
- 5 In Brazilian universities, there two types of quotas initially established were the so-called "social quotas" - quotas aimed at students from public schools, as well as racial quotas, for Black and Indigenous people. The criteria are usually combined, especially after Federal Quota Law 12.711 in 2012.
- 6 There is a significant set of research on this topic, which confirms this vision, like Campos, Feres Junior and Daflon (2014), who analyze the performance of candidates to Sistema de Seleção Unificada, Velloso (2019) at Universidade de Brasília and Queiroz et al. (2015) at Universidade Federal de Uberlândia.
- 7 We currently see a reinforcement to the idea of a school to teach the rudiments in the speech of President Bolsonaro, for whom one must "read, write, count and learn a profession".
- 8 The Couto Ferraz Reform of 1854 prohibited slaves from attending school.
- 9 I have restrictions on the use of the term "resilience" to refer to students who mobilize retention strategies. It is a term that is quite suitable to refer to material or ecological properties: a certain type of material that does not deform when subjected to a force or a certain environment that has the ability to recover from disturbances. However, it is precisely the existence of this analogy with the

material world that justifies my resistance to transpose this term to students pressured by their living conditions to drop out. The term seems to assume that it is expected or even valued that these subjects endure and overcome violence in their academic career as a sacrifice that justifies the merit of their diploma.

References

- ALMEIDA, Heloísa Buarque de; SIMÕES, Júlio Assis; MOUTINHO, Laura; SCHWARCZ, Lília Moritz. Numas, 10 anos: um exercício de memória coletiva. *In*: SAGGESE, Gustavo Santa Roza; MARINI, Marisol; LORENZO, Rocio Alonso; SIMÕES, Júlio Assis; CANCELA, Cristina Donza (Org.). **Marcadores Sociais da Diferença: gênero, sexualidade, raça e classe em perspectiva antropológica**. São Paulo: Terceiro Nome; Editora Gramma, 2018.
- ANDIFES. **V Pesquisa Nacional de Perfil Socioeconômico e Cultural dos (as) Graduandos (as) das IFES**. Uberlândia: UFU, 2019.
- BRAH, Avtar. Diferença, diversidade, diferenciação. **Cadernos Pagu**, Campinas, n. 26, p. 329-376, jun. 2006.
- CAMPOS, Luiz Augusto; FERES JUNIOR, João; DAFLON, Veronica. O Desempenho dos Cotistas no ENEM: comparando as notas de corte do SISU. **Textos para discussão GEMAA**, n. 4, 2014.
- COMBAHEE RIVER COLLECTIVE. **The Combahee River Collective Statement**. 1977. Disponível em: <<http://circuitous.org/scraps/combahee.html>>. Acesso em: 29 maio 2019.
- CRENSHAW, Kimberlé Williams. Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. **Stanford Law Review**, n. 6, p. 1241-99, 1991.
- CRENSHAW, Kimberlé Williams. A interseccionalidade na discriminação de raça e gênero. *In*: AÇÃO EDUCATIVA. **Cruzamento: raça e gênero**. Brasília: Unifem, 2004.
- FAIRCLOUGH, Norman. **Discurso e Mudança Social**. Brasília: UnB, 2001.
- FRASER, Nancy. A justiça social na globalização: redistribuição, reconhecimento e participação. **Revista crítica de Ciências Sociais**, n. 63, p. 07-20, 2002.
- FRASER, Nancy. Reenquadrando a justiça em um mundo globalizado. **Lua Nova**, São Paulo, vol. 77, p. 11-39, 2009.
- HIRATA, Helena. Gênero, classe e raça Interseccionalidade e consubstancialidade das relações sociais. **Tempo social**, v. 26, n. 1, p. 61-73, 2014.
- LÉDA, Denise Bessa; MANCEBO, Deise. REUNI: heteronomia e precarização da universidade e do trabalho docente. **Educação & Realidade**, Porto Alegre, v. 34, n. 1, 2009.
- LEHER, Roberto. Florestan Fernandes e a defesa da educação pública. **Educação & Sociedade**, Campinas, v. 33, n. 121, p. 1157-1173, dez. 2012.
- MENDES, Maíra Tavares. **Acesso à universidade: dualismo, mérito e democratização em questão**. 2016. 258f. Tese (Doutorado em Educação) – Programa de Pós-Graduação em Educação, Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, 2016.
- NOSELLA, Paolo. **A escola de Gramsci**. Porto Alegre: Artmed, 1991.
- PISCITELLI, Adriana. Interseccionalidades, categorias de articulação e experiências de migrantes brasileiras. **Sociedade e cultura**, v. 11, n. 2, 2008.

QUEIROZ, Zandra Cristina Lima Silva; MIRANDA, Gilberto José; TAVARES, Marcelo; FREITAS, Sheizi Calheira de. A lei de cotas na perspectiva do desempenho acadêmico na Universidade Federal de Uberlândia. **Revista Brasileira de Estudos Pedagógicos**, Brasília, v. 96, n. 243, p. 299-320, maio/ago. 2015.

VELOSO, Tereza Christina Mertens Aguiar; MACIEL, Carina Elisabeth. Acesso e permanência na educação superior—análise da legislação e indicadores educacionais. **Revista Educação em Questão**, v. 51, n. 37, p. 224-250, 2015.

VELLOSO, Jacques. Cotistas e não-cotistas: Rendimentos de alunos da Universidade de Brasília. **Cadernos de Pesquisa**, v. 39, n. 137, p. 621-644, maio/ago. 2009.

Maíra Tavares Mendes is a Professor at UESC's Departamento de Ciências Biológicas and Programa de Pós-Graduação em Educação, Post-Doctorate at USP's Faculdade de Educação, Researcher at GEPPES/MB.

ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-1697-3133>

E-mail: mtmendes@uesc.br

Editor-in-charge: Luís Armando Gandin

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0 International. Available at: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>.