

EVALUATION, TEACHER AUTONOMY AND CURRICULARIZATION:  
CHALLENGES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

*AVALIAÇÃO, AUTONOMIA DOCENTE E CURRICULARIZAÇÃO: DESAFIOS NO  
ENSINO SUPERIOR*

*EVALUACIÓN, AUTONOMÍA DOCENTE Y CURRICULARIZACIÓN: RETOS EN LA  
EDUCACIÓN SUPERIOR*



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**ABSTRACT:** This paper discusses teacher evaluation in higher education in the context of curricularization of university extension programs. It uses a bibliographic review on the determinants of the organization of academic work, with regard to the planning and implementation of actions. The results indicate that the influences of the operational university model impose the prevalence of the technical-linear curricular paradigm, of instrumentalization for the labor market, to the detriment of the emphasis on research aimed at solving comprehensive social problems and sustainable development, something that can be achieved by expanding the dialogue with society. Confronting ultra-liberal impositions requires respect for teacher autonomy and action to establish the critical-emancipatory curricular paradigm.

**KEYWORDS:** Evaluation. Higher Education. Teacher autonomy. Curricularization.

**RESUMO:** *Discute-se a avaliação docente no ensino superior, em contexto de curricularização da extensão universitária. Vale-se de revisão bibliográfica acerca dos condicionantes da organização do trabalho acadêmico, no que tange ao planejamento e implementação de ações. Os resultados indicam que as influências do modelo de universidade operacional impõem a prevalência do paradigma curricular técnico-linear, de instrumentalização para o mercado de trabalho, em detrimento da ênfase em investigações voltadas à resolução de problemas sociais abrangentes e ao desenvolvimento sustentável, algo a se lograr com a ampliação do diálogo com a sociedade. Enfrentar as imposições ultraliberais exige respeito à autonomia docente e atuação no sentido de firmar o paradigma curricular crítico-emancipatório.*

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** *Avaliação. Ensino Superior. Autonomia docente. Curricularização.*

**RESUMEN:** *Se discute la evaluación docente en la educación superior, en el contexto de la curricularización de la extensión universitaria. Se utiliza una revisión bibliográfica sobre las condiciones de la organización del trabajo académico, en lo que respecta a la planificación e implementación de acciones. Los resultados indican que las influencias del modelo universitario operacional imponen la prevalencia del paradigma curricular técnico-lineal, de instrumentalización para el mercado de trabajo, en detrimento del énfasis en la investigación orientada a la solución de problemas sociales integrales y al desarrollo sustentable, algo que se logra ampliando el diálogo con la sociedad. Enfrentar las imposiciones ultraliberales requiere respeto a la autonomía docente y acción para establecer el paradigma curricular crítico-emancipador.*

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** *Evaluación. Educación Superior. Autonomía docente. Curricularización.*

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## INTRODUCTION

There is much to discuss regarding the topic of evaluation, particularly large-scale evaluations, in the Brazilian educational landscape, given the constraints on the teaching process in the face of advancing neoliberal policies, changes in modes of production driven by technological development, and the assumptions of technical rationalization, under the pretext of streamlining the state's administrative apparatus, which is generally viewed as costly and bureaucratic. Thus, studies such as those conducted by Garcia and Hillesheim (2017) and Laval (2019) are valuable in highlighting “social inclusion and income decentralization, combined with vigorous growth in output and employment, as fundamental to the country's development process” (Garcia & Hillesheim, 2017, p. 136).

In the case of higher education, the range of constants expands in the face of the challenges to be addressed regarding the development of critical-reflective thinking, academic freedom, and the resulting organization of teaching work, all of which are necessary corollaries to consolidating the university's role in relation to the ideal of building a democratic society. Over the past four decades, the entire educational system has been affected by transformations in the capitalist mode of production—marked, above all, by rapid technological development—which have imposed prescriptive and normative consequences on teaching work through the imposition of technical-pedagogical procedures and so-called curricular innovations, such as the discourse situated within the framework of competency-based pedagogy, according to Duarte (2016).

Based on Pires and Gomes (2024), it can be inferred that, in addition to duties related to the nature of academic work itself, higher education faculty members are held responsible for securing, through external funding, equipment and supplies, which requires them to seek out resources, thereby legitimizing an organizational model within a context of competition regarding the distribution and allocation of science and technology funds. Failure to do so leads to the demise of the teaching career due to the evaluation system tied to this model.

While productivity is inherent to academic work, excessive focus on productivity—characterized by a discourse of excellence that must be reflected in the number of publications in peer-reviewed journals, faculty involvement in graduate programs, the internationalization of research, and their ability to secure funding from external agencies—creates a climate of excessive competitiveness within the university. Taken together, these factors reinforce a scenario of intensified academic work marked by quantification and competitiveness (Ball, 2005).

Federal Law No. 13,005, which defines the legal parameters of the National Education Plan for the 2014–2024 decade, has proven to be clear and consistent with the concern for the social function of the university, establishing the need to “ensuring that at least 10% (ten percent) of the total course credits required for an undergraduate degree are earned in university extension programs and projects, with a priority focus on areas of great social relevance” (Brasil, 2014, Strategy 12.7).

It seems clear to us that, despite the fact that the majority of the 2014–2024 PNE targets have not been fully met, Strategy 7 of Target 12 sparked significant momentum and debate within higher education institutions, given the need to integrate university extension into the curriculum, with consequences, including for the accreditation and recognition of courses (Brasil, 2014; Miguel, 2023). Moreover, it contributed to greater integration of the university with other sectors of society, opening up prospects for enhancing initial and continuing education from a humanistic perspective, enriching the curriculum, and bridging the gap between theory and practice. We hope that this will also gradually lead to greater recognition, in academic evaluation, of the dimensions of teaching and university extension, a trend already evident in the strategic planning of some universities in the country.

Although a considerable number of institutions have only managed to implement the process of integrating university extension into the curriculum in the final years of the second decade, the initiative taken can be considered promising, and it is hoped that faculty evaluation processes consistent with the established protocol will be developed with a view to renewing curricula and teaching programs at the university (Brasil, 2014).

It is hoped that, following the consolidation of the legal framework for the integration of university extension into the curriculum, a faculty evaluation policy in higher education will emerge that is capable of upholding the constitutional principle of the inseparability of teaching, research, and university extension, while also focusing on recognizing the core competencies of each faculty member. This requires the academic community to recognize that research can be conducted both through university extension activities, via a dialogic relationship with the external community, and through the demonstration of the integration of theory and practice in a dialogic relationship with the internal community, via the renewal of teaching programs. But it also requires understanding and respecting that one may have a greater affinity for teaching, for university extension, or for research-centered work, and that all can contribute to the integration of theory and practice in the performance of their duties.

Drawing on Luckesi (2017), Thiollent (2022), and Freitas (2018), we can assert that such formulations require a critical-reflective approach to academic work, developing a faculty evaluation policy capable of valuing performance within the context of the traditional three-pronged framework of university competencies, without disregarding individual vocation, individual aptitudes, and capabilities, which are generally revealed within the scope of each academic dimension.

Thus, this article discusses some implications of faculty evaluation policies in higher education, especially in the context of the university's social function, which has been severely undermined by regulations imposed by the prevailing trend toward a neoliberal model of the operational university.

The methodology used involves a literature review and documentary analysis of the factors affecting the organization and evaluation of academic work, with regard to issues of planning, implementation of actions, analysis and interpretation, as well as the final drafting of the article. Thus, based on the selection of the collected material, we conducted an interpretive reading "that aims to establish a relationship between the content of the sources and content obtained from other sources" (Gil, 2019, p. 80), in order to critically examine the evaluation policy that influences faculty autonomy in higher education, as well as, on the one hand, restricts academic work to serving as a tool for the labor market, which, although it has an impact on society, on the other hand, undermines a well-rounded humanistic education and, paradoxically, overemphasizes evaluation focused primarily on the research dimension, sometimes reduced to publications, thereby creating opportunities for differential funding for so-called centers of academic excellence.

In this vein, the article builds on this introduction to discuss, in the following section, the organizational, technical, and political factors that affect academic work and the faculty evaluation process, in order to subsequently present the appropriate concluding remarks.

## **FACULTY EVALUATION IN LIGHT OF THE EROSION OF ACADEMIC WORK IN THE CONTEXT OF THE RISE OF THE OPERATIONAL UNIVERSITY MODEL**

Some argue that, strictly speaking, the primary role of the university is to produce scientific knowledge. We agree with this thesis, but we believe it is important to establish, from the outset, that, from the perspective of the university's social function, it is defensible and consistent for the knowledge produced to have a social foundation and to be grounded in society, by proposing the necessary steps toward resolving relevant social problems.

Of course, a given situation may constitute a problem or a matter of interest for one segment of society but not for others; however, discussing it is equally important for us to consider the academic dimension within a context of critical reflection, freedom, pluralistic thought, and the enrichment and broadening of the human condition. In this sense, the work carried out at the university should strive for universality and cultural diversity.

Without this broad and dialectically articulated perspective on the world, evaluation—when used to guide practices—can become an instrument of power and co-optation, given the profusion of subject areas, epistemological traditions, and diverse cultural forms and manifestations present at the university. How can we expect a purely quantitative and instrumental evaluation in an institution whose most notable characteristic is cultural diversity?

Certainly, the self-reproduction of society through the educational process involves a contradictory and dialectical movement, since it carries within it both the possibility of incorporating and subjecting social actors to the existing state of affairs, and the prospect of progress, of disrupting the supposedly existing equilibrium, of creating the new, and of social transformation.

This movement is even more striking and contradictory in the university, given its historically defined social commitment to the production and dissemination of scientific knowledge, which progressively contributes to the distortion of its *raison d'être* and imposes a process of intensification of teaching work, characterized by competitiveness and the quantification of published papers.

The increasing emphasis on quantitative assessment of output contributes to the transformation of the university, historically characterized by universality and diversity, into an operational university, imposing a level of productivity that at times resembles that sought by the capitalist mode of production. Indeed, “School is not a business” (Laval, 2019).

Strictly speaking, and remarkably, the current stage of capitalism features other forms of appropriation of economic surplus—derived from scientific labor—that impose control over university activities through an operational model, since this results not only from the appropriation of surplus value, but also from a commercial surplus and from differentiated forms of appropriation of the produced wealth situated within the context of technological development, whose profit appears as a product of intellectual management capacity. Thus, information has become a new fetish of contemporary capitalist society, alongside all the others, especially alongside the “holy trinity”: the fetishes of commodities, money, and capital, the latter being the “father of them all” (Carcanholo, 2010, p. 19, author’s quotation marks). It

should be emphasized, therefore, that this phenomenon is not new and is becoming increasingly pronounced as other tools and signs of pedagogical mediation are incorporated into teaching practice, driven by the transformation of information and communication processes. The techniques for creating standards of measurement and comparison—whether numerical or analog—are becoming more comprehensive and varied due to the explosive development of new technical-administrative systems, justified as “rationalization.” However, strictly speaking, this reduces the human resources specific to the field and transfers bureaucratic functions to teachers that, in the recent past, were not part of their job descriptions.

Undoubtedly, the main controversy surrounding academic evaluation arises when quantitative indicators are taken as a measure of the value or quality of the outputs, objects, and events being measured; in other words, the quantification of academic output does not necessarily reflect its quality.

When evaluation bodies focus, as recent trends indicate, on the social impact of academic output, evaluators must be careful not to center the evaluation process solely on the impact factor of scientific dissemination tools; for, despite their scientific scope and validation, the analysis may focus predominantly on the research dimension—or, more specifically, on publications—without strictly considering the social impact of teaching and university extension programs, strictly speaking.

In an article analyzing the processes of scientific development and innovation as intrinsically linked dimensions of academic work, Oliva and Silva (2012) argue that the criteria and indicators for analyzing the quantitative and qualitative aspects of academic output should be considered but not overemphasized:

Peer review, which takes into account the number of papers published in indexed journals, citations, and involvement in training researchers, has been accepted, even if occasionally questioned, as a standard for evaluating knowledge production. Its widespread adoption has been essential to promoting significant advances in national science over the past thirty years; however, this evaluation model does not provide the necessary incentives and recognition to encourage greater engagement by Brazilian scientists in innovation and the dissemination of science to society. In the analysis of technological output, the situation is more delicate because the most frequently used indicators—such as patent registrations and economic impact—do not constitute a universally accepted and easily measurable standard. Many patents are intended solely to protect intellectual property, with no prospect of resulting in development, a product, or a process. (Oliva & Silva, 2012, pp. 65–66)

Thus, quantitative records are important; however, they actually reflect the very techniques used to construct units of measurement, not necessarily the quality of the actions, objects, products, and events generated in the context of academic work—which are translated into cultural products resulting from the inseparable link between teaching, research, and university extension. As previously noted, this is a constitutional provision whose ethical and legal scope can be optimized through the process of integrating university extension into the curriculum.

Depending on the analytical methods developed and the uses of the results of faculty performance evaluations, faculty members are held accountable for institutional performance: “it is important to highlight that the implementation of a performance-oriented culture, more pronounced in the context of graduate studies but with a direct effect on the evaluation of Brazilian higher education, impacts the subjectivity of faculty researchers” (Pires & Gomes, 2024, p. 6).

In fact, in a class-based society, people’s access to institutionalized education depends on the society’s overall level of development, which dictates the need to integrate its members into higher forms of culture so that they can perform more complex types of productive work. It imposes a type and quality of education defined by market-driven values, guided by the setting of targets and funded based on the ranking of the results obtained.

Consequently, the development of education becomes a direct function of society’s interest in harnessing, for its collective purposes, the labor of each of its members. However, education is not merely an individual achievement but a function of society. It is the process by which society shapes its members in its own image and according to its interests and determinations, based on Garcia and Hillesheim (2017).

It is a fact that so-called “plural” conceptions of the university, which excel at attempting to respond unilaterally to the demands of global society, are taking shape in Brazil, not only through the expansion of the private higher education network via distance learning, but primarily through the erosion of the public university’s identity and its social function, which is grounded in plural, sustainable, and solidarity-based development.

This erosion is initially driven by the outsourcing of support services—primarily cleaning, security, transportation, and IT—and is progressively extending to core academic activities through the hiring of faculty under precarious conditions and the push to charge tuition at public universities, under the pretext of supposedly minimizing privileges for incoming

students, as occurred in a bill defeated by the São Paulo State Legislative Assembly in 2023, which is now being revived in a new attempt at approval as we write.

These efforts to minimize the scope of the inseparable relationship between teaching, research, and university extension, as mediated by administration, have not only eroded university autonomy but also affected academic freedom in the face of influences from the business management model. In this regard, it is worth noting that the movement highlights “the constant tensions between education and politics, science and ideology, the university and society, etc.” (Trevisol & Garmus, 2021, p. 309).

Thus, attempts to undermine university autonomy and the organizational structure of work in public universities rely on the aforementioned constraints to transform them into an operational model, which may minimize the social impact of university extension programs because, in this model, the process of dialogic interaction with society—when it occurs at all—is generally reduced to the provision of services. However, the resilience of faculty, staff, and students in defending the ideals of a public, democratic, tuition-free, and high-quality university, one that serves as a model for society, is remarkable.

Critical mass, in this sense—which is essentially generated by the model of a democratic and pluralistic university—has proven capable of fostering resistance in defense of its form of organization and, perhaps, its hegemonic dominance. The preservation of the public university model enshrined in the Federal Constitution of Brazil (Brasil, 1988) finds, in the movements of faculty, students, and other education workers, concrete opportunities to counter neoliberal attacks through dialogue with society. Hence the importance of the legal framework for integrating university extension programs into the curriculum, with the aim of strengthening the three pillars of teaching, research, and university extension, guided by democratic governance.

We concur with the views of Bandeira and Marques (2023), who note that the professional isolation of faculty members is a social phenomenon still present in higher education institutions, despite efforts to strengthen research groups—a situation that requires reflection and consideration, given that education is a collective endeavor and must move beyond its instrumental conception, which, for much of its history, has been characterized as follows:

The concept of the “professional” advocated by the reformist movement is based on the model of the independent professional, such that teachers and administrators are viewed as holders of

knowledge that should be applied in the school setting. This conception of the education “professional” also presupposes a form of individualized work, thereby leading to the isolation of teachers and the resulting weakening of the teaching profession. (Aguiar & Barguil, 2024, p. 10)

We emphasize the intentionality of educational practices, since “the pedagogical nature of educational practice implies the explicit articulation of the ends and means that guide the roles of the teacher and the student in a specific direction” (Bandeira & Marques, 2023, p. 10). Thus, teacher evaluation should be considered a means rather than an end in itself and, therefore, defined by the relationship between theory and practice that surrounds it. Consequently, evaluation does not and will not occur in a conceptual vacuum, as it is shaped by theoretical and worldview concepts revealed through pedagogical practices (Luckesi, 2017).

The deconstruction of evaluation as a guide for practices—generally for the purpose of control—undermines teacher autonomy, for although it is widely advocated in pedagogical discourses and projects, it is threatened, among other factors, by the contradictory agenda of educational institutions within their own sphere; for while it contributes to social reproduction and the maintenance of the status quo, it also works to foster a critical perspective on reality, thereby contributing to its transformation (Aguiar & Barguil, 2024).

Obviously, attempts to undermine the nature of the work process at the university have a profound impact on basic education institutions, given their role as providers of professional training and as producers and disseminators of systematized knowledge.

Meanwhile, contemporary education—influenced by neoliberal ideology and, in particular, by the use of large-scale assessments, which further accentuate this contradiction—reveals a certain disconnect between theoretical discourse and pedagogical practice, establishing control over teaching work, even in institutions of higher education.

It is therefore imperative to strengthen faculty autonomy, given the current structure of evaluation policies in higher education, with an emphasis on massive demands for publications and the National Student Performance Exam (ENADE), whose objective of evaluating students and undergraduate programs, especially teacher-training programs, can lead to a practice similar to that found in the Basic Education system, where students are trained to provide pre-determined answers to standardized questions. A public university must uphold universality, foster an environment conducive to critical reflection, promote cultural diversity, and ensure student access and retention with concrete opportunities for success.

According to Contreras (2012), faculty autonomy is experienced through three dimensions: moral obligation, commitment to the community, and professional competence. Thus, we emphasize that the way in which each professor relates to these dimensions is unique, shaping their identity and exercising their autonomy based on the values and commitments they embrace as educators. However, in recent years, expressions such as “teachers’ autonomy” and “quality of education” have taken on the character of slogans; that is, the concept of autonomy has been stripped of its meaning and is even being used to defend proposals that run counter to academic freedom or educational systems of questionable quality.

In the neoliberal context, educational reforms have done little to question whether the proposed changes are in line with what we understand as quality education. Furthermore, such reforms, as they have been proposed globally by conservative-leaning multilateral organizations such as the World Bank, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), indicate that “the adoption of these reforms seems to be understood as a way to overcome the limitations of national borders and adapt to a globalized context” (Aguilar & Barguil, 2024, p. 7).

According to Ball (2002), the constituent elements of the “reform package” under analysis are: the market, managerial capacity, and performativity. As for the latter, we believe it is characterized by a demand for high performance, which results in the evaluation and comparison of individuals’ knowledge—a subjective reform demanded of teachers through competencies conceived as necessary for teaching practice, which dangerously presuppose a transformation of how one acts, thinks, and feels in order to meet the demands of efficiency and effectiveness.

Laval (2019) is emphatic in stating that, in order to meet these new demands, schools and universities must become almost like businesses, operating according to the model of private companies and with an obligation to achieve maximum “performance.” However,

this modernizing discourse has historically been a way of redefining the education system, in opposition to traditional humanism, as a productive machine subordinated to modes of reasoning and approaches that can be applied to other sectors of production. Many progressives saw no difficulty in embracing this discourse, as it seemed to align with the promising advances in science and the “development of the productive forces”. (Laval, 2019, p. 36)

We agree with Novaes (2022) when he argues that, in higher education institutions, the “publish or perish” policy reveals the following contradiction: “For bureaucrats, there has been an increase in ‘efficiency.’ For us, it has led to the precariousness of teaching work” (p. 51). It seems that the quality and importance of teaching work, especially in top-tier graduate programs, have reduced us to an increasingly insane demand for publications, at any cost and of questionable quality (see the rise of predatory journals), in order to lead international rankings, meet the requirements of funding agencies, and, more than that, to reinforce the idea that the university of the ultraliberal phase of Brazilian capitalism—in its cruelest form, which must be fought with all our might—is the colonial university, for it “trains managers for international capital, produces and reproduces scientifically backed ignorance, and becomes increasingly commodified” (Novaes, 2022, p. 33).

We live in times when the practice of managerialist administration, as discussed by Ball (2005), aims to exert greater control over faculty work. The values that once permeated democratic management have been replaced by a culture of efficiency and effectiveness, which exploits teachers to the point of exhaustion in the name of results—results that can be questioned, as they often deviate from the precepts of the republican school, which was based on holistic human development.

To begin with, it is worth noting that the managerial model introduces into the school context forms of work organization and rationalization that are characteristic of the business world (Aguiar & Barguil, 2024; Laval, 2019; Novaes, 2022). There is also evidence of a strengthening of surveillance and control practices targeting workers, which may establish or perpetuate authoritarian practices within educational institutions—a phenomenon that was heavily criticized during the military dictatorship and has once again come to the forefront with attempts to consolidate the implementation of civic-military schools, particularly in the state of São Paulo, and, more recently, the debate over charging tuition at public universities, justified by budget cuts.

Higher education policy is guided by the National Curriculum Guidelines (DCN) for undergraduate programs, formulated in the late 1990s for various fields of study and gradually expanded to cover nearly all existing programs in the country. These documents address the essential characteristics of each profession and highlight the need for humanistic, critical, and reflective professionals, based on general principles that advocate for a solid, broad-based education aimed at enabling students to adapt to changes, particularly in the world of work and the production of knowledge.

In Brazil, as in all countries aligned with the ultraliberal agenda, large-scale assessments have been used not only to identify potential problems in order to develop solutions, but also as a tool for accountability, through sanctions or rewards (Afonso, 2012). From this perspective, assessment has not been effectively understood, in our view, as a procedural tool of educational work, thereby undermining its central role in the educational landscape: to provide theoretical and conceptual elements so that the curriculum can be designed and modified to enhance the teaching process in the assessed area. When based on purely quantitative procedures, this can undermine teachers' autonomy regarding their freedom to plan didactic and scientific activities.

Another aspect to consider is the weight assigned to the results of this assessment and its consequences for the school, not to mention the possibility of various forms of “gaming,” which allow schools to meet targets without necessarily adhering strictly to the proposed objectives, with the aim of winning awards and avoiding common sanctions (Freitas, 2018; Koslinski et al., 2017).

In this context, managerialism and the establishment of hierarchical and authoritarian relationships within schools—in the name of achieving educational quality indicators—have increasingly left teachers with their hands tied, hindering their ability to exercise autonomy and, consequently, the autonomy of students.

This is a serious problem affecting the entire education system, which increases the university's responsibility—not only to improve its assessment system but also, given its role as a trainer of professionals, for the benefit of both the university itself and the community at large, especially in the area of Basic Education.

## **FUNDAMENTALS OF FACULTY EVALUATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION: A NECESSARY OVERVIEW**

Having outlined, in general terms, the theoretical framework on which university work is based, let us now turn to the main findings of the literature review on this topic, which serve as the basis for the evaluation process.

In our view, a faculty evaluation system should analyze whether, how, and to what extent the objectives defined in the Work Plan or in the Teaching Activity Proposal were met. First, we emphasize that, in the case of higher education, teaching activities must be centered on the constitutional principle of the inseparability of teaching, research, and university extension, within academic processes mediated by university administration.

Based on this constitutional principle, the guidelines for university extension established under Resolution No. 7, dated December 18, 2018, of the Chamber of Higher Education—a body of the National Education Council (Brasil, 2018)—are consistent, as they suggest an academic and educational process grounded in the valorization of the human person—in their relationships with others and with the world—in respect as a universal value, in individual, social, and cultural differences, and in the pursuit of pluralistic knowledge.

Based on a review of the literature and, in particular, a documentary analysis highlighting the role of the curricularization of university extension programs in consolidating the university's social function, Miguel (2023) identifies as necessary elements for achieving this goal the influence on student education in the humanistic dimension; its implications for social, economic, and political development, based on inclusion and contributions to the construction of processes of emancipation and empowerment; and ongoing dialogue with diverse social segments, aimed at redefining knowledge through the recognition, or lack thereof, of links between scientific knowledge and everyday knowledge.

By strengthening ties with society, the university can achieve the development of interdisciplinary educational processes by promoting interaction among scientific models, concepts, and methodologies from various disciplines and fields of knowledge, providing interfaces between them—whether from a pedagogical perspective or an epistemological dimension—to build new knowledge. This is a dynamic of academic practice that fosters interprofessionalism, recognizing the importance of learning to work as a team, valuing reflection on professional roles, consolidating a problem-solving perspective and negotiation in decision-making processes, as well as respecting individuality and differences in the approach to professional knowledge and practices.

In line with this way of thinking, one can establish counterpoints to the operational model, reinforcing the trend toward universality by establishing a model of a public, secular university of high quality recognized by society, focused on the effective integration of teaching, research, and university extension, mediated by management. Such a perspective on academic work cannot have faculty evaluation centered primarily on research, but must consider the prerogatives of teaching as a process of renewal through research, produced in synergy with university extension, that is, a continuous evaluation process that conceives of university extension as a space for broadening academic debate, consolidating itself as a vast field for theoretical reflection, knowledge production, and dissemination.

Strictly speaking, when viewed as a collective project and taking into account the different situations and stages of development across various university contexts, “the process of implementing curricular integration will only be possible through dialogue and by listening to the perspectives of the main protagonists of extension activities within the university—that is, students and faculty” (Ribeiro et al., 2018, p. 335).

Although it is acceptable for teaching practice to focus more on one of the dimensions of the tripod—given individual vocations and abilities, something for which one must have deep respect—a comprehensive educational process cannot consider it reasonable that, within the system of faculty evaluation, in higher education, the central elements of each dimension of the triad set forth in current legislation are not observed, as this would result in a failure to fulfill the university’s historical mission, especially with regard to its social function.

It should be noted, however, that the problem is not merely one of legality; strictly speaking, it involves a conception of science, since all scientific knowledge is a response to a question, an inquiry, or a tragedy, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, which makes the articulation of the academic tripod a promising prospect for scientific and social development. In this sense, the major challenge facing the evaluation of teaching work in academia is to determine whether teaching is grounded in research and, at the same time, to ascertain whether that research has social relevance and is consolidated through university extension programs.

This discussion is relevant given its social, academic, and political scope, which involves conceptions of the university, society, and the construction of knowledge. For this reason, Marques and Stallivieri (2024) point to the need for continuing education for faculty, students, and technical-administrative staff involved in university extension programs through an organizational plan that allocates the necessary resources to achieve these objectives.

As a social institution, a university, in addition to producing and disseminating knowledge, influences the system of social relations, contributing to the transformation of ways of seeing, understanding, and producing worldviews, and shaping new forms of academic, social, and political action. Within this sociocultural framework, the university must develop practices aimed at securing public recognition of its legitimacy and responsibilities, elements that justify the process of integrating university extension into the curriculum.

In discussing the foundations of a university extension project and its implications for the university’s dialogue with other sectors of society, Thiollent (2022) emphasizes that, by adopting a perspective of the social construction of knowledge, university extension initiatives

can explore ways to align with the principles of social transformation. For the researcher, academic work must encompass a process of the social construction of knowledge, which materializes through the dialogue inherent in extension activities and is defined by diagnostic assessments, training initiatives, and research conducted in communities or institutions, involving dialogic interaction between the community inside and outside the university. Strictly speaking, without the premise of an internal-external relationship to the university, there can be no talk of university extension, since it is this dialectical movement that contributes to expanding and renewing the broad spectrum of knowledge production.

Rooted in a broad spectrum of social relationships, as outlined throughout this text, faculty evaluation in higher education cannot, even in a veiled manner, be confined—as a general rule—to just one dimension of academic work. By situating itself within the framework of the main arguments supporting the curricularization of university extension programs—without disregarding the potential for above-average output in terms of products and processes within a given dimension—collective work can and should take individuality into account, while still fulfilling the university’s historical mission, which is oriented toward universality. Consequently, the reverse is not true; that is, by overemphasizing one of the academic dimensions, the university may, strictly speaking, fail to fulfill the social function inherent to it.

Upholding the principle of the inseparability of teaching, research, and community engagement, regarded as a foundational element for the consolidation of a democratic university, implies establishing a fruitful interdependence between academia and society, supported by quality teaching, relevant research, and community engagement with social impact, all coordinated within a dynamic process of interaction among the various programs, projects, and thematic networks for the dissemination of knowledge. It also requires a faculty evaluation process grounded in the traditional academic triad, under the guidance of university administration. In short, it involves consolidating public policies for higher education capable of “envisioning an extension program that breaks with welfare dependency and the political culture of authoritarianism, which systematically denies and disqualifies the participation of organized society in public affairs” (Fontenele, 2024, p. 6).

Situated within this context of defining the work at the university, faculty evaluation will be able to reasonably assess the achievement of four fundamental parameters: the production and dissemination of scientific knowledge; the integration of theory and practice; professional training, both initial and continuing, aligned with the exercise of citizenship; and

ethical education focused on the dignity of the human condition—values that are indispensable to education.

## **FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Under the current circumstances of the process of capitalist accumulation, the international division of labor requires a peripheral country like Brazil to reform its educational system in order to adapt it to its role in this new order. From this perspective, the university model focused on integrating teaching, research, and community outreach, which requires significant investment and a qualified, full-time faculty, is now considered obsolete and faces opportunistic attacks, particularly regarding budgetary support.

From a neoliberal perspective, the constitutional model of the Brazilian university should only be maintained in exceptional cases, among other reasons, to serve market interests, as evidenced by initiatives to expand so-called centers of academic excellence and attempts at budgetary strangulation, sometimes imposed on universities under the pretext of streamlining the administrative apparatus.

At the same time, universities are assigned another role: that of providing simplified education through shorter programs that lack an adequate research environment—the so-called teaching universities. Meanwhile, institutions that aim to integrate teaching, research, and outreach have their operations hindered by attempts to tie the production and dissemination of knowledge to market conditions.

Predominant in the private sector, as seen in “university centers,” this model is beginning to gain traction in public universities, whether due to the increasingly precarious nature of faculty hiring practices, the introduction of distance learning programs for undergraduate degrees, or the overemphasis on scholarly output. This explains, to a large extent, the difficulties encountered in consolidating the process of integrating university extension programs into the curriculum. Although provided for in the 2014–2024 National Education Plan, it was only at the end of that period that it became established in most institutions, with resistance still evident regarding the implementation of initiatives aimed at fostering a dialogic relationship with society and seeking to transform the technical-linear curricular paradigm into a humanistic dimension of education, thereby paving the way for a curriculum organized along critical-emancipatory lines.

As we have argued throughout this discussion, careful consideration of the assumptions underlying the integration of university extension programs into the faculty evaluation system in higher education can achieve—beyond the necessary dialogic relationship with other sectors of society—a constitutional requirement: dynamic relationships in the process of knowledge production and dissemination, prioritizing situations in which students are guided through a rich process of reflection, analysis, and problem-solving regarding socially relevant issues.

Finally, it should be emphasized that, although the university must be attentive to the needs of the labor market, it should not become a prisoner of market forces to the point where its scientific output becomes skewed toward technicality, a tendency of the so-called global society. This model advances within the realm of technocracy and regresses in the process of human formation. Now, if one of the objectives of scientific research is to find solutions to the problems faced by humanity, it is necessary to ensure autonomy for discovery, innovation, and the dissemination of scientific knowledge.

Otherwise, research topics would be dictated exclusively by the contingencies of daily life, which would result in a university of a purely functional nature, one that would serve only to discuss immediate issues raised by prevailing historical and social conditions and would prove incapable of also enacting structural changes to consolidate its social function.

Without a free university, there is no individual freedom; critical thinking is limited; and culture is impoverished.

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