

The Universidade Federal da Fronteira Sul in the Brazilian scenario: notes from Darcy Ribeiro

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ABSTRACT. The article analyzes the founding ideals of universities directly influenced by Darcy Ribeiro as well as his books and texts, aiming to diagnose their presence in universities today. The text establishes some possible relations with the project of the Universidade Federal da Fronteira Sul and the Interdisciplinary course in Rural Education, pointing out possible marks of this author, at the same time rescuing his concepts and updating them due to unprecedented fields of possibilities, especially in the which refers to the entry and permanence, in Higher Education, of peoples historically excluded from society, as is the case of indigenous and rural subjects.

Keywords: Rural Education, University Project, Popular Education.

A Universidade Federal da Fronteira Sul no cenário brasileiro: notas a partir de Darcy Ribeiro

RESUMO. O artigo analisa os ideais fundantes de universidades influenciadas diretamente por Darcy Ribeiro bem como seus livros e textos, objetivando diagnosticar sua presença nas universidades da atualidade. O texto estabelece algumas possíveis relações com o projeto da Universidade Federal da Fronteira Sul e do curso Interdisciplinar em Educação do Campo, apontando possíveis marcas desse autor, ao mesmo tempo resgatando seus conceitos e atualizando-os em razão de inéditos campos de possibilidades, especialmente no que se refere ao ingresso e permanência, no Ensino Superior, dos povos historicamente excluídos da sociedade, como é o caso de indígenas e sujeitos do campo.

Palavras-chave: Educação do Campo, Projeto de Universidade, Educação Popular.

La Universidade Federal da Fronteira Sul en el escenario brasileño: notas de Darcy Ribeiro

RESUMEN. El artículo analiza los ideales fundacionales de las universidades directamente influenciadas por Darcy Ribeiro así como sus libros y textos, con el objetivo de diagnosticar su presencia en las universidades de hoy. El texto establece algunas posibles relaciones con el proyecto de la Universidad Federal de Fronteira Sul y el curso Interdisciplinario en Educación Rural, señalando posibles marcas de este autor, al mismo tiempo rescatando sus conceptos y actualizándolos debido a campos de posibilidades sin precedentes, especialmente en el que se refiere al ingreso y permanencia, en la Educación Superior, de pueblos históricamente excluidos de la sociedad, como es el caso de los sujetos indígenas y rurales.

Palabras clave: Educación Rural, Proyecto Universitario, Educación Popular.

Introduction

Thinking about the university in a country immersed in an ocean of cultural diversity and pluralities, of a common miscegenated genesis, which resulted in unique subjects needing a conscientious teaching intellect capable of meeting the specificity of a Brazilian student body, requires the ability to dialogue with authors, who followed a path of struggle for public schools and universities, which meet the socioeconomic and cultural needs of their people.

We understand, based on our historical-cultural theoretical framework, that understanding the social significance of Brazilian universities and, in particular, the federal university in which we conduct our research, is fundamental to the construction of the meaning of our actions as teachers, especially in with regard to the construction of the reasons for the activities developed in the classroom.

The purpose of this article is to analyze the founding ideals of universities directly influenced by Darcy Ribeiro - more specifically the *Universidade de Brasília* (UNB) - as well as his books and texts, in order to later diagnose their presence in universities today. To this end, we analyzed, more specifically, the project of the *Universidade Federal da Fronteira Sul* (UFFS), and the Interdisciplinary

Course in Rural Education, seeking to find marks by this author and, at the same time, rescue his concepts and update them due to unprecedented fields of possibilities, especially with regard to the entry and permanence, in Higher Education, of peoples historically excluded from society, as is the case of indigenous and rural subjects. In Vasconcellos' interpretation (2015, p. 41), "Darcy Ribeiro differs from Marxist authors because he dedicated himself to the study of the Indian". According to him, "there were almost no Marxists studying the ethnological issue" (Vasconcellos, 2015, p. 41).

The research is carried out in the context of teaching praxis, in a course in Education in the Field - Natural Sciences at UFFS. The study is characterized as an essay, based on bibliographic and documentary research (Gil, 2002). The methodological approach, therefore, favors, in a hermeneutic sense, the study of some classic works by the studied author, as well as the reading of commentators by Darcy Ribeiro. He is also dedicated to investigating some central documents that help to characterize the emergency scenario of UNB, UFFS and the Degree in Rural Education.

The text that integrates the study is organized in three parts, as a theoretical support strategy to argue about the

relevance of Darcy Ribeiro's contributions to think about the University in Brazil, as well as to think about the challenges of reflecting on Rural Education in the university context. In the first, we recovered the meanings about the idea of “Necessary University” to Brazil in Darcy Ribeiro. In the second, we discuss some possible relations between the writings of Darcy Ribeiro and the genesis at UFFS, seeking to situate the interdisciplinary course in Rural Education. And, in the third, we analyze the challenges posed to pedagogical practice in the Interdisciplinary Course in Rural Education (Natural Sciences) at UFFS.

We initially presented and analyzed some aspects of the UNB project, which expresses the utopian mentality of an intellectual group about an academic, educational, architectural and social project, which is why it is called “Necessary University” (Ribeiro, 1969), which he proposed the refined investment in scientific development, in an original, national and autonomous structure, in which the sciences could dialogue with each other, as well as the knowledge and the doing if they met again effectively, towards the constitution of a people and a sovereign nation. A nation that demands a “real university”, Ribeiro expresses in his speech - University for what?, which

allows “to dominate all human knowledge”, allowing “the interaction of the mathematician with the anthropologist, the veterinarian with the economist, the geographer with the astronomer”, generating a “national center of scientific and cultural creativity” (Ribeiro, 2018, p. 106).

Darcy Ribeiro and the Necessary University in Brazil

We find in Darcy Ribeiro an iconic, expressive and effective reference to leverage reflections on universities in Brazil. We aim to support the discussion about the Brazilian university in Darcy Ribeiro, an author who leads us to think of Brazil in an original way, to perceive it from the interior, differently from the perspectives from the coast facing outwards. Still, to think about a university for its people, that contributes to the resolution of economic and social problems of a mixed population of blacks, whites and indigenous people, who formed under years of exploitation (Ribeiro, 1995).

The context of uncertainties in which we live about the direction of our country, as well expressed by Lilia Moritz Schwarcz (2019) in her book entitled *Sobre o autoritarismo brasileiro*, make the works of this author fundamental, who interprets Brazil from the particularities of

his education economic, social and cultural. We understand that the problems listed by Schwarcz (2019) in relation to Brazilian authoritarianism, such as “the myth of racial democracy”, and “hatred of the different”, can also be interpreted from the work of Ribeiro (1995). In addition to his career as a professor, researcher and writer, Darcy Ribeiro contributed significantly to the construction of new universities, which, generally, had the objective of germinating changes, creating an original university model, as the foundation of “*Universidade de Brasília* and the *Universidade Estadual do Norte Fluminense* (UENF), and, in exile, with the *Universidade Nacional da Costa-Rica e a Universidade de Argel*” (Gomes, 2005, p. 66).

In the view of Ferraz and Santos (2014, p. 325), Darcy Ribeiro “was part of a generation of intellectuals and artists who firmly believed that it was possible to build a comprehensive cultural project for Brazil and Latin America”. Helena Bomeny (2001), in turn, when writing the work *Darcy Ribeiro: sociologia de um indisciplinado*, it understands it in the unconventional sense of a citizenship from Minas Gerais, of a pattern of social sciences and even of an ideal of pedagogy. According to her, Darcy Ribeiro, became an undisciplined intellectual in the

Brazilian public agenda, pursuing, for 40 years, an intervention in educational policy in line with the principles of the *Escola Nova* movement, given her proximity to Anísio Teixeira. This condition allows us to understand Darcy Ribeiro's enthusiasm for education and the value of the School and the University, as well as his appreciation for democracy. In her words, the author defines it this way: “Darcy Ribeiro, the undisciplined pedagogue, was, in my view, the last member of *Escola Nova* in Brazil” (Bomeny, 2001, p. 26). The study by Lôbo, Vogas and Torres (2008), named *Darcy Ribeiro: o brasileiro*, expresses well the relations between Anísio Teixeira and Darcy Ribeiro in their struggle for public school since the mid-50s of the 20th century, and their subsequent collaboration in the *Instituto Nacional de Pesquisas Educacionais* (Inep) during the Juscelino Kubitschek government, and even the delivery of the “ambitious project of the *Universidade de Brasília*” for the then president (Lôbo, Vogas & Torres, 2008, p. 48).

In his work *A universidade necessária*, written during his period in exile in Uruguay, Darcy Ribeiro (1969) took a stand against the mere reflexive modernization of the University. He conferred a trace of university autonomy consistent with a nation project, which was

necessary in order to “transform society itself”, generating “the condition of a people for itself, owner of the command of its destiny and willing to integrate itself in the emergent civilization as an autonomous nation” (Ribeiro, 1969, p. 10). In fact, the book's writing denounces the minority interests of a ruling class that imposed its interests to the detriment of the total population. In its version, this new critical awareness is what leads us to see the existing as unnatural, and to open up to a new possibility of thinking and transforming Brazil (Ribeiro, 1969).

Upon returning from his exile to Brazil, and initially devoted to basic education, Darcy Ribeiro also dedicated himself to building *Universidade Estadual do Norte Fluminense* (Uenf), focused on a new humanism, compatible with technological society, the *University of the Third Millennium*, according to what appears in its guiding plan. This institution was organized with a multiple structure, composed of integrated centers of basic sciences, experimental centers of technology, complementary centers and a technological park.

According to the original plan, the integrated centers consisted of 26 laboratories, which aimed to enable the study to learn to learn. The programs aimed to combine, from the beginning,

academic knowledge with practical skills. The curricula included a basic and a professional cycle. The first was made up of general education and pre-vocational training materials, associated with innovative materials to expand humanistic training. Students should participate in at least two seminars, one on Brazilian issues and problems and the other on theories of society and culture (Gomes, 2005).

When writing *O povo brasileiro: a formação e o sentido do Brasil*, Darcy Ribeiro makes clear the mark of this people, distinct from all the others, lacking an education thought in this context.

We are new people still struggling to make ourselves as a new human race that never existed before. Much more difficult and painful task, but also much more beautiful and challenging. In fact, what we are is a new Rome. Late and tropical Rome (Ribeiro, 1995, p. 454).

The concern was to propose a university planned by the Brazilian people and for the Brazilian people, no longer influenced by foreign countries in a decontextualized way, as we lacked an education that spoke to the interior of Brazil, to a social mass formed by centuries of exploitation, in a country that was a great “mill to grind people”.¹

We are building ourselves in the struggle to flourish tomorrow as a new civilization, mestizo and tropical, proud of itself. Happier,

because more suffered. Better, because it incorporates more humanities. More generous, because it is open to coexistence with all races and all cultures and because it is based in the most beautiful and luminous province on earth (Ribeiro, 1995, p. 455).

It is worth remembering the context in which Darcy Ribeiro operated: an intellectually very teeming political environment. Several organized sectors of Brazilian society pointed to the possibility of a self-propelled development of the Brazilian nation. “In other words, a development that was not marked by the heteronomy of the country's asymmetric relations with the world economy” (Leher, 2017, p. 148). This political-intellectual movement was not historically punctual, as it reverberates, in universities, in several later movements, with the same demands, now recontextualized.

Darcy Ribeiro publishes in 1962, in a special edition sponsored by the Ministry of Education and Culture, about a year after Law No. 3,998, which authorized the Executive Branch to institute the *Fundação Universidade de Brasília*, a book containing the new university's organizational plan and the statements of educators and scientists on the text of the law.²

For Darcy Ribeiro (2011), Brazil did not have a true university tradition to defend and preserve, because the Brazilian

university, strictly speaking, “differently from what happened in other countries in the Americas in which they were created since the 16th century, only in 1920, already in the 20th century, was instituted”(Almeida Júnior, 2011, p. 7). This, like the ones that followed, originated from the nominal congregation of preexisting schools, constituting a rectory set up for centralized budget and administration services, for solemn acts of “opening and closing the school year and for debate, still timid. , about the infeasibility of the structure itself and the need for university reform ” (Ribeiro, 2011, p. 11).

Perhaps it would be more appropriate to say installation than reform. Nor is there a university in our higher education. Our tradition is that of independent schools, brutally defending their autonomy, organized to receive students graduated from secondary school and segregate them to provide professional training in a few training modalities, authorized by formal and strict legislation. (Ribeiro, 2011, p. 12).

The task of designing the UnB, according to Darcy Ribeiro (2011), proposed the challenge of building the “necessary university”, which meant recognizing that Brasília, a city created in the center of the country, where the government of the republic was installed, would inevitably need a university as a cultural center, which had, according to

Darcy (2011, p. 18), “the entire domain of human knowledge and that cultivates it not as an act of academic enjoyment or vanity, but with the aim of, mounted on that knowledge, think of Brazil as a problem”.

It is not a question of whether or not it is appropriate to create another university, nor of examining the recovery capacity of our higher schools, but of recognizing that, constituting a city in the center of the country and installing the Government of the Republic, it has become inevitable the institution of a cultural nucleus there and that a university cannot miss (Ribeiro, 2011, p. 18).

According to Darcy Ribeiro, the “necessary university” was a Brazilian university focused on problems in Brazil, of interest to its people. These ideals marked the creation of UnB, whose project proposed a university designed “on the same basis as the teaching and research centers that are revolutionizing the modern world” (Ribeiro, 2011, p. 19).

In the book *Universidade de Brasília*, Darcy Ribeiro himself exposes the UnB organization project, but in order to assess the scope of this project, he brings to the publication pronouncements from several educators who had expressed themselves about the proposal, constituting a source of better understanding and acceptance that she received from her of Brazilian intelligence at the time. For our purpose of finding traces of these ideas,

and even substantial presence in Brazilian universities created over the years that followed, such as UFFS, for example, these become precious testimonies. The following testimonies were signed: Almeida Júnior, Jayme Abreu, Florestan Fernandes, Milton da Silva Rodrigues, Anísio Teixeira, Jairo Ramos, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Leopoldo Nachbin, José Leite Lopes, Celso Furtado, Paulo Sawaya, Maria Yedda Leite Linhares, Oracy Nogueira, Oswaldo Gusmão, Walter Oswaldo Cruz and Jacques Danon.³

Professor Almeida Júnior⁴ refers to the work of Darcy Ribeiro, when designing the UnB, as the work of a leader, as an illustrious renovator, who seeks to bring down everything in this poorly maintained area in the country even before building the new one. In the analysis of the present conditions, there was only the possibility of a “new university”, and it is convenient to speak of “establishment” and not “reform”. The professor claims to agree almost everything with Darcy Ribeiro, pointing out, in the testimony, mainly, the view - which differs from his - about the institution of the chair.

The evils that Darcy Ribeiro lists, and which in fact unhappiness certain sectors of our higher education, reside much less in the institution of the chair than in the personality of a few university professors (who do not properly cultivate their plot of land) and also in the inertia of the

professors organs that turn a blind eye to abuse (Almeida Júnior, 2011, p. 76).

Regarding the system's curriculum in force, Professor Almeida Júnior (2011) highlights that the “architect of *Universidade de Brasília*” (referring to Darcy Ribeiro) formulates two criticisms: the imposition of identical standards for each professional category and the rigidity of normal curricula, which prevent curricular combinations appropriate to the new professions. For Almeida Júnior (2011), the criticisms proceed, but to a certain extent.

... for a few years now, thanks to the new jurisprudence of the National Education Council, there has been a loosening of the sacred respect for the old standards ... (as can be seen in relation to certain medical schools for example). On the other hand, there is nothing to prevent (except the lack of funds) that higher education institutes operate postgraduate specialization courses; because the certificates that correspond to them do not grant new rights to the respective holders and, therefore, are independent of the registration (Almeida Júnior, 2011, p. 77).

On the other hand, the testimony of Professor Jaime Abreu⁵ is an enthusiastic speech with the new university and the possibility of debating the organizational structure most appropriate to that university, discussing which principles should govern it and incorporating the

basic considerations of Brazilian aspects into connections with university models other than universal culture are needed. The author asks: What directions will the new *Universidade de Brasília*, at this crucial crossroads of your institution, where will there be an inevitable boundary of guidelines? Will you get closer to the traditional Western European model or will you look for reasonable inspirations in the new American model? Will you incorporate the best of both in relation to the Brazilian national problem?

Initially and largely receiving the European cultural contribution, by rebuilding it in its new world, it was a deliberate objective of American education to “de-Europeanize” the new citizens from there, in relation to old cultural molds of origin, to enculturate them in the new world in training process (Almeida Júnior, 2011, p. 85).

Jaime Abreu concludes his testimony by declaring that all his desirous thinking, around the new University, encompasses thinking and rethinking his mission and his task. In other words, the University should be able to effectively materialize its “serious responsibilities, as Anísio Teixeira says (*The university and human freedom*): in the redirection of social life, towards the democratic and modern formation of Brazilian culture” (Almeida Júnior, 2011, p. 88).

Seeking to understand how these ideas are today materialized in the universities created more recently, and with the intention of locating the influence of this intellectual movement, which originated the *Universidade de Brasília*, in the universities that continued to be created, is that we analyze the project of *Universidade Federal da Fronteira Sul*.

Darcy Ribeiro and the genesis of *Universidade Federal da Fronteira Sul* and the Interdisciplinary Course in Rural Education

As the 21st century entered, social organizations in the three southern states of Brazil (Paraná, Santa Catarina and Rio Grande do Sul), which sought to build a different university, won the *Universidade Federal da Fronteira Sul* (UFFS), with the challenge of thinking about a public and popular university that would contribute to reducing the historical educational gap in a country made up of centuries of exploitation of its people (UFFS, 2010a).

To face these challenges, the Pro-University movement has invested in building a higher education institution that is different from the existing experiences in the region. On the one hand, the public and free character sets it apart from other institutions in the region, whether private or community, supported by monthly fees. On the other hand, this proposal understood that to face the challenges encountered, more than a public university was needed, it was necessary to build a public and

popular university (UFFS, 2010a, pp. 12-13).

According to the document consulted (UFFS, 2010a), was through the universal program of access to higher education “*Programa Universidade para Todos*” (Prouni), of the Program to Support Federal University Restructuring and Expansion Plans (Reuni) and the MEC Higher Education Interiorization Program, which made it possible to propose relatively daring projects by a quality university and, at the same time, available to everyone, especially those historically excluded audiences.

In the process of fighting for the creation of UFFS, interstate coordinations were formed that developed debates in the form of seminars, meetings, lectures, mobilizations and marches, involving the various sectors of society at different levels, criticizing the conventional and traditional universities, which, it normally reproduces and maintains the exclusion system present in today's society. Criticizing and looking for alternatives to these patterns that strengthen dominant sectors of this society, which deny access to knowledge and space to the most impoverished strata, the proposal of this new university was based on a democratic, humanizing understanding, contextualized in the local reality, committed to the social

justice and capable of significantly contributing to the development processes of each location where it was installed. Thus, on September 15, 2009, UFFS was created by Law No. 12,029, covering 396 municipalities in the *Mercosul* Frontier Mesoregion: Southwest of Paraná, West of Santa Catarina and Northwest of Rio Grande do Sul (UFFS, 2010a).

From the debates, the Institutional Pedagogical Project (PPI) is built, establishing that the University must be “committed to the sustainable and solidary development of the region” and that its courses should “privilege the vocations of the regional economy, aiming at integrated regional development, with family farming as a structuring and dynamic sector in the development process” (UFFS, 2010b, p. 22).

The principles, found in the UFFS statute, are directly linked to those defended by Darcy Ribeiro:

- I - free education;
- II - education as a public good;
- III - equity of conditions of access and permanence of different social subjects in Higher Education;
- IV - commitment to inclusion and social justice and combating social and regional inequalities;
- V - defense of dignity and human rights and combating prejudices of any kind;
- VI - respect for the freedom to learn, teach, research and disseminate thought, art and knowledge, and appreciation of tolerance in accepting

divergent academic positions and attitudes;

VII - link between education, work and social practices and valuing extra-school experience;

VIII - universality of knowledge, supported by interdisciplinarity and pluralism of ideas and pedagogical concepts;

IX - inseparability between teaching, research and extension;

X - integration between general, area and specific training in the curricula;

XI - permanent dialogue with the regional community within the scope of the Institution;

XII - regional and national cultural, artistic, scientific, technological and socioeconomic development, in a sustainable manner;

XIII - democratic and ethical management in dealing with public affairs;

XIV - legality, impersonality, morality, impartiality, publicity, efficiency, effectiveness and effectiveness (UFFS, 2010b, p. 6).

The purposes are also:

I - teaching, from the democratization of access and permanence in the Institution, aiming at the formation of academic and professional excellence, initial and continuous, in the different fields of knowledge, stimulating cultural creation, the development of the scientific spirit and critical thinking reflective;

II - scientific research and investigation in all fields of knowledge, especially in topics related to scientific-technological, social, economic, ethical, aesthetic, cultural, political and environmental issues;

III - university extension, open to the participation of the population, aiming at the joint production of advances, achievements and benefits resulting from cultural and artistic creation and scientific and

technological research (UFFS, 2010b, p. 7).

The Law of Guidelines and Bases of Brazilian Education (LDB 9.394/96), also popularly called the Law Darcy Ribeiro (for being one of its main formulators), is the legislation that regulates the educational system - public or private - in Brazil. LDB 9.394/96 reaffirms the right to education that is guaranteed by the Federal Constitution. In its article 43, it presents the purposes of higher education:

I - stimulate cultural creation and the development of the scientific spirit and reflective thinking;

II - train graduates in different areas of knowledge, able to enter professional sectors and participate in the development of Brazilian society, and collaborate in their continuous training;

III - encourage research and scientific investigation, aiming at the development of science and technology and the creation and dissemination of culture, and, thus, develop the understanding of man and the environment in which he lives;

V - promote the dissemination of cultural, scientific and technical knowledge that constitute the heritage of humanity and communicate knowledge through teaching, publications or other forms of communication;

V - arouse the permanent desire for cultural and professional improvement and enable the corresponding implementation, integrating the knowledge that is being acquired in an intellectual structure systematizing the knowledge of each generation;

VI - stimulate knowledge of the problems of the present world, in particular national and regional ones, provide specialized services to the community and establish a reciprocal relationship with it;

VII - promote extension, open to the participation of the population, aiming at the dissemination of the achievements and benefits resulting from cultural creation and scientific and technological research generated at the institution;

VIII - act in favor of the universalization and improvement of basic education, through the training and qualification of professionals, the carrying out of pedagogical research and the development of extension activities that bring together the two school levels.

Notoriously, we can find in the Interdisciplinary Course in Rural Education: Natural Sciences, the challenge and, in large part, a search for the materiality of these objectives, principles and purposes, which, as stated, bring aspects and ideas of Darcy Ribeiro.

The Interdisciplinary Course in Rural Education

We analyzed the points of approximation between the UFFS Field Education course project and the ideal university required, as conceived by Darcy Ribeiro, seeking to contribute to the construction and understanding of the social meaning of this course. The Rural Education course has always been linked to the struggle of social movements, and, among the commitments assumed by

Universidade Federal da Fronteira Sul in favor of overcoming social and regional inequalities, there is access and permanence in Higher Education, especially for the most excluded population in the countryside and the city. This university project seeks to contribute to the presence of popular classes in the university and to the collective construction of a sustainable development project for the region, whose structural axis is family farming. Therefore, it seeks to contribute to the transformation of reality as, opposing the reproduction of inequalities, it allows the search for alternative methods and projects with a more engendered meaning in the context of the region (UFFS, 2013).

With its history deeply related to the struggles of popular social movements in the region, a place of dense fabric of social organizations and the cradle of some of the most important popular movements in the country, UFFS sought to formulate a university project that, for its concretization, requires countless efforts towards overcoming historical contradictions. In this sense, the process experienced in the construction of the university project comes close to the method that generated the concept that we know as Countryside Education, especially with social movements (UFFS, 2013).

The debate around Rural Education, which took off in the 1990s, brings some fundamental elements of discussion - field, education and public policies - and can support the elaboration of projects based on educational theories and existing concepts: Popular Education, Historical-Critical Pedagogy, Socialist Pedagogy and the construction of “Pedagogies of Rural Education”. Thus, looking for an education that can allow and guarantee the access and permanence of its student audience, as well as providing the practical-theory-practice relationship experienced in its social and cultural environment, it was proposed to organize this course (UFFS, 2013).

It is also necessary to note that in the vicinity of UFFS *Campus Erechim* there are 5 *quilombola* communities located in the cities of *São Valentim* and *Sertão*, and 12 indigenous areas located in *Água Santa*, *Benjamin Constant do Sul*, *Cacique Doble*, *Charrua*, *Erebango*, *Getúlio Vargas*, *Nonoai*, *Ronda Alta* and *Sananduva*. In each indigenous community there is an elementary school that also needs trained teachers to meet the demands of this population, who live in the rural area, producing their lives through agricultural and artisanal work. With the knowledge that it needs to be a school - whether from the countryside, indigenous or *quilombola* - that considers local knowledge and social

practice, and that establishes relationships with the scientific knowledge produced throughout the history of humanity, the course project (which form teachers for these schools) understands that the land must be the key element, and the culture, the struggles and the history of the countryside, constitute the starting point for the work in the classroom (UFFS, 2013).

This perspective, indicated in the course design, shows that the themes to be explored at school need to be linked to the world of work and the development of the field. Also, the methodology used in teaching is pointed out as necessary to be adapted to the reality of the field, facilitating the “interface with the emphasis of this training (Rural Education), knowledge that parents, students, technicians, community leaders have about the different themes in the area of Natural Sciences” (UFFS, 2013, p. 27).

We see in the Rural Education course a conquered space of struggle and continuous reconstruction to ensure the right to a specific education to the subject of the countryside, of indigenous and *quilombola* communities, in short, of the Brazilian people, who deserve an academic space that overcomes the gap historically imposed, discussion qualified by Darcy Ribeiro.

In this sense, the course faces the challenge of understanding the specificities of these subjects that make up its student body, and develop teaching and learning strategies that, in fact, are significant and respect diversity, a fundamental feature of the course. The historical-cultural perspective contributes, in this attempt, to take into account the social aspect of these subjects. "Darcy Ribeiro sometimes fumed against teachers who 'pretend to teach and students who pretend to learn'" (Gomes, 2005, p. 90). Contributions from this perspective can help to reduce the risk of alienated teaching as well as alienated learning, leading students to understand the real reason for what they develop in the classroom with regard to social senses and meanings. It is important to highlight that one of the failures of the Brazilian public school, in the interpretation of Darcy Ribeiro, has been that of not considering and creating a school that dialogues with the popular classes (Ribeiro, 2018; Martinazzo, Silva & Luft, 2020).

The course in Rural Education has a curricular organization that suggests the transformation of conventional practices, strategies and methodologies to build training that meets the demands and specificities of its students.

The curriculum composition considers the structure adopted by the institution, since it already has a

course of this nature. However, the organization of educational spaces and times will be developed following the precepts of Pedagogy of Alternation, allowing a greater insertion of field workers (UFFS, 2013, p. 41).

This option for an alternating organization requires an effort by the faculty to appropriate, problematize and propose a different method. In this way, moments of reflection were outlined whose core is the planning, elaboration and collective organization of the so-called Educational Times - University Time (TU) and Community Time (TC) -, which underlie the alternation methodology (UFFS, 2013). With the development of the classes, Community Time allows the university to get closer to the communities, which can contribute to the context of teaching practices, with the potential to achieve an effective inclusion of these subjects and their peers in the training process.

Another challenge of the course is interdisciplinarity. Carrying out an interdisciplinary training in a universe as complex as that which involves the course - "field education", "natural sciences", "indigenous" -, is a task that requires the intellectual effort of the entire faculty, seeking organization, the objectives and methodology of this doing. One of the main challenges to be faced in this project

is precisely related to interdisciplinary practice.

Although entangled in the boundaries of the disciplines that provide theoretical and methodological support, the areas represented in the course, with a focus on Natural Sciences, due to their different specificities, should create spaces and times to develop proposals for pedagogical intervention, in the perspective of interdisciplinarity, concretizing in practice the interdisciplinary attitude in rural school (UFFS, 2013, p. 30).

At the same time, if the objective is achieved, it can be configured with great potential to meet the specificities of the subjects that make up the student body:

In this sense, interdisciplinarity presents itself as a primary way to promote an integrated and articulated formation with the social, political, economic and cultural reality, which always requires more citizen, conscious, critical, reflective, emancipatory formation (UFFS, 2013, p. 45).

It is crucial to highlight the limits and challenges identified in the process of setting up this course.

Some contradictions must be announced in this context. According to Molina (2015, p. 158), "the risks that have been perceived in some Higher Education courses offered in Alternation for subjects in the field have referred to the type of practice of Community Time". Often times, Community Time has been ignored

as a time and space for learning, taking into account only school time (in our case named University Time). According to the author, without intentionality and action planning in these pedagogical spaces, which are closely related to the conditions of life and work in the field, “the tensions and contradictions of the material production of life that occur in them end up not being incorporated into the dynamics of the curriculum of graduation, these issues being absent from subsequent School Times” (Molina, 2015, p. 158).

This limitation is sometimes observed, incurring in the use of this space/time for the mere accomplishment of tasks, such as a list of exercises or works strictly linked to University Time. We believe that the most determining factor of these limitations is the lack of knowledge of the concept of alternation, or of its historical production, since most teachers of the teaching staff are trained only in their specific area, not previously transitioning through the concepts and history of education the field.

If, on the one hand, Alternation has immense potential to reframe the processes of knowledge production, in situations in which an intense exchange of learning times and spaces is promoted, in which the different dimensions of life are integrated into the processes on the production of knowledge, on the other hand, if disregarding the assumptions of valuing the

knowledge of the subjects and integrating material production in the teaching-learning processes, and the non-presence of the University in different types of activities in Community Time, the Alternation in Higher Education loses a relevant part of its meaning (Molina, 2015, p. 158).

We understand that the wealth of possibilities that exist in the context of Community Time is precisely what can contribute to breaking with the processes of alienation.

... the contradictions ... in the university context, with the presence of social groups previously not considered and that denounce the weaknesses and incapacities of the institutions, in our view, it contributes to the exercise of participation and construction of a democratic project. In this way, it is possible to recognize the novelty of the presence of these courses in the academic space, as long as they do not end in themselves, becoming palliative or light answers to a claim. Combined with other groups and movements, they can contribute to the struggle for education, in its broad and universal sense (Mohr, 2018, p. 185).

It is certain that these historical contradictions will be present in Brazilian universities, even more so in a course like Rural Education. To a certain degree, however, Rural Education courses remain distanced from other courses and, sometimes, from the University itself as a whole. We believe that this distance is due to its peculiar and singular form of

organization and functioning, including its distinct student body, which could, even, exponentially enrich the other reflective processes in the university scope.

An alternative that seeks to contribute in the meantime in the course in which we build the data, is the organization of the integrating projects, which articulate with the University Time, Community Time and the curricular components of each phase, organized in the perspective of teaching by solving contextualized problems in the communities. This strategy brings to its core another issue that has already been identified as challenging: interdisciplinarity.

The interdisciplinary character was part of the methodological strategies in the discussion of the first-Degree courses in Rural Education, however, this articulation between disciplines presents some resistance on the part of the professors who work in the courses of public universities. With this panorama in mind, some questions are presented that reveal the contradictions between educational purposes and the way society is structured: How is it possible to articulate a formation that conceives extended educational times and an integrated non-disciplinary conception, in a society that increasingly more specializes and fragments knowledge? Or yet, how is it possible to deal with conflicts and mediations between specific and universal knowledge within university courses and institutions? These are questions that can hinder the progress of the courses. However, we understand that they add aspects

that can be translated into new debates, reflections and proposals, one of the social roles of the university (Mohr, 2018, pp. 184-185).

We understand that the organization of the course in integrating seminars/integrating projects allows advancing in discussions about interdisciplinarity, at the same time that it faces the fragmented reality of the disciplines' specialties, a fact resulting from a historical and cultural construction, permanently questioned. Therefore, the highlighted focus, starting from the work of Darcy Ribeiro, allows us to think that this interdisciplinarity requires us to understand the historical constitution of the Brazilian people in their complexity and cultural, social and economic contradiction, with a view, above all, to help build a sovereign people-nation, which means producing a pedagogical practice capable of breaking with alienating modes of teaching and conservative views of the world and society.

Final considerations

In this brief review of some of Darcy Ribeiro's ideas about the role and meaning of the university in Brazilian society, we seek to identify some of these ideals in *Universidade Federal da Fronteira Sul*

(UFFS) and in the Interdisciplinary degree course in Rural Education - Natural Sciences.

As a conclusion to the reflections, we highlight the power of Darcy Ribeiro's work and involvement for a sense of a University that thinks the problem of Brazil - a University that at the same time aims to distribute and democratize a universal culture, as well as capable of creating a critical spirit of a nation-people in search of its destiny. In this double sense, both the universal developed for the Brazilian University and that of creating in students an ability to problematize and think about the country, its problems, its people, its history, its culture, its destinies, we see a current thought of Darcy Ribeiro to help think about a task for the University in the middle of the 21st century, since part of the authoritarianisms, and of the social exclusion formats in Brazil, remain present, as evidenced by Lilia Moritz Schwarcz (2019).

In the Rural Education course, within the scope of teaching natural sciences, this relationship with the popular and democratic education project, created for UFFS, maintains a link that can be enhanced by the UNB project and the ideals proclaimed in terms of identity, to the extent that university culture constitutes a potential collection of

knowledge to reinvent Brazil and, in it, the peoples, who need to define themselves and create ways of producing life in a sustainable way.

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Notes

- 1 Quote by Darcy Ribeiro on the context of exploitation and oppression of the Brazilian people.
- 2 Universidade de Brasília. Projeto de organização. Brasília: Editora Universidade de Brasília, 2011.
- 3 The journal *Anhembi*, directed by professor Paulo Duarte, published, in its numbers 126, 127 and 128, corresponding to the months of May, June and July 1961, statements by several educators about the structure and organization of the *Universidade de Brasília*.
- 4 Law School of *Universidade de São Paulo*.
- 5 Coordinator of the Educational Studies and Research Division of the Brazilian Center for Educational Research.

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