

# Higher Education in an Emerging Context: the Democratization of the Brazilian University under Debate\*

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### **ABSTRACT**

The article discusses the recent scenario of expansion of access to University in Brazil, highlighting the new public institutions that integrate the so-called emerging context. Its main objective is to reflect on the democratization of university access and permanence in a social context of inequality. To this end, it mobilizes the theoretical contribution of studies on Higher Education, presenting two methodological strategies. The first (a) State of Knowledge research, aiming to identify perspectives and trends of academic articles in the main electronic journals of the country. Also, of these and dissertations produced in the Postgraduate Programs in Brazil, about the theme of democratization of Higher Education; and (b) exploratory research with professors from federal universities implemented in the last period, seeking empirical subsidies to understand the limits and possibilities of university democratization in Brazil. The work done suggests that advances have occurred in public policies of access and permanence in the first decade of the 21st century, although the new universities are involved in challenges of consolidating their physical structure and institutional projects. Therefore, the emerging scenario signals what we call the inconclusive democratization of the Brazilian university, characterized by the relative improvement of access in quantitative and qualitative terms, as well as by dilemmas of student permanence and new epistemological and methodological approaches in the University curriculum.

#### **KEYWORDS**

Democratization. Growth. University.

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# Educação Superior em Contexto Emergente: a Democratização da Universidade Brasileira em Debate

#### **RESUMO**

O artigo discute o recente cenário de expansão do acesso à universidade no Brasil, destacando as novas instituições públicas que integram o denominado contexto emergente. Tem como objetivo principal refletir sobre a democratização do acesso e permanência universitária em contexto social de desigualdade. Para isso, mobiliza aporte teórico dos estudos sobre a Educação Superior, apresentando duas estratégias metodológicas: (a) pesquisa de Estado do Conhecimento visando identificar perspectivas e tendências de artigos acadêmicos das principais revistas eletrônicas do país, assim como de teses e dissertações produzidas nos Programas de Pós-Graduação do Brasil acerca da temática da democratização da Educação Superior e (b) pesquisa exploratória com docentes de universidades federais implantadas no último período, buscando subsídios empíricos para compreender os limites e as possibilidades da democratização universitária no Brasil. O trabalho realizado sugere que ocorreram avanços em políticas públicas de acesso e permanência na primeira década do século XXI, embora as novas universidades estejam envolvidas em desafios de consolidação de sua estrutura física e projetos institucionais. Portanto, o cenário emergente sinaliza ao que designamos como democratização inconclusa da universidade brasileira, caracterizada pela melhoria relativa do acesso em termos quantitativos e qualitativos, assim como por dilemas de permanência estudantil e de novas abordagens epistemológicas e metodológicas no currículo universitário.

#### **PALAVRAS-CHAVE**

Universidade. Expansão. Democratização.

# Educación Superior en Contexto Emergente: la Democratización de la Universidad Brasileña en Debate

#### **RESUMEN**

El artículo discute la reciente escena de expansión del acceso a la universidad en Brasil, señalando las nuevas instituciones públicas que integran el denominado contexto emergente. Tiene como objetivo principal reflexionar sobre la democratización del acceso y permanencia universitaria en contexto social de desigualdad. Para ello, moviliza aporte teórico de los estudios sobre la Educación Superior, presentando dos estrategias metodológicas: (a) investigación de Estado del Conocimiento aspirando identificar perspectivas y tendencias de artículos académicos de las principales revistas electrónicas del país, así como de tesis doctorales y tesis de maestría producidas en los Programas de Posgrado de Brasil acerca de la temática de la democratización de la Educación Superior y (b) investigación exploratoria con docentes de universidades federales implantadas en el último período, buscando subsidios empíricos para comprender los límites y las posibilidades de la democratización universitaria en Brasil. El trabajo realizado sugiere que ocurrieron avances en políticas públicas de acceso y permanencia en la primera década del siglo XXI, aunque las nuevas universidades estén involucradas en retos de consolidación de su estructura física y proyectos institucionales. Por lo tanto, la escena emergente evidencia lo que designamos como democratización inconclusa de la universidad brasileña, caracterizada por la mejora relativa del acceso en términos cuantitativos y cualitativos, así como por dilemas de permanencia estudiantil y de nuevos abordajes epistemológicos y metodológicos en el currículo universitario.

#### **PALABRAS CLAVE**

Universidad. Expansión. Democratización.

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# Introduction

This article is aligned with recent research on Regulation of Education Policies (TEODORO; JEZINE, 2012; AKKARI, 2011), understanding that, in order to exert control over developing countries, international regulation indexes of quality indicators are instituted, which promotes a direct action of strong countries in economic and social development policies of emerging countries. It is understood here that emerging contexts refer to "contexts that have the ethos of human and social development in globalization, in which there is interaction with other forms of contexts" (MOROSINI, 2014, p. 386).

Alongside this situation, from the results of comparative research, the concept of Good Practices emerges, which, taking the average of the countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) as a reference, is disseminated in countries signaling those with an inefficient education system. Based on monitoring strategies and external evaluations, governments then seek to achieve goals equivalent to the indexes achieved by the countries in the top rankings of OECD reports, which leads the educational system of these countries to engage even more in the context of international economic competitiveness. Thus, it is necessary to problematize this standardization, since "demanding equal arrival levels for different starting points is in fact exclusion" (LIBÂNEO, 2008, p.174). In this scenario, thinking about the national and global scenario in connection allows the broadening of the theoretical scope that will support empirical research about the phenomenon of the university in Brazil in the 21st century.

The phenomenon of globalization has led to a political convergence that guides similar measures in different countries. "In Brazil, besides many specificities pointed out above, the context of transition, in higher education, is being marked by accelerated expansion, diversification policies, privatization and democratizing trends, commanded by state centralization" (MOROSINI, 2014, p. 387). In this sense, it seems interesting to understand the contradictions of this process of university expansion from different possibilities, from government intentionality, public pressure movements via organized social movements, to the construction of inclusive academic projects in this context of emergence of new training models in the context of Higher Education (PEREIRA, 2015). In this aspect, "the emerging contexts would occupy a transitional space between a Weberian ideal type model of traditional education and another of neo-liberal higher education" (MOROSINI, 2014, p. 386).

Brazil has experienced a process of expansion of Higher Education enrollments in the last decade (2007/2017). A peculiar aspect of this recent expansion is the role of the State (Federal Government) in the planning and implementation of public policies based on the following diagnosis: The Brazilian Higher Education system reaches the 21st century in an elitist, private way and concentrated in metropolitan areas.

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Based on this diagnosis, which originated in a scenario that produced shy percentages of students in higher education, the Brazilian State, during the government of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (2003-2010), deepened and implemented a set of policies with the following objectives: a) expand access; b) foster public institutions; c) internalize supply.

Along with the National High School Exam (ENEM) as a selection mechanism for university openings, the main public policies developed in this period were: 1) 2004: University for All Program (ProUni); 2) 2005: Open University of Brazil (UAB); 3) 2007: Support Program for Restructuring and Expansion Plans of Federal Universities (REUNI); 4) 2001: Financing Fund for Higher Education Students (FIES).

It is noteworthy that REUNI is a public policy that integrates the current emerging context of the Brazilian University, allowing the expansion of the public and free system of Higher Education. By encouraging the creation of new Campus of existing Universities and entirely new institutions, this policy enhances new academic experiences. The expansion of federal universities, via REUNI, happens at the same time as the ProUni, a program that has generated much criticism to the extent that it benefits, by buying vacancies, private institutions (LEHER, 2010).

In this mismatch between the expansion of the system and the funding to subsidize higher education institutions, the ongoing expansion process has significantly increased the number of university students in Brazil, especially from social segments historically excluded from this level of education, which characterizes a constitutive aspect of an emerging context. Emergent contexts can be understood as "configurations under construction in higher education observed in contemporary societies and that coexist in tension with pre-existing conceptions, reflecting historical trends" (RIES, 2013).

In this way, when considering the Brazilian university system in connection with the processes at the international level, comparative analyses are potentialized that enable the construction of more comprehensive syntheses about the investigated phenomenon, considering the emerging context (CERDEIRA, 2016) that is on the agenda of the scientific community. In particular, it is of interest to situate the Brazilian scenario in the emerging Latin American context (LEITE; GENRO, 2012; ZITKOSKI, 2013).

From this perspective, the present article focuses on how projects of expansion and democratization of access to Higher Education have operated, betting on new university arrangements based on state funding. To this end, the discussion is focused on issues related to the Brazilian university in its interfaces with the emerging context, understanding that "as the emerging contexts are strengthened, so is the concept of equity in higher education". (MOROSINI, 2014, p. 393). The objective is to investigate how Higher Education has been constituted in Brazil, considering the remote and recent historical panorama, with emphasis on the post-LDB/1996 scenario.

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To this end, the first stage of the research consists of a review of the literature produced in Brazil in a historical study and an analysis of the discourses that have permeated the field of Higher Education in recent decades through a State of Knowledge research in SciELO and in the Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (BDTD). In the second stage of the research, an exploratory investigative exercise was carried out by means of an online questionnaire, considering as empirical context the university spaces of the Universidade da Integração Internacional da Lusofonia Afro-Brasileira (UNILAB), Universidade Federal do Pampa (UNIPAMPA) and Universidade Federal do Sul da Bahia (UFSB).

In this sense, the present article has a significant interest in dealing with these issues from the perspective of the agents involved, in the same way as it seeks to problematize the conditions of emergence that make the existence of policies aimed at this level of education possible, as well as their effects. This includes themes linked to democratizing educational policies, to the political agendas of capitalism in emerging contexts, as well as the reception of inclusion programs and the relations between education, State, and society. In particular, the analytical focus will be on the expansion and possibilities of democratization of this level of education, considering the inductive role of the State through public policies.

# **Method**

To contribute to a deeper understanding of the issues surrounding the Democratization of Higher Education in the Emerging Context, a State of Knowledge survey was conducted in two of the country's main digital repositories: SciELO and the Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (BDTD). The main objective of this stage of the research was to find out what has been published about the Democratization of Higher Education in these databases in the last two decades (2000-2020).

The objectives of this bibliographic survey also included (i) discussing the main issues that involve, relate, and approximate the Emerging Context and the policies of Democratization of Higher Education in Brazil; and (ii) proposing categories of analysis based on points of convergence that can trace an overview of the discussion on Democratization of Higher Education in academic articles of the main electronic journals in the country and theses and dissertations defended in the Post-Graduation Programs in Brazil.

The definition of the concept of State of Knowledge goes through the understanding of a study that can be both qualitative and quantitative, which concerns the course and the contingent of the scientific production on a subject one seeks to know, aligning connections with a set of other variables, such as year of publication, themes and journals (UNIVERSITAS, 2002). It is also a State of Knowledge research because it did not intend to include all publications in the field of studies on Democratization of Higher Education in Brazil, but only a selection of such production, since the State of Knowledge, according to Morosini and Fernandes (2014, p. 155), consists of the "identification, registration,

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categorization that lead to reflection and synthesis on the scientific production of a given area, in a given period of time, bringing together journals, theses, dissertations and books on a specific theme.

The State of the Knowledge research was then carried out at SciELO and BDTD with the descriptors Democratization and Higher Education, delimiting its location to the titles of publications between 2000 and 2020. From this search, which totaled 24 publications, the results of the research point to a trend of research on the impacts of democratizing public policies of inclusion, access and permanence in universities in the emerging context, which will be discussed in the analysis section of this article.

For the second part of the research, the emphasis of the work fell on recent Brazilian federal public university institutions. The listening work with their actors becomes interesting from the analytical point of view, being carried out research procedure based on exploratory characterization, understanding that this methodological strategy would be pertinent in the course of the research project undertaken, especially because it is still in its early stages (GIL, 2010). Therefore, "this type of investigation, for example, does not exclude the literature review, interviews, the use of questionnaires, etc., all within a scheme prepared with the severity characteristic of a scientific work" (TRIVIÑOS, 2011, p.109-110).

Preceded by the phase of survey of sources and theoretical-conceptual thickening, the exploratory stage was planned for the end of the first phase of the research. In this way, the diversification of experiences around the objective of analysis (emerging universities) was of interest, with the possibility of apprehension of some meanings coming from interviews with professors working in the higher education career.

Thus, a research instrument was constituted in an online document and a non-probabilistic sample of intentional type was built. Also known as judgment sampling, it is based on the judicious discernment of the researcher for the best possible research results. So, "the selection of intentional or judgmental samples are carried out according to the researcher's judgment. If a reasonable judgment criterion is adopted, favorable results can be achieved" (OLIVEIRA, 2001, p. 4).

The constitution of the group of interviewees met the judgment criteria of the researchers involved, considering the following aspects: (a) being a career faculty member working in a federal university created in the 2000s; (b) accepting the terms of the research and understanding its exploratory nature; (c) not identifying themselves (ethical criteria) and proceeding with the answers to the questionnaire in Google Drive.

Although the application of questionnaires via the virtual platform is increasingly a reality in the production of knowledge (FALEIROS *et al*, 2006), it is typically the exposure to new situations that change the most usual scenarios in interviews as a research technique in the field of human and social sciences, particularly in the sociology of education (ZAGO, 2011).

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In this sense, it was chosen, within the scope of this research stage, the realization of a lean questionnaire, with open and closed questions, totaling seven questions. The questionnaire was sent to the intentional sample composed of three (3) professors from the following universities: UNILAB, UNIPAMPA and UFSB. Each colleague represents a new university working in two regions of the country (South and Northeast) and was characterized as DOC1, DOC2 and DOC3, respectively.

To analyze the results of the exploratory research, efforts were made to understand the web of meanings between the discursive productions of contemporary themes concerning Higher Education under investigation and the dimensions practiced by individuals. To this end, the final step, then, was the analysis of the data, supported by Content Analysis, by Lawrence Bardin (2011). This methodology is divided into three stages: 1) Pre-analysis: consists of an organizational period, in which is defined the material to be submitted to the analysis; the hypotheses about the results to be obtained; the objective in which it is proposed to reach by analyzing the answers; and the categorization of essential elements that substantiate the final interpretation; 2) Exploration of the material: this step corresponds to the actual application of the terms defined in the pre-analysis; 3) Treatment of the results obtained and interpretation: after the material is already explored, the next step is to analyze the results, which may generate graphs, diagrams, charts, figures, according to the fundamental elements extracted and, finally, interpret the data in order to confirm or refute the initial hypotheses, or create new biases of analysis.

Given the nature of the research undertaken, generalizations of the universe under analysis are not possible; however, within the purposes of the ongoing investigation, reflections about the evidence that emerged from the survey carried out from the experiences of teachers involved in the labor context of new university institutions in Brazil are appropriate.

## Results

The democratization of Higher Education is a recent theme in academic productions since initiatives for access to the university by populations historically excluded from these spaces are overdue. In the context of the ten years of REUNI, data from the 2016 Higher Education Census (BRASIL, 2017) are illustrative of this quantitative dimension in progressive terms experienced in Brazil in the last decade. The official data point to a growth in gross and net rates, as well as in total enrollment that reaches 8,052,254, representing an increase of 62.8% in the period, with an annual average of 5% growth. Even with the increase in the number of public institutions in the last decade, the private ones are still the majority, totaling about 75.3% (3/4) of the enrollments in undergraduate courses in the country. Regarding the gross enrollment rate in Higher Education, data from 2015 indicate that it is 34.6%, far short of the goal set by the National Education Plan (PNE) of 50% by 2024. The percentage of the net rate, considering the population between 18 and 24 years old, is 18.1%, also well below the PNE's goal for 2024, which is 33%.

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Thus, the possible democratization of the Brazilian University is a process that must be constituted by observing quantitative indicators, coming from the policies of access, as well as qualitative indicators, potentiating the permanence of students and new arrangements of management and of the university curriculum. Therefore, it is understood that the current Brazilian context signals what we call "inconclusive democratization", in which the expansion of enrollment has improved indicators (gross and net rates) amid great challenges to student permanence in situations of evasion (ZAGO; PAIXÃO; PEREIRA, 2016).

Issues related to access and permanence of students in Higher Education through public policies are recurrent themes in academic productions focused on the study of the democratization of universities. Aspects involving inclusion, impact, quotas, equity and quality are predominant in the studies of researchers interested in the theme. These findings emerge from a State of the Knowledge research, which was constituted as the first methodological step of this study and, in this direction, sought to trace an overview of what has been published on Democratization of Higher Education, since it allows us to know how this research theme has been treated in recent research, identifying approaches and recurrences of such research.

This method of surveying published documents on a particular subject is known as the State of Knowledge and can be conceptualized as "identification, registration, categorization that lead to reflection and synthesis on the scientific production of a given area, in a given period of time, bringing together journals, theses, dissertations and books on a specific theme" (MOROSINI; FERNANDES, 2014, p.151).

To this end, the State of Knowledge was conducted in the Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (BDTD) and The Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO), respecting as criteria the presence of the descriptors "democratization" and "Higher Education" in the title of articles, theses and dissertations in the Portuguese language, as well as the time cut in this advanced search modality for the period between 2000-2020. The choice of these research repositories was due to the relevance of their impact in academia and their vast repertoire of publications, as well as the possibility of advanced search, which allows the delimitation of themes, languages, authors, document types, and publication period of the research, thus facilitating the location of works related to the intended subjects.

The results of the search identified a total of 24 publications, being 13 dissertations, 8 articles and 3 theses that contained the keywords "democratization" and "Higher Education" in their titles, with the first publication dating from the year 2004 and the last one from 2019.

**Table 1.** Distribution of publications by repositories

REPOSITORY	SEARCH TERM	TITLES FOUND	SURVEYED FIELD
BDTD	Democratization + Higher Education	16	Title
SciELO	Democratization + Higher Education	08	Title

Source: Prepared by the authors.

After the construction of the corpus of analysis from this research, a "floating reading" allowed the construction of the Annotated Bibliography, Systematized Bibliography and Categorized Bibliography of the documents found (MOROSINI; NASCIMENTO, 2017). It is in this direction that a State of Knowledge, **Democratization** + Higher Education according to Morosini and Nascimento (2017), allows the survey of recent publications through an organization of these documents in three stages: the Annotated Bibliography, which corresponds to the organization of the complete bibliographic reference of the summaries of the publications; the Systematized Bibliography, which refers to the organization of this information in a more specific way, subdividing the table into analysis items, such as title, year of publication, author; and, finally, the Categorized Bibliography, which deals with the organization of the documents in thematic blocks, that is, from the establishment of categories of analysis of this information.

Thus, in the first stage, the documents found were organized via the Annotated Bibliography, and, for this, only the abstracts of these papers were analyzed. In this step, as can be seen in Chart 2, the transcription and organization of the complete bibliographic reference of the abstracts occurs.

Table 2. Template for Analyzing the Annotated Bibliography

N	1°	Author	Title	Summary
F	ull	document reference		
0	1			

Source: Prepared by the authors.

In a second step, these abstracts go through an analysis process, and some information is extracted from them, in this step called Systematized Bibliography, such as year of publication, author's name, institution of origin, research title, objectives, methodology used for data construction, as well as the results found and the conclusions of the research.

Table 3. Systematized Bibliography Analysis Model

N	l°	Year	Institution	Author	Title	Objectives	Methodology	Results	Conclusion
0	1								

Source: Prepared by the authors.

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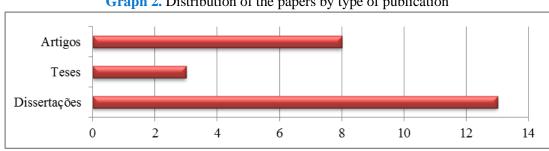
From the construction of this table, with the consequent analysis of this information, graphs were constructed to present an overview of these publications that address the theme of Democratization of Higher Education.

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**Graph 1.** Distribution of articles, theses and dissertations by year of publication

Source: Prepared by the authors.

According to Graph 1, the largest number of publications in BDTD and SciELO occurred in the years 2016 and 2013, with 4 papers each, followed by the year 2010 with 3 academic productions. Thus, it can be said that we are referring to a theme that has been the focus of scientific investigations only in the last 15 years, since, even though the search occurred in publications dating from the year 2000, it was only in 2004 that the first paper on this subject was published in the two search repositories. As for the type of publication, we can observe the classification below.



**Graph 2.** Distribution of the papers by type of publication

Source: Prepared by the authors.

From the information presented in Graph 2, we observe that the largest number of publications refers to Dissertations (13) followed by Articles (8) and Theses (3). The authors of these productions published their work from Higher Education Institutions (HEI) located in four of the five regions of the country.

Região Região Região Região Sul Região Norte

**Graph 3.** Distribution of publications by regions of the country

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Considering the Brazilian regions where most academic productions on Democratization of Higher Education were published, the Southeast (9) and Center-West (8) regions show the greatest interest in the subject. In the Northeast (4) and South (3), articles, dissertations and thesis on the subject have also been published. No papers were found that were authored by researchers belonging to institutions in the North region of the country. As for the HEIs to which the authors are affiliated, the University of Brasilia (UnB) stands out with 5 of these 24 publications.

As for the methodological issues of the 24 articles, theses and dissertations, 11 are named by their authors as Case Studies, since they seek to investigate the theme from the analysis of a very specific context, such as mostly, the implementation of public policies, affirmative action or institutional initiatives of access and permanence of studies in the HEIs where they work. Here also the UnB appears as the place of research of 5 studies, with no other repetition of research locus among the studies. The other publications, on the other hand, are aimed at discussions less focused on certain spaces, bringing up a wider debate about the democratization of Higher Education in a national context.

Regarding the methodological approach, there is a predominance of the Quantitative Approach, which was nominated by 8 authors. Finally, the most frequent methodological path used in these investigations consists of Bibliographical Research, Statistical Data Analysis, Documentary Analysis and Field Research, the latter being put into practice using interviews and questionnaires, both analyzed primarily by means of Content Analysis. As for the research subjects, we highlight the participation of managers/institutional leaders and students who entered the HEIs through access policies (PROUNI, REUNI, FIES, ENEM) and affirmative action, such as racial and social quotas and for students from public schools.

The analysis of the other topics in the Systematized Bibliography, such as the Objectives, Results and Conclusions of the studies, allows us to think about the similarities and differences in the approaches of these academic productions when discussing the Democratization of Higher Education. In this context, it is possible to trace here some analysis categories of the 24 publications.

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To this end, we enter the third and last stage of a State of the Knowledge research. In this stage, as follows, the Categorical Bibliography is built.

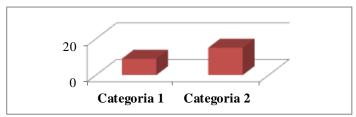
Table 4. Categorized Bibliography Analysis Model

CA	CATEGORY 1 -										
N°	Year	Institution	Author	Title	Objectives	Methodology	Level	Results	Conclusions		
1											

Source: Prepared by the authors.

According to Morosini and Nascimento (2017), Categorical Bibliography is understood as the organization of documents in thematic blocks, i.e., from the establishment of categories of analysis of this information. Thus, the Categorized Bibliography, as the name already infers, concerns a deeper analysis of the content of the publications and selection of what we can call units of meaning, i.e., keywords or representative themes of a set of publications. In this sense, we built two categories.

**Graph 4.** Distribution of publications by categories



Source: Prepared by the authors.

In category 1, entitled Education as merchandise, are those articles, theses and dissertations that bring to discussion the process of globalization, commodification and submission of universities to the recommendations of transnational agencies, alerting to the existence of external factors that are determinants in national educational policies. The debate over quality, efficiency, internationalization, and excellence arise here as a reminder that democratizing policies are born from international agreements that must be fulfilled to the exact extent of the demands determined by agents of the globalized economy. As we will see in Figure 1, there are other keywords that are part of the linguistic repertoire of these academic productions.

Figure 1. Recurring words in the publications belonging to Category 1



Source: Prepared by the authors.

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The discussions present in the 9 publications that are part of Category 1 highlight that international organizations, such as the World Bank and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), have directly impacted the proposition of democratizing policies, also aimed at Higher Education. Martins (2019, p. 8), in her master's research, states that "influenced by international forums and guidelines, the country has implemented Affirmative Action Policies (AAPto reduce inequality and elitism, [...] albeit generating perverse effects: favoring mercantile institutions and deteriorating quality." Such initiatives of inclusion and expansion of Higher Education, in the perspective of Costa Filho (2016, p. 7), "are articulated to a transnational political agenda mediated by the dictates of productive restructuring and neoliberalism". In this vein, from the creation of quality indicators and conditioned to recommendations from international organizations, rankings, competitiveness and commodification of education are mobilized.

These studies point to the 1990s as the beginning of this process of expansion of Higher Education in Brazil, starting with the incentive for the growth of private universities and the lack of commitment to investment in public institutions. This "advance of the private sector from the mid-1990s" (CORBUCCI, 2004, p. 1), together with the "minimization of the State, leads to the diversification/differentiation of Higher Education Institutions (HEI) that meet mainly the interests/needs of extension of the capitalist production of merchandise" (LIMA, 2006, p. 8). Such initiatives dialogue with international guidelines for which "peripheral capitalism countries" should direct their policies to "lean' the State, transferring public responsibilities to the private initiative" (LIMA, 2006, p. 8). This situation, even after so many decades, still leads us to a scenario where 75% of the HEIs in Brazil are part of the private initiative.

In this circulation of "certain discourses of political agents and international organizations" (SILVA, 2013, p. 8), "what is at stake is the imposition of an instrumental rationality to the university, materialized in business management and the ideology of efficiency, competitiveness and productivity [...] justified by the rhetoric of competence, effectiveness, efficiency" (LIMA, 2006, p. 9). According to Costa Filho (2016, p. 7), the "narrowing with the business sector and the intensification of the adjustment of education to market demands" promotes a decommitment with the right to a public and quality education and, thus, "authorizes the hypothesis that higher education, in Brazil, lives an intense process of transformation of a right into merchandise" (SGUISSARDI, 2015, p. 1).

In category 2, entitled Education as a public good, are the publications of BDTD and SciELO, made available in these repositories in the period 2000-2020, which analyze the objectives, implementation and impact of democratization policies in Higher Education, focusing on the investigation of the conditions of access and permanence of these students in Brazilian universities. This category of work includes predominantly research involving case studies based on questionnaires and interviews with course coordinators, professors, institutional and association managers, as well as, and especially, quota-holding students who entered universities through policies of democratization of Higher Education. In the abstracts of these papers, we frequently found the following keywords:

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Figure 2. Recurring words in the publications belonging to Category 2



Source: Prepared by the authors.

It is possible to say that this category is predominant when there is an academic discussion about the democratization of higher education. Therefore, the debate on how HEIs in different regions of Brazil are building (or not) initiatives aimed at the permanence of these students is the most frequent in the debate on this theme. This curiosity appears as an objective in 15 of the 24 articles, theses and dissertations analyzed here, showing a recurrence of studies that aim to know, monitor and evaluate the actions, advances, difficulties and impacts, especially of REUNI, FIES and PROUNI, in the institutions and the academic trajectory of students.

Thus, they seek, like Oliveira's (2019) dissertation, to "problematize how the materialization of these policies occurs" in HEIs, analyzing whether institutional policies of student assistance are ensuring "the conditions of permanence for students entering through the social quota system" (OLIVEIRA, 2019, p. 7). In this direction, recurring objectives in these studies are: "to analyze the problems and limits of these policies, especially about the inclusion of socially disadvantaged strata and ethnic minorities in courses of high demand/high social prestige" (PAULA, 2017, p. 9).

The researches grouped in this category are unanimous in valuing governmental and institutional initiatives and policies aimed at the Democratization of Higher Education, as they understand that such initiatives have contributed greatly to social justice and to the social inclusion of contingents of people historically excluded from university spaces. They agree that education is a public good to which everyone has a right and that it is the State's duty to create and offer conditions for it. However, all these studies point out that "public policies for democratization must go far beyond actions focused on increasing enrollment and social inclusion. Democratization requires [...] ensuring good conditions for students to remain in the courses" (DIAS SOBRINHO, 2010, p. 1). In this direction, after analyzing the data, which, for the most part, refer to the Content Analysis of the texts of documents, questionnaire responses and interview transcripts, these types of findings recur regarding the national policies for access and institutional policies for permanence:

**Table 5.** Results and conclusions of studies belonging to Category 2

"the trajectory is not always accompanied by an institutional policy that contributes to the permanence of these students in the university" (KRAINSKI, 2013, p. 6).

"the expansion of access was greater than the guarantee of permanence" (OLIVEIRA, 2016, p. 6).

"it was observed a discrete evolution in the number of entrants from public schools, especially in courses of low social prestige, suggesting that the socioeconomic status of the individual continues to exert direct influence on the place to be occupied by the student within the university and deconstructing the idea of democratization by access" (LOURENÇO, 2016, p. 6).

"due, mainly, to the limited amount of openings for access to the programs, this policy does not meet all students who request it, showing itself insufficient to ensure the permanence of this teaching profile" (OLIVEIRA, 2019, p. 7).

"The conception of democratization present in REUNI within the institution is set with a focus on access, disregarding the need to guarantee permanence [...] the funding made available for the proposed expansion is not proportional to the activities implemented [...] a frankly democratizing trend in the sense of social inclusion and distribution of academic quality independent of social conditioning factors was not observed" (MELO, 2011, p. 7).

"Although some positive results in the democratization of access have been noted [...] the research suggests that the democratization of access to higher education [...] does not pass only through the simple expansion of vacancies, but requires more precise measures in terms of social inclusion, such as changing the selection model, strengthening high school and pedagogical support" (MELO, 2009, p. 7).

"a) there is still room for greater investments; b) the social backgrounds of the students in the sample reveal low credentials in cultural and economic capitals; c) programs are needed to rescue the social prestige and image of educators" (LORENZET, 2016, p. 9).

"concludes that, in practice, effective forms for the exercise and enjoyment of rights established by Law have not been consolidated. This fact can be observed in the absence of public interventions in the HEIs that are part of the System. With the plastering of the norm, the implementation of the Quotas Law in higher education [...] occurred in a limited way" (QUEIROZ, 2008, p. 10).

"the increase in access and student assistance policies, with increased vacancies and entrants, has not been accompanied by the permanence of students in the system, decreasing graduation rates and completion of undergraduate courses, in recent years. [...] problematize the inclusion of new profiles of students me a model of university that, to a large extent, has not changed" (PAULA, 2017, p. 1).

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Given this data, the scenario is that it is necessary to improve the actions and institutional policies of permanence and monitoring of these students by the universities, made possible through a significant increase in public investments in the maintenance of these access policies. While these policies do not promote permanence with quality, pertinence, and social relevance, they will continue to be characterized only as access policies, and not as policies for the democratization of Higher Education.

Thus, the process of analyzing the educational scenario opened by the new public universities provides interesting clues about the so-called emerging context, in which the empirical field turns to the new university arrangements under development since the beginning of the 21st century in Brazil.

In the second stage of our investigation, which refers to the empirical research on the theme, the entry into service of the participating professors varied between 2014 and 2017, indicating that the experience in the new institutions is in line with the period after the three-year probationary period. Regarding the area of knowledge in which they work, the answers

were: Social Sciences and Humanities, Humanities - Education, and Applied Social Sciences. This means that there is a certain homogeneity in terms of the field of action, which is made explicit by the teachers' undergraduate degrees: Social Sciences, Pedagogy and Philosophy.

Our sample is made up of colleagues with doctorates and with exclusive dedication (DE) in their institutions. At the time of the answers, we were living the context of the Covid-19 Pandemic caused by the new coronavirus (Sars-CoV-2), which sent academic activities to the remote/virtual universe with the support of internet technologies. Therefore, the use of online quizzes was, on the one hand, something pertinent within the situation and the physical distances, but, on the other hand, it contributed to the intensification of the teaching work in times of indeterminate daily spaces (time for work, leisure, socializing, etc.).

There is in effect what we can call a "cruel pedagogy of the virus" (SANTOS, 2020) that resizes all spheres of human sociability, potentiating contradictions and gaps. In particular, within the theme at hand, we highlight that remote teaching in emerging contexts resulting from recent university expansion may deepen challenges, among others, regarding dropout. This issue has been challenging new institutions in their consolidation process (PEREIRA; REIS, 2020).

Considering this context, this exploratory survey was initially scheduled for an intentional sample involving faculty colleagues from the five regions of the country. However, without major losses, the research possibility generated the three participations mentioned. It is known that between the construction part of the research project (architectural) and its execution there are variables not always controlled by the researcher. In this way, this exploratory survey does not allow generalizations for the researched universe (emerging universities), but raises questions pertinent to the continuity of research.

As highlighted, university democratization is understood as the possible synthesis of the dialectics of student access and permanence, having in transversal perspective the processes of internal political interference (involving professors, TAEs and the external community) and the relationship with the normative instances (Ministry of Education/Federal Government). Thus, it is interesting to examine the answers about the main policies for access to the university.

Selective Process for Foreign Students (PSEE), aimed at PALOPs - Portuguese-Speaking African Countries [DOC1]

Permanence plan - housing allowance, food allowance [DOC2].

1. Reserved places (quotas) for students from public schools. There are 75% of the places reserved for those who enter through SISU and 85% of the places for those who enter through the University Colleges (CUNI) linked to the Campi. In addition to the vacancies for students from public schools established by the Quotas Law, the university offers supernumerary vacancies for the admission of indigenous, quilombola, gypsy, transvestite,

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transsexual and transgender students. 3 The UFSB also seeks to advance in the inclusion and permanence of people with disabilities in higher education. To this end, the institution invests in the acquisition of assistive technology equipment and in monitoring the various psychopedagogical needs [DOC3].

It can be observed that elements associated with the debate on affirmative action in the access to the university are present, focus, as highlighted, of expressive bibliography in the last period. Issues related to cultural/ethnic diversity, internationalization and material maintenance of life (aid) are present, suggesting that the new emerging universities have projects that are sensitive to this "new" public that is attending the campuses with more force.

However, in a question guided by the Likert Scale, the question was: "Regarding access to university, how would you rate your institution?" and a scale of 1 (not very inclusive) to 10 (very inclusive) was given to be marked. The numbers 3, 6, and 10 were marked. It can be seen how, despite some important advances in policies of student access and permanence and diversity, there is still the observation that university institutions cannot adequately meet the demands of inclusion that today's society has conquered, not without contradictions.

In the same vein, also with the same methodological bet as the previous question, it was asked: "About student permanence and evasion rates, how do you rate your university?" - 1 (high evasion) to 10 (low evasion). The answers indicated how much evasion is a phenomenon that challenges the university education system in Brazil and, in particular, the new institutions. The numbers 1, 6 and 8 were marked on the scale. Colleagues from universities in the Northeast perceive their institutions as slightly more inclusive than their counterparts in the South. These regional asymmetries are very present in the Brazilian university system (TREVISOL, 2015) and present themselves in a diversified way between traditional institutions located in capitals and metropolitan areas and those operating in the interior regions.

Finally, closing our initial exploratory survey, we asked: "What are the main challenges for the democratization with quality of the new public universities in Brazil? The answers provide us with interesting clues.

Democratization is a process, and in this sense, there is a need for a permanent and attentive look at the differences and how these differences are produced in order to act against these constant mechanisms. Democratization with quality must be linked to diversity. Without diversity, there is no democratization. Access and permanence policies are fundamental for democratization. However, the permanence policies besides scholarships should leverage student experience and protagonism in the sense of a significant formation that allows a later placement in the job market or the continuation of studies and research [DOC1].

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Student assistance policies with monitoring of students' conditions [DOC2]

Financial investment in permanence scholarships, scholarships for scientific and technological initiation, support to extension projects, scholarships for the initiation of teaching and other types of scholarships. - Financial investment for the installation/expansion/improvement of the physical and technological infrastructure of the campuses and university colleges. - Investment in the training of new professionals (masters, doctorate and post-doctorate) committed to critical, citizen and transforming education to work in public universities [DOC3].

The positions of the fellow respondents of the exploratory research ratify the conceptualization of university democracy in a synergistic relationship between access and permanence. Access to Higher Education, as a quantitative dimension, seems to be a tendency in the Brazilian scenario, even though the historical liabilities of contradictions in schooling in a context of strong social inequality is very challenging (ZAGO, 2006).

Given this situation, the policies of student permanence constitute an essential strategy for the process of democratization of the Brazilian university, considering that the enrollment of more students of popular origin in academic institutions exposes the cracks in the social fabric of the country. Therefore, expansionist policies such as REUNI, even though it foments more opportunities in public and free universities, as well as full scholarships from ProUni, without the due support from policies of student permanence, are insufficient for the substantive democratization of the university in Brazil.

The perceptions of professors from emerging universities that are part of the interiorization process suggest the continuity of diversification in terms of social class, ethnicity and gender of the university campuses, as well as aggressive investment in the expansion of scholarships and other types of support for student permanence. Along with this, they point to the very formation of new teaching staff at the graduate level with the necessary social sensitivity and scientific training to reinvent the Brazilian university. Thus, for those who are on the front line of academic work in the process of interiorization and attempt to massify the university system, democratization with quality is a process that involves several investments.

The analysis of the answers (phase of treatment of the results obtained and interpretation) to the questionnaire applied on an exploratory basis presents indications in the same direction observed in other research on the topic at hand, that is, that the process of democratization of Higher Education in Brazil is an inconclusive phenomenon with historical challenges regarding student access and permanence, as well as funding and valuing diversity in the university.

1	8	3

## **Final Considerations**

Inserted as a partial result of a research project on Higher Education and (in) Emerging Contexts, this article bet on two research strategies. In the first analytical axis, a State of Knowledge research was carried out in SciELO and BDTD using the terms "Democratization + Higher Education". In turn, the second analytical axis was organized around exploratory research via an online questionnaire with professors from federal universities created within the recent expansionist process via the REUNI public policy.

The work sought to problematize the scenario of expansion of public vacancies in Brazilian Higher Education, reflecting on the contradictions of student access and permanence at the threshold of the 21st century. The theoretical review allowed us to characterize an interesting scenario of research that has been published on the subject of university democratization, with emphasis on the struggle between education as a commodity vs. education as a public good. This categorization signals the tensions that have accompanied the public policies aimed at democratizing the elitist Brazilian Higher Education system.

These tensions present in the reference literature were observed in the research carried out with professors working in universities recently built in Brazil. The exploratory survey with professors from UNILAB, UNIPAMPA and UFSB made explicit the investment of the new universities in affirmative action and curricular diversification, even though the challenges and contradictions of this process were also evident. Thus, from the perceptions of the professors, it is possible to perceive a very challenging picture in the current scenario of regression of public investment in the Higher Education system.

The lack of guarantees of improvement and deepening of access and permanence policies in public universities, as well as the policy of funding and scholarships in non-state institutions, suggests difficulties in consolidating the project started in the first decade of the 21st century. Brazil is a very unequal country and its socioeconomic structure reflects in the schooling extension, especially of the popular classes. Thus, without the action of the State in fostering educational opportunities, the tendency is the reversion of the positive indicators verified in the last two decades.

Another issue that the bibliographical analysis and the exploratory empirical research demonstrated was that the relative success of access policies cannot be sustained without solid investment in permanence policies for students. Thus, when we talk about the democratization of the university, we are dealing with access and permanence in an articulated manner. As discussed, the dropout phenomenon is an element that challenges the effectiveness of university expansion.

New research must continue to focus on the indicators and perceptions that shape higher education in Brazil. Themes such as educational public policies, comparative analysis with the international context, financing, and university curriculum will remain on the

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research agenda. On the horizon, studies on the impacts of the reduction of the federal budget and the Covid-19 Pandemic should subsidize the analysis in this field of research, especially the implications for the emerging context.

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