The Concept of Internationalization in Educational Research: National and Regional Planning

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The text presented is part of the study “Evaluation of postgraduate (PG) education in Brazil, Portugal, and Spain” and analyzes the five Brazilian National Plans of Posgraduate Studies (in portuguese: Plano Nacional de Pós-Graduação—PNPG), specifically evaluating the relationship among internationalization, integration, and development regional relations, in Brazil’s relations with its neighbors in Latin America and the Caribbean. Using research methodology from the field of knowledge of comparative education, it seeks to construct three research axes in order to propose an analytical categorization on the following epistemological actions: to relate the historical context of each Brazilian PNPG to the concepts of regional development and integration, especially with respect to national needs for the expansion and renewal of science and technology; trying to show the evolution of PG courses and programs (specifically master’s and doctoral courses); and also in IV and V PNPG, to analyze the direction that the internationalization objective has taken and which regional integration proposals are present in the planning documents. Preliminarily, we can affirm that, although Brazil incorporated the discourse of regional integration in its national plans, especially in the so-called “national-developmental” decades, only from the end of the 20th century did the theme appear more objectively and focused on real actions regarding evolution of post-graduation.

Keywords: postgraduate in Brazil, national development, internationalization

Introduction

In Brazil, the historical construction of university higher education is directly linked to the various national development projects as well as to science and technology policies. The Ministry of Education (MEC), together with the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq) and other organs and subjects of civil society, has been working since 1975 on the National Plans of Posgraduate Studies (PNPG), rethinking the present, and planning the future of its activities in the various areas of knowledge.

The text presented below is part of the research “Evaluation of Postgraduate (PG) Education in Brazil, Portugal, and Spain” and analyzes the five Brazilian PNPGs, specifically evaluating the relationship among internationalization, integration, and regional development, in Brazil’s relations with the neighbors of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Using metodological tools of comparative education, it seeks to construct three research axes in order to propose an analytical categorization on the following epistemological actions: to relate the historical context of each Brazilian PNPG to the concepts of regional development and integration, especially with regard to

national needs for the expansion and renewal of science and technology; trying to show the evolution of PG programs (specifically the so-called *stricto sensu*, master's, and doctoral courses); and also in IV and V PNPG, to analyze the direction that the internationalization objective has taken and which regional integration proposals are present in the planning documents.

Preliminarily, we can affirm that, although Brazil incorporated the discourse of regional integration in its national plans, especially in the so-called “national-developmental” decades, only at the end of the 20th century did the theme appear more objectively and focused on real actions regarding evolution of the PG studies in general.

The Developmentalism of the 20th Century and the Globalization of the 21st Century

Since the great need to rethink and rebuild the nations and regional blocs that occurred in the postwar period, the renewal, expansion, and even the creation of PG programs and courses was part of the economic growth strategies of many developed and developing countries. In the period from 1945 to the 1970s, with the need for the reconstruction of the world in question, the Keynesian solution, assumed by the Western countries, placed the state and its planning actions at the forefront of development, and in the case of Latin America, of developmentalism (Melo, 2004). Creation of national industrial parks, new sources of energy, mining, advances in agricultural production, and trade strengthening and trade networks around the world combine with national and regional concerns aimed at the production of own science and technologies, highly qualified staff to produce and interpret the new demands of capitalism.

Initially linked to the universities, PG programs and courses at that time had a great increase in quantity and quest for quality financed by local governments, at the same time, they also became targets for external loans, always associated with the formation of national staff qualified personnel. The World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), as major lenders of the time, created in the context of the United Nations (UN), extended their policy of lending and donations through economic and social changes, the period of “reforms” negotiated with the debtor nations. Such reforms constituted the external debt mainly of the developing countries, resulting in large packages that involved the most diverse policies, aimed to infrastructure or related to the welfare state (Melo, 2012; Kerstenetzky, 2011).

Between the 1980s and 1990s, the preoccupations of the nations with such issues related to economic growth and development accompanied, with the consolidation of neoliberalism, the new needs of a capitalism that became increasingly globalized:

The new development project generated by hegemonic globalization has brought to the forefront a strategy of liberalization of world markets by taking the axiom of competitive advantages to become the center of this project, and thus, to the recovery of the neoclassical theory of human capital. (Teodoro, 2011, p. 87)

In addition to the classic UN agencies and their many specific agencies, such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), other international organizations were created by the end of the 20th century: Non-governmental organizations, such as the Organization for Cooperation and Academic Development (OECD) and other regional ones also begin to have a greater influence on the regulation of national educational policies. In the case of the OECD, even non-member countries can choose to participate in projects, such as the International Student Assessment Program (PISA), endorse their guidelines

and improve their positions in the global rankings on various policies educational systems (Melo, 2015).

At the beginning of the 21st century, new directions of globalization accompanied new forms of relationship between society and the state, and also accompanied the efforts of international capitalism itself to survive, in the face of so many cyclical crises that permanently threaten its full realization.

Since the end of the 20th century, issues of concern for the environment, as well as human rights and social justice, including the right to health, had already begun to be on the agenda of both hegemonic and developing countries education (McCowan & Unterhalter, 2016). In the 21st century, new forms of governance are being consolidated and the paths of globalized capitalism require that different types of economic and social processes become more homogeneous. In addition to the promotion of peaceful multilateral environments for the flow of industrial production, services, and the market in general, ways of producing culture and knowledge are modified. The accountability practices of the previous century are added new needs to know the destinations of investments and loans, both at the global and regional levels, and even within countries. Generating surpluses becomes increasingly difficult and risky, and both countries and international and transnational financial agencies seek to reinvent themselves to continue their growth and development projects by listening to and responding to new issues on the global agenda of capitalism (Harvey, 2011; Melo, 2015; Teodoro, 2011), creating new forms of regulation and governance.

Concerning to educational policies, the construction of a global agenda, chained mainly by the WB/UNESCO from the 1990s (Melo, 2015) is following new directions. In addition to a global lending and policy agenda, the need to make homogenous readings of such results is to be made homogeneous, such as the construction of indexes based on variables accepted by an increasing number of countries. The way education information is produced, from statistical data to more specific issues of curriculum content or even teacher training, acquires global hegemonic and homogeneous contours, as several authors critically analyze (Afonso, 2009).

Higher education policies, both in relation to the training of professionals and researchers and in their face regarding the creation of science, technology, and innovation, also follow the dynamics of the new regulation, it follows the trends in several countries regarding the expansion of privatization and also financialization of markets that deal with higher education as a service, not as a right, increasing the permanent tension in several countries between the public and private relations, especially in relation to the public financing of higher education.

In many countries, tertiary, post-secondary, or higher education is usually divided into undergraduate and PG, or even in cycles. While undergraduates may present themselves in their various types of courses, such as teacher formation, baccalaureate, and technological courses; PG courses also present a wide variety of courses and programs, usually divided into “*lato sensu*” and “*stricto sensu*”. The main difference between the two denominations is the type of research that will be carried out, and those that are recognized as “*lato sensu*” can also be classified as improvement, training, or specialization, while the courses and programs known as “*stricto sensu*” are usually master’s and doctoral programs. Also, presenting diverse types and diverse modalities, there are the courses of master and doctorate professionals and also the distance courses. Each of them goes through different processes of recognition, accreditation, and evaluation, with this dynamic having different histories in each country.

Postgraduate Courses in Brazil

In Brazil, since the 1930s and 1940s, the higher education historical construction is directly linked to the various national development projects, as well as to science, technology, and innovation policies. Pioneers of our national education, such as Francisco de Campos and Anísio Teixeira, already associated the need for higher education and diversification of courses and modalities to the creation of courses and PG programs. With several PG courses already created in 1951 (within the movement to strengthen the state bureaucracy in the Getúlio Vargas government, associated with the creation of several other institutions, such as the National Research Council-CNPq), on the initiative of Anísio Teixeira, the institution that until now has been linked to the MEC has been created: The Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES), which together with CNPq and other civil society groups and individuals, has since 1975 developed the PNPG aimed of rethinking the present and planning the future of its activities in knowledge various areas.

Having been studied by many researchers, CAPES is the National Public Agency responsible for the recognition, accreditation, evaluation, and distribution of resources for Brazilian Public and Private Graduate Studies (Andre, 2013; Lima, 1998; Sartori, 2013; Neto & Rebelo, 2010) among others activities, in all areas of knowledge. According to these authors, and also CAPES own institutional Website, as well as all the legislation built on the subject, all affirm that the periodic evaluation and peer commissions of each area, indicated by CAPES itself, based on consultation with several academic. That is an eminently formative evaluation. However, it is necessary to question the need for differentiation of scientific production among the areas, and the autonomy of each PG course or program in accepting the evaluation dynamics and its capacity to suggest changes in the CAPES evaluation process itself.

Opening an explanatory parenthesis: divided into “*lato sensu*” and “*stricto sensu*”, the Brazilian PG studies as “courses” that are denominates as “*lato sensu*” that are courses of improvement, updating, and specialization, are not evaluated by CAPES and depend on the approval of each training institution; and the PG programs called “*stricto sensu*” in its multiple forms are considered as a “program”, since they host a masters and a doctoral courses (academic or professional) and are rigorously evaluated nationally, both public and private PG programs.

Despite being well-praised internationally, the CAPES PG evaluation system is questioned by the limits that its evaluation instruments impose on the programs, often not recognizing their efforts in areas that are not included in the national evaluation. Social practices in the area of education, such as the relationship between basic education and higher education—in questions related to teacher training, for example—are still issues to be better discussed. Some authors question these challenges, as well as many other criteria used for the allocation of resources, as well as regional distribution of scholarships and limits for the creation of excellence programs (Ferreira, Catani, & Oliveira, 2010; Hostins, 2015; Machado, 2012; Santos, 2003). The following is a review of the five Brazilian National Graduate Plans.

National PG Plan (1975-1979)

At the time of the launch of I PNPG, two main laws of Brazilian educational legislation had been enacted, Law No.4.024/1961, called the National Education Guidelines (LDB), and Law No.5.540/1968, known as the University Reform Law. In addition to these, it was in 1965, a post-LDB period, that the Federal Education Council (through its Higher Education Chamber) issued in note number 977, which specifically dealt with the need to regulate the “PG regime” in the country.

The I PNPG was launched in Brazil in the context of the II National Development Plan (PND), affirming its necessary articulation with the Sectorial Plan for Education and Culture (PSEC) and the Basic Plan for Scientific and Technological Development (PBDCT). His primary concern was the need to consolidate a “National Graduate System”, even though there was no legislation that had created it (the President of the Republic was Ernesto Geisel and the Education Minister was Ney Braga). We considered that it would be an even generic term to serve as a basis for the needs pointed out in the I PNPG. At the time, such issues were dealt with in the former Department of University Affairs (DAU) at MEX, and the entire I PNPG seems to express concern that the DAU should centralize the management of all national policy related to both higher education for PG studies. The document presents a great concern about the way PG courses were being created and consolidated in the country, pointing out as a great difficulty its fragmentation and lack of articulation to a national policy (Brazil, 1975).

The national PG could only be a privileged space of research for the problems related to industrialization and urbanization, if there was a planning that would lead it to the objectives of developmentalism (Melo, 2004).

At the time, it was urgent for the PG to adapt and integrate itself with the bureaucracy and hierarchy of universities, avoiding that specific “private” spaces of the PG that were created within them. It was stated in the document that it would be essential for PG to become part of the “university environment”, with the participation of the same professors in the undergraduate and PG, also creating diversified interinstitutional ties among the areas.

Even though it was written 42 years ago, the I PNPG brings concerns that are very current, such as the need to create a greater integration of teaching and research between undergraduate and PG; as well as the concern with the formation and commitment of the teachers with such activities; proposing actions, such as institutional programs for teacher training, interdepartmental and interinstitutional exchanges and greater administrative rationality, especially in relation to the planning and the expansion of PG.

The new requirements for the national PG would also involve raising performance standards, such as improving student selection processes; teachers’ work regime; award of grants; pedagogical and scientific production processes; and teacher selection process. That are proposals that seek to bring together and integrate the courses to teachers, universities, and finally, the country and its development projects, creating more and better frameworks for higher education and research.

If by 1973, the document shows that Brazil had formed a total of 3,500 masters and 500 doctors; and at the beginning of 1975, there were 7,050 vacancies open for masters and 485 vacancies open for the doctorate. The I PNPG intended to form, from 1975 to 1979, 16,800 masters and 1,400 doctors. That was the size of the country’s need to improve the training of “high-level” staff to meet development needs.

National PG Plan (1982-1985)

The II PNPG was articulated with the III PND and the III PBDCT, this time approved by means of Decree n.87.814, of November 16, 1982, by the President of the Republic João Figueiredo and his Education Minister Esther Ferraz, with three years of delay. Among its premises and more general guidelines, it was concerned with regional inequalities in the supply of vacancies and scientific production, pointing to structural problems and financing of universities, and the need to improve the national importance of the “*lato sensu*” courses for the career of the magisterium of basic and higher education.

The II PNPG is still more succinct than the I PNPG, but it brings a few more sentences about the need to have as a priority the improvement of the PG evaluation systems (Brazil, 1982), which would mean a good quality scientific production, associated with the qualitative increase of the “performance” of the system in general.

National PG Plan (1986-1989)

Launched already in the period of the “democratic transition” (with President José Sarney and Education Minister Jorge Bornhausen), the III PNPG did not bring great changes to previous plans, reinforcing the role of PG in its relation with human resources training policy for science and technology, training scientists in quantity and quality appropriate to the current development model of the country.

A table on the percentage of the programs, according to the concepts obtained by CAPES evaluation, should be highlighted, thus demonstrating that the concepts A to E were still used at the time (in addition to the “no concept” or “no assessment” programs):

The concepts assigned are based on the analysis of a broad set of quantitative indicators and qualitative criteria, to which are added the accumulated experience of evaluation and the knowledge of the graduate programs. The criteria established by the Consultants’ Commissions were, over time, different and according to the specificity of each area of knowledge and its stage of evolution. The evaluation system is based mainly on the material accumulated in the “memory” of each course, consisting of annual reports sent to CAPES and reports of visits by specialists, among others. (Brazil, 1986, p. 198)

In addition to taking place among the 22 action strategies, the evaluation, and improvement of the monitoring and performance system have a central role in the document, associated to the improvement of the relationship between teaching and research; the improvement of the offer of specialization and improvement courses and also the priority to be given to the Amazon Region.

National PG Plan (2005-2010)

Launched with a lapse of 15 years, the IV PNPG was built from various seminars and meetings with the CAPES area coordinators, with other institutions and also with the PG teachers of the Federal Institutions of Higher Education (IFES), and its third version was approved by the Higher Council of CAPES, in a demonstration of democratic maturity (at the time, it was President Luis Inacio Lula da Silva and Education Minister Tarso Genro). The document reports that in the period from 1989 to 2005, several preliminary versions were written (Brazil, 2004).

More extensive and bringing more information about the current situation of PG than the previous ones, the document—still in the five-year form—was careful to make a historical rescue of the previous PNPG, as well as to present several tables of growth scenarios for the master’s degree and Ph.D. in the whole country. It was also the first to be signed jointly with CAPES.

The document expanded and added several themes to the previous ones and, for the first time, presented in its diagnosis, some comparisons with other countries, such as the number of graduates per 100,000 inhabitants, and scientific papers published by country and also by competitive country in areas of industrial policy demonstrating, although in an incipient way, a concern with the international relations related to the area.

The IV PNPG was the first to be approved after the promulgation of the 1988 Federal Constitution and also after the LDB, Law No.9.394/96, and other complementary norms, such as Law No.9.131/95, which regulates the National Council of Education and granted it normative assignments. The issue of evaluation was also highlighted:

Successful experience in the expansion and quality of the graduate system can be credited to public funding and the institutionalization of a continuous evaluation process created in the mid-1970s organized by CAPES and conducted by peers. Although at the beginning, the graduate was guided by a flexible model, throughout its development, it was losing this characteristic inside the institutions. The evaluation system, interpreted in a rigid way, contributed to consolidate a strongly sequential model (master's/doctorate). (Brazil, 2004, p. 42)

The document is an apology to CAPES, in order to bring into relevance the international recognition of its “National System of PG Evaluation”, remembering that there was a great change in the system in the year 1998, when the final concepts of the evaluation changed for the numerical system, from one to seven, incorporating the questions related to the internationalization of PG. Maintaining as its main objectives “the strengthening of the scientific, technological, and innovation bases; the training of teachers for all levels of education and the training of staff for non-academic markets” (Brazil, 2004, p. 59); the document also presents sections on issues related to the internationalization of programs, such as the need to expand international cooperation policies and training of human resources abroad.

The document shows that there was a concern to maintain the specificities of the areas of knowledge and to verify the impact of scientific production, turning the attention of national policies to the production of new knowledge and also to scientific and technological innovation.

National PG Plan (2011-2020)

As the first PNPG to be proposed for a 10-year period, the document innovates by its extension, by improving the presentation of the data on the diagnosis of PG's current situation, and by presenting a specific chapter on the internationalization of PG and international cooperation; also brings together the analysis and projection of 19 consolidated areas of PG, as well as considerations on the country's Science, Technology, and Innovation Agenda.

Having been formulated from the same methodology as the previous one, it added the work of commissions—National, Coordinator, and Technical—to the composition of the text, also signed by CAPES. It brings old issues, but with new approaches, following the trends of the current national political-economic project, reviewing the boundaries between public and private, with public institutions and private companies increasingly competing for public resources also in areas social policies, such as education (Melo, 2015).

Recovering and valuing the partnership with CNPq and IFES in its chapter on internationalization and cooperation, the document also emphasizes the relationship of the SNPG with the market and the public and private companies historically in partnership with national science and technology policies: Studies and Projects (FINEP), the Butantan Institute and Foundation, the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation, the Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation, Petrobrás, Embraer, Embraco, Brasken and Power System Research, among others. In addition, it also adds the presence of Brazilian scientists in international associations and forums. Describing the actions of the International Relations Board, created at the end of 2007, it also presents a list of scholarships and countries with which CAPES and CNPq have links, however, it does not detail the actions of agreements and internationalization programs.

The V PNPG emphasizes the distortions between the regions and areas, as well as the adjustment needs, and also criticizes the evaluation actions that led the Brazilian PG to value more the quantity than the quality of the scientific production. For this, the document presents suggestions, such as the need to collect and value in the evaluation process of the national PG the international insertion and the ability to offer courses of international standard. Still, as an objective of the evaluation, the text refers to the need to train teachers and

researchers for the national education and research system, and at the same time, to train cadres and technicians for the public and private sectors; both for the basic and academic areas, and for extra-academic activities.

Preliminary Conclusions

Even though Brazil has as a constitutional principle the integration of Latin America people, its PNPGs do not show specific directions for achieving this goal. Regional integration does not appear as a strategy and issues related to international insertion, such as a dialogue between academic-scientific production and countries, that is presented more as an evaluation requirement than as a priority.

Summarizing, the five plans were protagonists of five important stages in the history of the Brazilian PG:

1. The qualification of the universities professors, forming the first contingent of researchers and specialists in federal scope;
2. Concern about performance and quality;
3. The integration of the research developed in the university with the productive sector, aiming the national development;
4. The flexibilization of the PG model, the improvement of the evaluation system and the emphasis on internationalization;
5. The introduction of the principle of strategic induction, combating the asymmetries and the impacts of PG activities in the productive sector and society, resulting in the incorporation of innovation in the SNPG and the inclusion of social parameters in the evaluation process (Brazil, 2010, p. 16).

Thus, although PG programs are evaluated by their international insertion, we have not been able to visualize the same priority in the goals or strategies in the PNPGs reading, even though they present an incipient need.

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