



## Author's Correspondence

<sup>1</sup> Valéria Giannella  
[valeria.giannella@csc.ufsb.edu.br](mailto:valeria.giannella@csc.ufsb.edu.br)  
 Universidade Federal do Sul da Bahia  
 Campus Sosígenes Costa  
 Porto Seguro – BA, Brazil  
 CV Lattes  
<http://lattes.cnpq.br/3294576132779889>

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## Critical pedagogy for public and social management. The Thematic Workshop device as an integral experience

<sup>1</sup> Valéria Giannella  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7321-0437>

**ABSTRACT**

**Introduction:** The theoretical-practical field of this article is the recognition of educational and extensionist practices as fields of dispute, between paradigms, theories and possible meanings. The context is the construction of the Political Pedagogical Plan for a Bachelor's Degree in Public/Social Management and Public Policies, in one of the newest Universities in the country (Brazil). **Objective:** The article aims to socialize and reflect on the experience of building a pedagogical device that we call the Thematic Workshop (TW) based on the desire to build a critical pedagogy in public/social management and public policies. **Methodology:** In methodological terms, this is a reflective approach, supported by bibliographic research, of a practice of political-pedagogical construction, seeking to deepen the theoretical-methodological bets that its design implies. **Results:** The result is to enucleate the theoretical-practical implications of methodological innovations instigated by the requirement of curricular accreditation of extension, seeking to advance in the effective integration between teaching/research/extension. **Conclusion:** The design of the TW creatively interprets the scenario of extension accreditation, allowing to question the meaning of the concept of experience in curriculum construction and opening an autonomous space for self-knowledge on the part of the student in relation to the type of professional he intends to be.

**Keywords:** Critical pedagogy. Extension (Curricular accreditation). Workshop practices. Experiential learning.

## Pedagogia crítica para a gestão pública e social: o dispositivo da Oficina Temática como experiência integral

### RESUMO

**Introdução:** O campo teórico-prático deste artigo é o do reconhecimento das práticas educativas e extensionistas como campos de disputa, entre paradigmas, teorias e significados possíveis. O contexto é a construção do Plano Político Pedagógico de um Bacharelado em gestão pública/social e políticas públicas, em uma das mais novas Universidades do país. **Objetivo:** O artigo objetiva socializar e refletir em torno da experiência de construção de um dispositivo pedagógico que chamamos de Oficina Temática (OT) a partir da vontade de construir uma pedagogia crítica em gestão pública/social e políticas públicas. **Metodologia:** Em termos metodológicos, trata-se de uma abordagem reflexiva, suportada por pesquisa bibliográfica, de uma prática de construção político-pedagógica buscando aprofundar as apostas teórico-metodológicas que o desenho do mesmo subtende e implica. **Resultados:** O resultado é o de enuclear as implicações teórico-práticas de inovações metodológicas instigadas pela exigência de creditação curricular da extensão, buscando avançar na efetiva integração entre ensino /pesquisa/ extensão. **Conclusão:** O desenho da OT interpreta criativamente o cenário de curricularização da extensão permitindo indagar o significado do conceito de experiência na construção curricular e abrindo um espaço autônomo de autoconhecimento por parte discente em relação ao tipo de profissional que pretende ser.

### Palavras chave:

Pedagogia crítica. Extensão universitária (Curricularização). Práticas de oficina. Aprendizagem pela experiência.

## Pedagogía crítica para la gestión pública y social. El dispositivo del Taller Temático como experiencia integral

### RESUMEN

**Introducción:** El campo teórico-práctico de este artículo es el reconocimiento de las prácticas educativas y extensionistas como campos de disputa, entre paradigmas, teorías y sentidos posibles. El contexto es la construcción del Plan Político Pedagógico para la Licenciatura en Gestión Pública/Social y Políticas Públicas, en una de las Universidades más nuevas del país (Brasil). **Objetivo:** El artículo pretende socializar y reflexionar sobre la experiencia de construcción de un dispositivo pedagógico que denominamos Taller Temático (TT) a partir de la voluntad de construir una pedagogía crítica en la gestión pública/social y en las políticas públicas. **Metodología:** En términos metodológicos, es un abordaje reflexivo, apoyado en la investigación bibliográfica, de una práctica de construcción político-pedagógica, buscando profundizar en las apuestas teórico-metodológicas que su mismo diseño implica. **Resultados:** El resultado es enuclear las implicaciones teórico-prácticas de las innovaciones metodológicas instigadas por la exigencia de acreditación curricular de extensión, buscando avanzar en la integración efectiva entre enseñanza/investigación/extensión. **Conclusión:** El diseño del TT interpreta creativamente este escenario, permitiendo cuestionar el significado del concepto de experiencia en la construcción curricular y abriendo un espacio autónomo de autoconocimiento por parte del estudiante en relación al tipo de profesional que pretende ser.

**Palabras clave:** Pedagogía crítica. Extensión universitaria (Acreditación Curricular). Prácticas de taller. Aprendizaje a través de la experiencia.

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## 1 Introduction

Education is, without a doubt, a field of practices and theories of crucial importance in the contemporary world and, perhaps precisely for this reason, a field of disputes among possible paradigms, theories, and meanings. Incidentally, the same situation can be observed with regard to other crucial fields and concepts of our time, such as democracy and participation. This means that mere demands for "more education" or "more children in school" or even "more universities in the country", by themselves do not guarantee that such changes will result in better educated children or young people who are truly capable of critically and creatively facing the problems of the future and contributing to the equitable transformation of their contexts. In other words, as Paulo Freire expressed simply and forcefully through the conceptual duo, banking versus liberating education, underneath the concepts of education and formation, practices that are opposite in their principles and results can nest.

It is worth remembering that Freire (2000) is not portraying education - be it banking or liberating - as a purely mental process; On the contrary, he makes it clear, in several moments, that in education what is molded, trained and tamed for the reproduction of the world as given, are the bodies, the emotions (BRIGHENTE, MESQUIDA, 2016), the ways of being in the world of the learner, and liberation will occur, after all, when the oppressed can recognize "the oppressor hosted in his body" (ibid. p. 155).

Since the focus of this article is critical pedagogy for teaching-learning in the fields of public policy, public and social management, and since it is of interest to socialize cases of theoretical and methodological innovation to propitiate these processes, it should be clarified in advance that the experience presented here assumes and places itself on the liberating side of the famous conceptual duo. Based on this choice, we will propose the inquiry around the concept of pedagogical device and present/analyze a particular pedagogical device contained in the Pedagogical Policy Plan (PPC) of the new course of Bachelor of Public and Social Management (BGPS) of the Universidade Federal do Sul da Bahia (UFSB) in Porto Seguro. This PPC aims at a critical formation in public policies and public and social management (FISCHER, 1998; BOULLOSA, 2013), formation of humanistic nature, never reduced to its technical aspects; epistemologically aware, built from the concept of positionality, explicitly anchored to the values of equity, equality in respect to differences and inclusiveness (FREIRE, 1973; MORAES, 2008; UFSB, 2014; CAITITE, 2016).

In these molds, based on the construction process of this PPC and the current challenge of its implementation, we intend to present here the pedagogical device of the Thematic Workshop (TW), planned in the scope of the aforementioned Course (UFSB, 2020), as an experience with innovative potential of the teaching/learning methodology in the field of public and social management and public policies. The TW represents this innovative potential because it is a device for interconnection between extension, teaching, and research.

Through its conception we seek to: 1) deconstruct the classic hierarchy between theory and practice in university teaching; 2) establish a close link of relevance/pertinence between the manager's training and the territory in which this training takes place; 3) open as much space as possible to the process of self-motivation and autonomous construction of the learners' training paths. The three aspects dialog, in different ways that will be tried to unravel throughout the text, with the possibility of a critical formation in the fields already mentioned.

They allow, in the hypothesis presented, to face the most common risks of university education, which are the tendencies: to instrumentality (the mere pursuit of obtaining a diploma); to the reproduction and maintenance of organizational structures and relational dynamics placed in the context (lack of critical reading of reality and commitment to an axiological dimension); to the inability to nurture the self-motivation and autonomy of students in relation to their formative journey. In extreme synthesis, our hypothesis is that, by firmly connecting the teaching dimension to the extension dimension, through the TW device, we will have the possibility of integrating the theoretical-methodological dimensions, commonly privileged by our higher education courses, with all the dimensions of the sensitive (going through the affected bodies, the "other" rationalities, the emotions that soak in and modulate our actions) dimensions that, together, make up the framework for the critical and political performance of any manager.

Affections and emotions are important dimensions that participate in the teaching and learning process, being present in different ways in teaching practices. Emotions interfere in the way students discuss and apprehend theoretical contents and live practical experiences in their academic formation processes and in their daily lives. In this sense, this perspective contributes to the development of projects guided by the principles of popular education committed to the autonomy of subjects and the transformation of reality (PATIÑO, LAMEGO, FARIA, 2020, p. 600).

Therefore, they sustain and dialogue in this reflection: a) an epistemological position of post-positivist nature (MIGNOLO, 2002; ALCOFF, 2011; MELLO, 2011; SANTOS, 2014) reflected in the field of public and social management and public policies (FISCHER, 1998; BOULLOSA, 2013; PERES, 2020), where the positionality of subjects is assumed and strained; b) a vision of education of pluriepistemic matrix, aimed at fostering the autonomy of subjects and their critical and creative capacity to invent forms and modes of social interaction more fair and happy (FREIRE, 1973; DE TUGNY, GONÇALVES, 2020); c) finally and complementing the other dimensions, an understanding of subject and rationality as integral, alternative to the ideals of universalism, objectivism and linearity, actively promoting the reconnection between the elements that the positivist paradigm has built as polar and irreconcilable (reason/emotion, mind/body, culture/nature, among others (MORAES, 2008; GIANNELLA, 2008; DOWBOR, 2008; YONEZAWA, 2018).

In methodological terms, this text was constructed through theoretical exploration, via bibliographical research, of a series of implications embedded in a process of pedagogical and institutional construction (the institution of a new undergraduate course and the construction of

its Pedagogical Plan) and represents the provisional result of a reflective process that will accompany the effective evolution of the case presented. The article is composed, besides this introduction, of four more topics: the first one intends to briefly present the new course of Bachelor's in Public and Social Management and the Universidade Federal do Sul da Bahia, as the context where the analyzed experience is inserted, so that it is possible to appreciate the political, epistemological, and pedagogical bet that is the basis of this institution.

The second brings the issue of university extension, the dispute over its social function, and seeks to ponder the potential that opens up for the university institution from the principle of its curricular accreditation. With the third, I bring under our lens the Thematic Workshop, which is the pedagogical device that intends to have an innovative potential in the critical teaching of public policies, public and social management. Finally, seeking to account for the pedagogical potential of extensionist activities, I will explore the concept of experience (BONDIA, 2002) and aesthetic experience (DEWEY, 2010) and how they have chances to realize the goals of building autonomy and result in a critical and transformative education.

## 2 The Bachelor in Public and Social Management and the bet on a critical education

The political-pedagogical bet of the BGPS and its innovative ambitions are better understood when we consider the institutional context where this undergraduate course is born. The UFSB is one of the 4 newest federal universities sanctioned in Brazil, in June 2013, within the scope of a political season in which the Brazilian state bet on a policy of expansion and interiorization of higher education in the country, reaching the implementation of 18 new federal universities and 38 new technical institutes offering high school and higher education courses (GIANNELLA, 2013). From 2003 to 2014, along with the investment in new campuses and new courses in pre-existing campuses, the Quotas Law sought to expand the access of young Brazilians to the university, especially for those social segments historically and systematically excluded from this access, that is, young black men and women, indigenous people, coming from peasant and traditional communities, peripheral (from slums and marginalized neighborhoods) and, in general, poor people (MUNANGA, 2020).

In a country where going to university was an option almost exclusively reserved for the children of the elite, one can imagine the potential effects, in the medium and long term, of this policy of expansion and democratization of access. Faced with the paradox that has made public universities function to perpetrate one of the most unjust social structures on the planet, the UFSB assumes for itself, and seeks to radicalize, an alternative strategy, coming to implement an access and quota policy where the regional public is privileged and important proportions (in some cases up to 85%) of vacancies are destined for blacks, indigenous and public school graduates (ALMEIDA FILHO, COUTINHO, 2019). In short, the UFSB was born with the programmatic project of being a popular university, pluriepistemic and rooted in the

territory, as well as to systematically practice, in its formative proposal, the criticism to the disciplinary model of education, reflected in a proposal for training by cycles, an alternative to the traditional model of early professionalization.

In the cycle system "[...] firstly the student has access to the university, for a general education, and only afterwards advances to professional qualifications or specific academic careers". (UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO SUL DA BAHIA, 2014, p. 39). From this premise the UFSB Guiding Plan affirms the role of the university not only as producers and diffusers of scientific, technological, and artistic knowledge, but also for "the formation of critical, conscious, emancipated and participatory subjects". (ibid., p. 19).

An ample and rich description of the political-pedagogical experience of the first years of UFSB is now accessible through the recently published book " Popular University and Meeting of Knowledge " (TUGNY, GONÇALVES, 2020), while an analysis of the challenges and obstacles of the implementation process of this proposal is in progress through a doctoral thesis and, in fact, exceeds the purposes of the present text. What matters here is to understand the connections between the theoretical and epistemological matrix of the UFSB proposal and the BGPS conception.

The Bachelor's Degree in Public and Social Management at UFSB intends to constitute a new space for professional education in Southern Bahia, confirming the political-pedagogical project of UFSB that has among its principles the commitment to social relevance, regional resonance, and valorization of the multiple articulations between State and society in the territory. [...] On this basis, the course's mission is to contribute to the formation of critical and participatory individuals endowed with the knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes necessary to act in the Public field, aware of their ethical responsibility and able to work decisively to promote the public good and the good life, in its various dimensions and scales. (UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO SUL DA BAHIA, 2020, p 52).

A course aiming to form critical and epistemologically aware public and social managers, with a humanistic profile, conscious of their crucial role (never exclusively technical), in the fight against political and cognitive asymmetries that make some subjects mere passive recipients of public policies, supposedly devoid of knowledge, as well as of any capacity for self-management / self-organization.

### 3 Curricular insertions of extension for a critical formation in public policies

The brief history of the University in Brazil - marked by a very late birth if compared to other Latin American countries - is that of an institution created to reproduce and consolidate the country's structuring inequalities, as well as its insertion in a geopolitical framework that determines it as economically dependent and culturally subaltern, intimately colonized despite the achievement of political independence in 1825 (CUNHA, 2000; MENDONÇA, 2000).

This does not mean that Brazil has lacked university projects committed with their social relevance and with their potential for transformation towards a less unequal society (TEIXEIRA, 1968). It would take another study to analyze this history, however, what can be summarily stated is that these projects faced great resistance at the political and academic levels, leading to their failure and the reflux of university action in the classical molds of the Humboldtian model (CARVALHO, 2020).

What is the role of university extension in this framework? According to Gadotti (2017) in Brazil, still in the 1930s, extension was not considered a specific function of the University.

It was only in the early 1960s that the extension as we know it today, inseparable from teaching and research, took shape when actions of commitment to the popular classes emerged, with the intentionality of making them aware of their rights. (GADOTTI, 2017, p. 1).

In the scope of this text, it is important to point out that we find, regarding extension, the same division previously reported regarding the concept of education itself. Extension is also a concept (and a practice) in dispute. The more traditional view of extension is coherent with the positivist ideal of education, where only one of the subjects of the teaching-learning relationship holds the knowledge of which the other is totally dispossessed. The teacher is the only possible source of knowledge that will be deposited in the student conceived as a "whiteboard", where nothing preexisting and nothing coming from outside the school has value.

Consistent with this, the more traditional view of extension is conceived as a process that brings knowledge (or some services) to people and communities that lack it. The most classic form of this type of extension is to offer short courses, one-time activities, or to facilitate access to some service that the context served is needing. The basic premise is that the University possesses knowledge that the contexts attended to do not possess and, for this reason, it "extends" it in a vertical way, from the inside out. The image of a one-way path - just from the University to society - is the most frequently used to describe this posture, while the hypothesis of the existence of a reverse hand, that is, that society has something to contribute to the University, is disregarded. The qualifier used by critics of this posture is that it is assistencialist (Gadotti, 2017; Curado Silva, Kochhann 2018; Costa, 2019), as a response to needs detected in specific territories, in an apolitical, sporadic, punctual, and only palliative way.

Still Gadotti (2017), when contrasting the assistencialist strand to another "non assistencialist" one, states that, in the second case, the very definition of extension would not be adequate. Let's see:

The second strand understands Extension as a communication of knowledge. It is a *non-welfarist, non-extensionist* vision of University Extension. Paulo Freire's proposal to replace the concept of extension with that of communication is along this line. It is based on a theory of knowledge, answering the question: *how one learns, how one produces knowledge*. A theory of knowledge based on an anthropology that considers every human being as an unfinished, incomplete, and inconclusive being,

who does not know everything, but also does not ignore everything. [...] Double hand means exchange of academic and popular knowledge that has as a consequence not only the democratization of academic knowledge, but also a scientific, technological, and cultural production rooted in reality. (GADOTTI, 2017, p. 2; emphasis added).

Thus, linked to two paradigmatically different conceptions of what education is, we also find different aspects of what extension is and, consequently, of the role it can play, whether in the redefinition of teaching and research practices, or in the mission of constructing relevant knowledge for society and committed to its transformation towards greater social justice.

Since the institution of FORPROEX - the Forum for Extension of Pro-Rectors of Under graduation of Public Universities - in 1987, an understanding of extension linked to the critical aspect (not assistencialist) has been consolidating in Brazil, seeing in it all the potential for innovation of traditional teaching and research practices, but also the possibility of

[...] to see the University as an active and positive part of a larger process of change. It is precisely here that the centrality of University Extension is affirmed, as an academic practice, as an inter and transdisciplinary methodology and as a system of dialogical interaction between the University and society. Practice committed to the relevance and social scope of the actions developed; methodology of knowledge production that integrates students, teachers, and technical-administrative staff, training them for an expanded citizenship from the ethical, technical-scientific, social, cultural, and territorial point of view; (National Policy of University Extension, 2012, apud UNIFESP, 2017, p. 5).

FORPROEX affirms extension as a " two-way path " between the University and society, a path that would finally make possible the reunion between popular knowledge and academic knowledge, thus confirming the principle of indissociability between teaching, research, and extension, established by the 1988 Federal Constitution and by the 1996 LDB (Law no. 9.394/96), which affirms University Extension as one of the purposes of the University (Article 43). However, we know that the existence of normative foundations is, frequently, only one of the necessary bases for changes in practices rooted in paradigms largely unquestioned, but certainly not sufficient for their effective transformation. In this way, we also know how teaching, research, and extension practices may be disconnected from any social relevance, aparted from their contexts, and uncritical in relation to the structures of domination and the mechanisms of their reproduction.

Faced with this evidence, the idea of curricular insertion of extension activities comes to reinforce the possibility of making this practice an effective opportunity to corroborate a critical conception of formation in higher education, along with its reverberations in the transformation of society and the surrounding contexts. The idea of establishing the "obligation of 10% of the curricular credits required for graduation to be integrated as extension activities" had already been contemplated since the 2001-2010 National Education Plan, in its goals 21 and 23. It was confirmed in the 2014-2023 Plan according to the following wording: "ensure, at a minimum, 10% (ten percent) of the total curricular credits required for graduation in

university extension programs and projects, orienting its action, primarily, to areas of great social relevance".

It is worth pointing out that, as expected, there is no unanimity on the compulsory curricular crediting of extension. On the contrary, based on a reading of the global context of higher education supply, predominantly occupied by private institutions, some see the possibility that these companies may use extension to build a fictitious image of social responsibility also through the ease of firing and hiring teaching staff as well as changing Course Pedagogical Plans. In this vision, the commitment of universities to extension is already a fact assumed by the institutions as a whole and it would be abusive to impose it indiscriminately on each faculty member (DIAS, CERNY, BRUNETTA, 2020). A deeper discussion of this issue does not fit here, but it is important to report its existence and point out that, in the proposal of the course presented here, the curricular crediting of extension is welcomed as a strategic opportunity for pedagogical innovation and used to be able to achieve the goal of a critical formation in public and social management, as well as for policy-analysts and policy-makers.

On this basis, the BGPS PPC conceives extensionist actions integrated and forming an indispensable part of the teaching and research processes, as they foster wide and meaningful learning for all subjects involved in them (students, teachers, technicians, managers, external actors), and make it possible to promote social transformation and better understanding of local and regional dynamics where they are inserted. Therefore, the curricular insertion of the extension entails the possibility of corroborating and accelerating the implementation of the always claimed inseparability with the teaching and research activities, promoting the production of relevant and pertinent knowledge because of their strong root in territorial practices and in the processes of collective and interdisciplinary construction/solution of problems, always in intense interaction with interested subjects, actors, and communities.

#### 4 Thematic workshops, critical training and autonomy

The curricular structure of the BGPS contemplates an initial block of five four-month periods called the Common Formation Core, in which students will deal with the main theoretical and professional contents of public and social management<sup>1</sup>. Then there is a Core of Specific Training, lasting three quarters, which is when the students, already more secure and aware of their attitudes and preferences, can choose between one of the two emphases available - Democracy and Society or State and Public Governance - or complete the course with components of both, in which case none of the emphases will be included in their degree. It is

<sup>1</sup> It is worth remembering that the BGPS has two possible forms of entry: one is after completing a first cycle course at UFSP, Interdisciplinary Bachelors or Degrees in broad areas of knowledge (Humanities, Arts, Science, Health, Languages, Computing); a second is by direct entry after completing high school. In this second case, the students will have to fulfill another basic block of workload called "Preliminary Training".

at the time of the Core Specific Training that the Thematic Workshops are inserted (UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO SUL DA BAHIA, 2020).

Since the elaboration of the PPC of the course, we describe them as a "pedagogical device"; therefore, it is important to shed some light on this concept before we move on. By Priberam dictionary, "device", as a noun, is an "Apparatus or mechanism intended for the attainment of a certain end."<sup>2</sup> Already according to Peixoto (2008), device is a notion coming from a technical field that, recently, has been incorporated with certain frequency in the discourses of human and social sciences to address issues inherent the professional practices and objectives when including the relationship with technological and digital resources.

The concept of device intends to apprehend a new relationship with the objects that characterize contemporary society and even another relationship with the material world. This concept seeks to approach technical objects not only as forms of alienation and instrumentation, but also in relation to the modes of access and use, integrating even the affective-corporal experience (PEIXOTO, 2008, p. 43).

However, in our case, the reference to the notion of device does not exactly depend on the need to describe a pedagogical relationship mediated by technologies (without excluding this), but rather on the desire to point to the insurgent arrangement of the interaction between a diverse set of elements, whose dynamics is impossible to prefigure exactly and remains open to the game between them. The elements I am referring to are: the existence of a normative disposition (curricularization of extension), a certain capacity of intervention (extensionist) by the university, the definition of a professional profile desired for the outgoing manager of the course presented here and, finally, but of central importance, the capacity of the learning subject to make sense and use that arrangement in favor of his own self-knowledge, in the sense of the personal construction of the professional he wants to be. In this sense, Bondia (1994) brings the pedagogical device as "[...], any place in which the experience of the self is constituted or transformed. Any place in which the relations that the subject establishes with himself are learned or modified." (ibid. p. 20).

It is in this direction, between the understanding that we are articulating a diversity of dimensions of which it is impossible to imagine total control in terms of results, and the idea of designing an open space for the autonomous discovery and invention of the learning subjects, that we imagined the pedagogical device of the Thematic Workshop I will describe below.

The PPC of the Course treats it as a pedagogical device of great importance within the BGPS Curricular Matrix as they have, constitutively, the purpose of materializing the intersection and integration among extension, teaching, and research, a purpose that in principle is preexistent, but not always accomplished and that the above mentioned normative regulates and fosters. Its institution in the PPC of the course presented here represents and concretizes

<sup>2</sup> In Dicionário Priberam da Língua Portuguesa [online], 2008-2021, <https://dicionario.priberam.org/dispositivo> [consulted 15-05-2022].

the primordial value of the extensionist activity as a structuring axis within the BGPS. It contrasts the traditional view of extension as an occasional, optional activity, subordinated and devalued in relation to teaching and research, and corroborates a view of the formative process as a constant coming and going, fertile and generating, between practice, theory, and practice. To TWs is assigned the main responsibility regarding the curricular insertion of extension activities in the BGPS; their workload makes up two hundred and forty (240) hours out of the three hundred and thirty (330) necessary to reach the 10% required by the regulations mentioned above (UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO SUL DA BAHIA, 2020).

Specifically, the TWs are established on the base of an annual survey of all extension activities implemented by BGPS teachers or others who work in thematic areas recognized as relevant to the Course. All these programs and projects are registered as TWs and will be able to receive students who have already reached the Specific Training stage to work on them, under the guidance of the professors responsible for these activities.

On the student's side, the dynamic will be as follows: each student will be faced with a wide range of extension projects, in the most varied areas of activity related to public management, social management and public policies, and must choose one project for each of the quarters in which he or she is expected to work in TW. It will also be possible to choose to stay in the same project for two semesters. By way of example, here are some projects that are planned to become thematic workshops in the future. 1. permanent Laboratory of Free Formation in Social Management and integrative methodologies; 2. Community Management of Traditional and Agroecological Territories; 3. Education, Access to Rights and Public Management (Education, Social Assistance, Health); 4. Alternative Economies, Economic Democracy and Public Policies; 5. Public Management and Health; 6. Public Management and Public Safety; 7. extension center on Human Rights; 8. continued training in environmental education.

The list is not complete and will always and necessarily be dynamic (because it will be updated annually); it should be noted that not only teachers from the management course may be responsible for the TWs, but also teachers from other courses, whenever their fields of work are pertinent to the interests of public and social management.

Considering the wide range of themes, approaches and territorial contexts in which the students' extensionist activities will be made possible, what is of interest is the significant level of freedom of choice given to the students, who - although within a pre-defined menu - will still be faced with a number of options and will be led to recognize/mobilize their self-motivation and exercise their autonomy in this choice, which, after all, focuses on a conspicuous part of their formative journey (FREIRE, 1996; OLIVEIRA, 2015).

Paraphrasing Roberto Freire's statement that "Without lust there is no solution"<sup>3</sup> (Freire, R. 1990), we need to rescue the lust to learn of our students. To do so, we need to increase the possibilities of self-construction of the formative paths of the students (forcing the limits imposed by the bureaucratic machine of the university institution), to encourage the autonomous choice of fields of practice and of partners with whom to get involved in significant paths of professionalization that, at the same time, are also always paths of critical revisitation and reconstruction of the theoretical baggage acquired throughout their formative journey and of projection/invention/experimentation of the type of professional they want to be.

In this proposal, we align ourselves with Paulo Freire's (1996) conception of autonomy, not only by recognizing and valuing students' previous knowledge and worldviews, but also by preparing them to take into their own hands the responsibility of defining the directions and fields of practice of a crucial part of their formative journey. This proposal is, at the same time, a bet on the fact that it is in the construction of autonomy and in the subjective assumption of responsibility for the professional that is being trained, that we will be fighting against the instrumental vision of higher education as a mere factory of graduates able to uncritically reproduce the given system.

For now, what is presented here is the pedagogical design of TW and its intended outcome, but more observation and reflection will be necessary and welcome to follow the implementation of the plan itself, as well as the teachers' ability to promote autonomy and the real reception of the proposal by the students. All this will be the object of future research.

## 5 The thematic workshops and the power of experience

What seems important to me, in arriving at this point, is to deepen the relationship between extensionist activity, inserted in the curricular structure of the course presented here through the pedagogical device of the Thematic Workshop, and the objective of a critical teaching in public management, social management, and public policies. To do so, I propose to resort to the potential of the concept of experience as presented by Dewey<sup>4</sup> (2010), Bondia (2002) and resumed by Peres (2020), who makes the effort to insert it specifically in the scope of critical studies in public policy, declining it through the concept of "public experience".

I will try to distill some elements of the proposal of the book "Art as experience" (Dewey, 2010) bringing to light how this concept (that of experience) can become the catalyst of an integrative vision of training, specifically in the field that interests us here, but, in fact,

<sup>3</sup> The Brazilian quote is poorly translated in English because of the lacking of the rime and the difficult translation of the word "tesão".

<sup>4</sup> In the text I am commenting on here, Art as Experience, Dewey initially deals with the seemingly generic concept of experience to then bring in a series of qualifications and come to differentiate between aesthetic and unaesthetic experience.

with possibilities of generalization to be tested. Dewey addresses the theme of experience as a necessary detour for the construction of a philosophy of art and states that the separation, firmly established in our societies, between what is considered artistic (imbued with aesthetic qualities) and the common, everyday experience, accessible to every human being, gives rise to a number of harmful consequences.

We recognize the conceptual movement of spiritualizing art and brutalizing common experience as stemming from the same paradigm that separated rationality from the emotional dimension, which placed the mind above and separate from the body, and that postulated as necessary the distrust of the senses, in their singularity, in order to achieving the objectification of experience proper to the device of scientific experiment. This separation between the refined aesthetic experience and common experience is nothing natural.

We need not travel to the ends of the earth or go back millennia to find peoples for whom everything that intensifies the immediate feeling of life is an object of great admiration. The scarification of bodies, swaying feathers, showy cloaks, and glittering ornaments [...] formed the content of aesthetic arts [...] Domestic utensils, furniture [...] jugs, pots, bows, or spears were made with such enchanted exquisiteness that today we hunt them down and give them places of honor in our art museums. [...] the arts of drama, painting music and architecture had no peculiar connection with gallery theaters or museums. They were part of the meaningful life of organized communities (DEWEY, 2010 [1980] p. 64-65).

This movement is one of the fruits of modernity and a reconstruction of its origin and reasons is not appropriate here (PRIGOGINE, STENGERS, 1991; MORIN, 1998; SANTOS, 2014). However, we can say, along with a vast movement of criticism of the modern vision of science (positivist, with its various declinations) that the objectification of experience and disembodiment of thought do not match the goals of a liberating education and critical training. In the search for the steppingstones to approach this goal, deepening our understanding of the concept of experience promises to be of great fertility and potential.

Experience is proper of every living being and occurs continuously, as it depends on the creative and meaningful interaction of each organism (and community of organisms) with its environment, which it produces and by which it is produced (BATESON, 1986; VARELA, THOMPSON, ROSCH, 2003; MATURANA, VARELA, 2010). This environment imposes and proposes conditions and possibilities, it brings dangers and opportunities. This always variable set of conditions generates the possibility of experience, as an integrated unit of perception-action-appreciation, which, in retroactive circles, seeks to approximate the purposes established by the organism/subject, purposes that can also be reconsidered and adjusted throughout the process. Bringing a concrete example may help: let's think about hunting moments with some native people from Latin America. The observation of this experience would show us a total imbrication between deep knowledge of the surrounding environment, total mastery of the means (tools and methods) aimed at an end full of meanings, total openness, and vividness of

the senses, which become "sentinels of immediate thought and outposts of action" (DEWEY, 2010, p. 83).

In this situation, the mind calculates movements and prefigures the evolution of the process, in total integration with the senses and the body in general, taking advantage of the emotions awakened at every instant as other ally, indicators of the next step, the most opportune and effective one in that specific situation<sup>5</sup>. In the example brought here, the full, singular experience is paradigmatically shown, which happens when the separations cease and the mind acts together with the body, and reason is informed and permeated by emotion. "Experience is affective, but in it there are no separate things called emotions [...] emotions connect with events and objects in their movement. They are not private except in pathological cases." (Ibid, p. 119). In this situation where means and end - self-determined and self-managed - are not separated and where knowledge passes through the body and emotions, the singular and full experience happens, according to Dewey, which reaches its original aesthetic dimension. I propose to call it *integral experience*, due to the coherence of this conception with the referential of Integrative Methodologies<sup>6</sup> and in the absence of a specific denomination by the author.

In opposition to this, what trivializes ordinary experience and makes it - in Dewey's words - unaesthetic, is distraction and dispersion, openness to too many stimuli, all experienced in a hurried and superficial manner. Jorge Larrosa Bondia fully concurs with Dewey's position when he states "Never have so many things happened, but experience is increasingly rare." (BONDIA, 2002, p. 21) and when he criticizes, in a purely Freirian key, the existing confusion between information, knowledge and learning, claiming that there is no learning possible in the mere activity of acquiring and processing information in order, on that basis, to hastily issue an opinion (most often limited to being for or against something). Instead, to provide a singular, integral, learning experience we need time, and that *something actually happens to us, affects us*.

This subject of permanent and accelerated training [...] is a subject that uses time as a value or as a commodity, a subject that cannot waste time, [...] that has to follow the fast pace of what is happening, [...] this subject no longer has time. And in school the curriculum is organized in ever more numerous and ever shorter packages. With that, also in education we are always accelerated, and nothing happens to us. (Ibid. p 23).

Learning, in Bondia's view, implies having experiences and this, in turn, needs the possibility to stop.

The experience, the possibility of something happening to us or touching us, requires a gesture of interruption, a gesture that is almost impossible nowadays: stop to think,

<sup>5</sup> It is interesting to notice that this type of conceptualization of the experience of interaction between the human being and his environment, through situated and meaningful activities, also goes back to Bateson's (1986) conception, who defined as "expanded mind", the one generated in this dynamic interaction and recursively updated within the action process.

<sup>6</sup> Integrative methodologies are conceptualized as "approaches, techniques and methods, guided by the search for a recomposition between the separate parts of the human being. The mind "embodying" itself, the rationality becoming sensitive, the science becoming subjective, method opening itself to intuition and creativity, etc." (GIANNELLA, OLIVEIRA NETA, ARAÚJO, 2011, p. 143).

stop to look, stop to listen, think more slowly, look more slowly, and listen more slowly; stop to feel, feel more slowly, linger on details, suspend opinion, suspend judgment, suspend the will, suspend the automatism of action, cultivate attention and delicacy, open our eyes and ears, talk about what happens to us, learn slowness, listen to others, cultivate the art of encounter, be very quiet, have patience, and give ourselves time and space. (ibid. 2002, p. 24).

Instead, in our contemporary lives - as well as in our formative journeys - it is ever rarer that anything ever really affects us; what we undertake stems from outside wills and impositions that are literally foreign to us; thus, the various parts that make up the action are just mechanically juxtaposed, without any necessity, without any organicity of flow.

[...] the unaesthetic is situated between two limits: at one pole there is the loose succession, which begins nowhere and ends - in the sense of ceasing - in an unspecific place. At the opposite pole are suspension and constriction, which advance from parts that have only a mechanical connection among themselves. There are so many of these two types of experience that they are unconsciously taken as the norm for all experience. [...] The enemies of the aesthetic are neither the practical nor the intellectual. They are monotony and inattention to hang-ups, submission to conventions in practice and in intellectual procedure. (DEWEY, [1980] 2010. p. 117).

Based on these words, we can ask if the curricular matrixes of our university courses propitiate aesthetic or unaesthetic experiences? Certainly, they are often perceived by our students as mere mechanical juxtapositions of parts whose relationship does not appear clearly and that, in any case, depends on someone else's will. Instead, what we need, as educators and trainers for freedom, autonomy, and criticality, is that the curricular paths we propose offer as many unique experiences as possible for each and every one of our students.

We could think, therefore, in an *aesthetic of the curriculum* and in the crucial role of the learner's autonomy to promote the fullness of the formative experience. In it, the purpose of completing one's curriculum path ends up depending on the interaction with the surrounding contexts, considered as true "fields of experience", generators of discoveries, disturbances, empathy and revolt, instigators of curiosity in the search for solutions; in there the values are tested, the creativity is challenged, and the possibility of building, in and through practice, the professional one wants to be, emerges. In the "artistic" experience (in the Deweyian sense), the author of the work (which in our case is the student himself) conceives it and appreciates each step taken with a view to achieving the result, adjusting the flow of action to what he observes in the process of becoming, until the moment in which the purpose is reached. However, the process counts as much as the result achieved, because the latter would not make so much sense if it were not for the significance of the former. This dynamic does not concern only the making of what we traditionally consider "works of art", it describes in the same way the work resulting from intellectual work, or as proposed, the work of construction of a formative journey. "No thinker can exercise his occupation unless he is attracted and rewarded by integral, total, intrinsically worthwhile experiences." (DEWEY, 2010, [1980] p. 112). These experiences are intellectual in their ultimate manifestation, "But in their actual occurrence they also were emotional, had a purpose, and were volitional" (Ibid.).

Walking towards the provisional conclusions of these notes, it can be said that the pedagogical device of the Thematic Workshop, as a structuring element of the PPC, in charge of organically articulating the universe of extensionist practices to teaching and research, constitutes, in principle, a propitious space for the construction of integral learning experiences. The latter can be defined as the eventual result of each subject's experience when faced with practical, theoretical, and methodological challenges; these will mobilize passions, make discomfort appear, and the answers created to face it all. Finally, this process, by affecting those involved and valuing their autonomy, can eventually bring the result of a critical and transforming formation, as well as new balances and configurations in the contexts and problems dealt with.

## 6 Provisional Conclusions

This article proposes and analyzes the hypothesis that the Thematic Workshop is a methodological innovation that can be used to approach the objective of a critical formation in public/social management and public policies. As a pedagogical device, the TW allows us to creatively interpret (without any pretension to control) the scenario installed by the normative that curricularizes the extension in Brazilian undergraduate courses and, at the same time, to open an autonomous space of self-knowledge on the part of the students in relation to the type of professional they intend to be.

TW proposes to organically interconnect the extension activity to the teaching and research dimensions and, programmatically, aims to provide a wide range of choices and as much autonomy as possible in the selection of extension fields that each student will choose to complete the workload required for graduation. Considering both the concepts of education and extension as theoretical and practical fields in dispute, this article has positioned itself to defend a vision of education as a liberating practice and of extension as an opportunity for different knowledges, visions of the world and of problems to meet, aiming at the co-production of new knowledge and transforming action.

Based on this, and after briefly presenting the TW and its form of insertion in the course's Pedagogical Plan, it was explored how the insertion of extension, in the molds of the TW, would allow us to approach the objective of a critical teaching in public policies. To this end, I came to present and investigate the concept of experience based on John Dewey's (2010 [1980]) and Jorge Bondia's (2002) proposal, as a possible descriptor of an integrating process of mind and body, reason and emotion, a process capable of sustaining a critical pedagogy in our field of interest, but also, potentially, in so many others.

The notions of pedagogical device, aesthetics of the curriculum, and integral experience were raised to signal the possibility of construction, as autonomous and even authorial as possible, of the formative process as the polishing of a "work of art" in which each step makes

sense, contributes to the final objective, but can also redefine and qualify it. Each subject is built in this process, in and through the interaction with others, inside and outside the university, or better and more precisely, in the challenge of the encounters and mismatches between the university and the territory.

To conclude, what has been pointed out here may seem to be not extremely specific in relation to teaching in public policies, as well as incapable of guaranteeing the desired result. In fact, the pedagogical device presented here can be linked to several formative fields, as long as they are interested in the transforming relationship with reality. As for the certainty of the result, every liberating educational and formative process, based on the principles of building autonomy and responsibility towards the contexts, can never be imagined as a linear path dependent on some formula or recipe that guarantees its success. What is up to us, as educators, is to build spaces where the integral experience is possible and where we all have chances to keep on learning.

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