

Productivism, research and scholarly communication: between poison and medicine¹

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Abstract

This essay addresses issues related to contemporary scholarly production and publishing. The analyses focus on the reflections of a perverse process which has affected researchers, universities and journals in Brazil (as it has occurred in different parts of the world), due to the so-called academic productivism (understood as the obligation to publish in journals, as virtually the only indicator used to evaluate researchers' scientific production and quality). Analyses also focus on the negative consequences of such process. Assuming that it is not possible to address the issue of scientific communication separately from the structure of scientific production, since the universe of indexed journals is part of the latter, this essay seeks to discuss the following questions: what are the main distortions that adopting largely quantitative criteria to assess, promote and fund researchers, journals and graduate programs has caused? What are the characteristics of the perverse cycle of productivism which now infects our academic context? How does such cycle affect our production and publications? How does what was planned to improve the investigative task end up impair it? Although I do not, of course, aim to exhaust the complexity of this process, I shall discuss some features identified in the mechanisms above. I shall also present some arguments in favor of collective action among editors of scientific journals (especially in the humanities), in order to develop political action to combat the ills of the current system of production, evaluation and communication of science.

Keywords

Academic productivism – Scholarly production and communication in the humanities – Editorial policy – Impact factor – Scientific journals.

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Produtivismo, pesquisa e comunicação científica: entre o veneno e o remédio^I

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Resumo

Este ensaio trata de temas relacionados à produção e publicação científica na contemporaneidade. As análises estão voltadas especialmente para os reflexos de um processo perverso que tem afetado os pesquisadores, as universidades e as revistas do Brasil (assim como já ocorreu ou vem ocorrendo em diferentes partes do mundo), devido ao chamado produtivismo acadêmico (entendido como a obrigação de publicar em periódicos, como indicador praticamente exclusivo para a avaliação da produção científica e da qualidade do pesquisador), bem como para o conjunto de desdobramentos negativos que esse processo provoca. Tomando como pressuposto a impossibilidade de tratar o tema da comunicação científica separadamente da estrutura da produção científica da qual o universo das revistas indexadas faz parte, o texto procurará problematizar as seguintes questões: quais são as principais distorções que a adoção de critérios majoritariamente quantitativos para avaliar, promover e financiar pesquisadores, periódicos e programas de pós-graduação tem provocado? Como se caracteriza o ciclo perverso do produtivismo que hoje contamina o nosso contexto acadêmico? Como ele afeta nossas produções e publicações? De que modo aquilo que foi planejado para melhorar a tarefa investigativa acaba por prejudicá-la? Alguns traços podem ser identificados e extraídos do conjunto dos mecanismos acima, sem que se pretenda, evidentemente, esgotar a complexidade do processo envolvido. Serão expostos também alguns argumentos advogando a favor da necessidade de uma ação coletiva entre os editores das revistas científicas (especialmente da área de humanidades), visando ao desenvolvimento de uma atuação política capaz de combater as mazelas do sistema hoje vigente de produção, avaliação e comunicação da ciência.

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Palavras-chave

Produtivismo acadêmico – Produção e comunicação científica nas humanidades – Política editorial – Fator de impacto – Periódicos científicos.

Introduction

The antinomy of the words poison and medicine that entitle this essay deserves some clarification. It indicates the double meaning that words can take, as it was stated by Jacques Derrida in his important work *The Pharmacy of Plato* (2005). In his text, the French philosopher examines the idea of *phármakon*, the Greek term with an ambiguous meaning which can be translated – among others – as a medicine and as a poison. Interested in the topic of writing and literature, Derrida takes as his guiding thread the examination of the last part of the dialogue Phaedrus by Plato, which focuses on the origin, history and value of writing. In this examination, he retrieves the myth Theuth in which writing is seen as a *pharmakon*. He points out that, in principle, writing is designed only as a medicine, as it is exclusively understood as a memory aid. Its contradictory nature – of *pharmakon* – of reminding and allowing to forget is revealed later.

Thus, inspired by this antinomy, in this text, my attention turns to the ambivalences surrounding the processes of fostering scholarly production and communication, here understood as *phármakon*. I especially seek to analyze some consequences and impacts of adopting a productivist policy, which, although designed as a solution (since, in theory, it aims to support the development of science and the communication of what has been discovered or studied), has proven to be a powerful poison, capable of producing and having increasingly nefarious side effects on the lives of researchers, on the quality of what is researched, on what is published, and on the future of scientific journals.

The content of this article was originally prepared for “Editorial Management of Journals – Current Status, Challenges and Perspectives”, a lecture delivered at the celebration of the 15th anniversary of SciELO – Scientific Electronic Library Online¹ -, in October 2013 in São Paulo,

1- SciELO is a multidisciplinary collection of scientific journals from 16 countries (Latin America, the Caribbean, Europe and South Africa). It is a

Brazil. The issues addressed at that time have been partially summarized here or expanded, gaining a different articulation and new contours.²

The conference aimed to discuss and examine the state of the art in scholarly communication in open access, as well as the challenges and obstacles to be overcome for the development of scientific journals and SciELO program. The meeting brought together a large number of authorities from different parts of the world, editors, experts in research and scholarly communication. The conference also allowed the exchange with researchers interested in studying the trends and innovations of the contemporary dynamics of scholarly communication, in editorial services, in scientific publishing and in the debate on the critical role of public policies and programs of support and evaluation of the research communicated by journals.

The ideas explored in this text were presented in the panel “The management of journals and SciELO”, which aimed to discuss the lines of action of the program from the viewpoint of editors of journals which already belong to its network. From the reading of a document, I and the other editors from different countries at the table received the challenge to reflect on the following question proposed by the organizers: *What services and actions are expected from SciELO so that your journal can strengthen professionalization, internationalization and sustainability of its editorial processes?*³

pioneer in the adoption of open access. Established in 1998, it is a program of São Paulo Research Foundation (FAPESP), and has the support of the Latin American and Caribbean Center on Health Sciences (BIREME, acronym in Portuguese) and the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq). By the end of 2013, SciELO's collection had over a thousand journals, with nearly half a million articles published. In 2012, the network had a daily average of more than 1.5 million hits. For further information, see <http://www.scielo.org/php/index.php>

2- The conference video can be watched at the following address: <http://www.scielo15.org>.

3- The document, entitled “Líneas de acción para los años 2014 a 2016 para incrementar la visibilidad de las revistas y colecciones de la Red SciELO. Versión preliminar para discusión entre las coordinaciones de las colecciones de la Red SciELO”, Sept 16, 2013, was prepared from a meeting on action lines for the development of the journals indexed in SciELO between Patricia Muñoz, CONICYT/Chile, Margarita Ontiveros and

The purpose of this article is both to inform about what was discussed there regarding the propositions of the document and to reflect on burning issues related to contemporary scientific production and publishing. Unfortunately, I will address a context that is not encouraging, as Da Matta explains:

Today, due to the regime imposed on the world of research and higher education, publishing is required and measured. Depending on where one publishes, the text is worth more or fewer points for the author and for his or her department regardless of, say with due reverence, its intrinsic value. (DAMATTA, 2014)

In fact, the present scenarios indicate the reflections of a perverse process that, in one way or another, has affected researchers, universities and journals in Brazil (as it has occurred in different parts of the world), commonly recognized as academic productivism: the obligation to publish in journals as virtually the only indicator used to evaluate researchers' scientific production and quality is leading to a disturbing set of consequences.⁴ Such consequences range from the emergence of a climate of rivalry and competition between colleagues to the multiplication of inconsistent journals. The climate of rivalry and competition is accompanied by an increasingly frenzied and unbridled search for quality editorial space by those who are in universities and other institutions linked to the production of knowledge, including the uncritical use of the same criteria of the said hard sciences – which have a longer tradition of publishing in journals

Sánchez de La Barquera, CONACYT/Mexico and Abel L. Packer, SciELO/ FAPESP Program, held in Santiago de Chile, between 25 and 27 June 2013.
4- According Godoi and Xavier (2012): "Although the official arrival of academic productivism in Brazil takes us back to the late 1970s – a time in which its characteristics and effects became visible (SGUISSARDI, 2010b) and, in a legitimate way, to the 1990s, the emphasis on quantity at the expense of quality as a criterion for the evaluation of research professors and programs becomes more evident among us, every year, through its sequelae." (p. 456-457).

and do research of a more universal character – in human and social sciences (which produce at a different pace). Regarding the multiplication of inconsistent journals, in addition to the profusion of problematic articles and journals (characterized by irregular publication and distribution, endogenous editorial boards or authors, absent or deficient standardization patterns, difficulty indexing in recognized international databases etc.), this process has one more very recent manifestation and consequence, which is the currently vaunted and combated "misconduct in research", a frequent practice by those who have been made "hostages to productivity" (BIANCHETTI; MACHADO, 2007).

The fact that especially managers and funders of scientific activities use the evaluation of journals of various areas as the only indicators of productivity and, consequently, as a guideline for making decisions on the distribution of rewards and resources (a widespread practice in the U.S. and other countries), is undoubtedly leading to a series of distortions of frightening proportions. This essay intends to contribute some reflections on aspects of this complex scenario, assuming that it is not possible to address the subject of scholarly communication separately from the structure of scientific production, since the universe of indexed journals is part of the latter.

The text is organized as follows: first, I will make some considerations on the perspectives of the analysis proposed. Then, I will present information on the participation of the journals of human and social sciences indexed in the SciELO database. Such information reveals aspects of the recent changes in the publishing universe in these areas. In the third part, I will focus on the efforts of managing a particular journal to meet new and increasingly difficult demands and pressures on the editorial boards of indexed journals. Following, I shall present some arguments in favor of collective action by editors of scientific journals, aiming to

develop political action to combat the ills of the current system of production, evaluation and communication of science. In the last topic, I will comment on aspects relevant to the understanding of the different elements involved in the perverse relation between productivism and science communication.

A micro and macroeditorial perspective: the possibility of examining the leaf without forgetting the tree or the forest

This essay is based on two distinct but complementary perspectives of analysis. Both arise from my experience in the world of research and scientific journals: a more specific microeditorial perspective, and a broader one, related to the macroeditorial policy and management, as I will explain below.

The microeditorial perspective is linked to having been a professor and researcher in higher education, Faculdade de Educação, Universidade de São Paulo (FEUSP), for almost two decades and having acted as editor-in-chief for two terms at *Education and Research* journal. It has continuously published previously unpublished articles on education, resulting from theoretical or empirical research, as well as reviews of education research literature since 1975⁵. It joined the SciELO of electronic publications in 1999. For nearly 40 years, the journal has experienced Brazil's substantial social, political, cultural and economic transformations. Likewise, it has had to face the changes in the educational reality in Brazil, which have affected universities and the scenario of scientific publications. In this respect, there are reasons to celebrate, but there is also plenty to discuss. The contents published and the modus operandi of the journal over the years reflect aspects of these transformations and witness their pace and scale, as well as the challenges the journal faces. Although

5- Since 1975, with the title *Revista da Faculdade de Educação*; from 1999 onwards with the title *Educação e Pesquisa (Education and Research)*.

linked to FEUSP, the *Education and Research* is managed by a standing committee of two editors-in-chief and nine assistant editors and accompanied by an independent editorial board with international qualification.⁶

The macroeditorial vision, in turn, stems from the position of representative of the editors of human and social sciences in the scientific committee of SciELO Brazil.

SciELO Brazil collection indexes and offers online, open access, full texts of Brazilian scientific journals in all areas of knowledge, which predominantly publish the unpublished results of original scientific research and which use peer review (of the content and relevance of articles). The journals' texts can be written in Portuguese, Spanish and English. For indexing and publishing in SciELO Brazil collection, publication on paper is not required.

The committee meets regularly to deliberate and evaluate, based on stringent scientific criteria, the formulation and implementation of policies of inclusion and permanence of scientific journals in SciELO Brazil collection. The committee members are scientist-editors elected by all the editors who are part of the portal SciELO Brazil, and it also has representatives from institutions which fund research and scholarly communication. Each of these representations consists of a member and an alternate. The representative of the editors has not only the responsibility of translating the expectations of the wider scientific community but also the opportunity to meet and collaborate to put some lines of action into effect and achieve targets aimed at developing SciELO. I have been a member of that committee since early 2012 as a result of consultation with the other editors in the humanities in late 2011.

6- Currently, the editorial board members are: Denise Trento Rebello de Souza e Teresa Cristina Rego (editors in chief), Claudia Pereira Vianna, Emerson de Pietri, Maria Ângela Borges Salvadori, Maria Leticia Barros Pedroso Nascimento, Marília Pinto Carvalho, Rosângela Gavioli Prieto, Vinício de Macedo Santos (editores assistentes). In my first term as editor-in-chief, I shared the management with colleague Lucia Emilia Nuevo Barreto Bruno.

These activities are quite strenuous but also valuable, in so far as they allow knowing and reflecting on some of our efforts, impasses and main challenges for communicating and disseminating what is produced by science. Being a representative at SciELO allows having a more critical view of our reality today with regard to the editorial policy, the production of scientific knowledge, and all the vicissitudes related to communication and science. Now, the other practices – as a researcher and as an editor of a specific journal – allow me to have a more microscopic view of the intellectual and scientific dissemination work and especially of the difficulties involved in the tasks of authors, reviewers, referees or editorial teams.

Therefore, the experiences are quite interrelated, but have different dimensions. The various positions I have had allow simultaneously perceiving aspects of what is close and what is a little farther, the singular and the plural, the individual and the collective, the part and the whole, the leaf, the tree, and its surroundings: the forest.

However, regardless of the perspective from which one analyzes the phenomenon, what one finds is the same bleak outlook, mainly due to the increasing pressure for graduate professors (and their supervisees) to publish, as the scientific production (please read the publication of articles) of professors and students is the item with the most weight in the decisions on program evaluation and distribution of opportunities and funds for fellowships and grants, as well as other forms of support.

The journals of humanities in SciELO collection

It is particularly important to understand how titles are distributed in SciELO Brazil collection today.⁷ They can bring some interesting elements to the debate on the relationship between the evaluation policy

7- To classify journals, SciELO Brazil adopts the table of knowledge areas defined by CNPq.

and the publishing universe, since they make explicit aspects that the contact with and the reading of journals do not always reveal.

As one can see in the chart below, the share of journals of humanities is very significant (26.16%), and only the health science journals have a higher share (29.39%).

According to what has already been pointed out by Santos and Noronha (2013), contrary to what is often believed, if we add the journals of applied social sciences (10.39%) and human sciences (26.16%), we can see that they are not a minority in SciELO collection, since, in the total number of the indexed titles, they represent 36.55%, a percentage equal to the sum of the journals of biological (7.17%) and health sciences (29.39%), which make up the total of 36.56%.

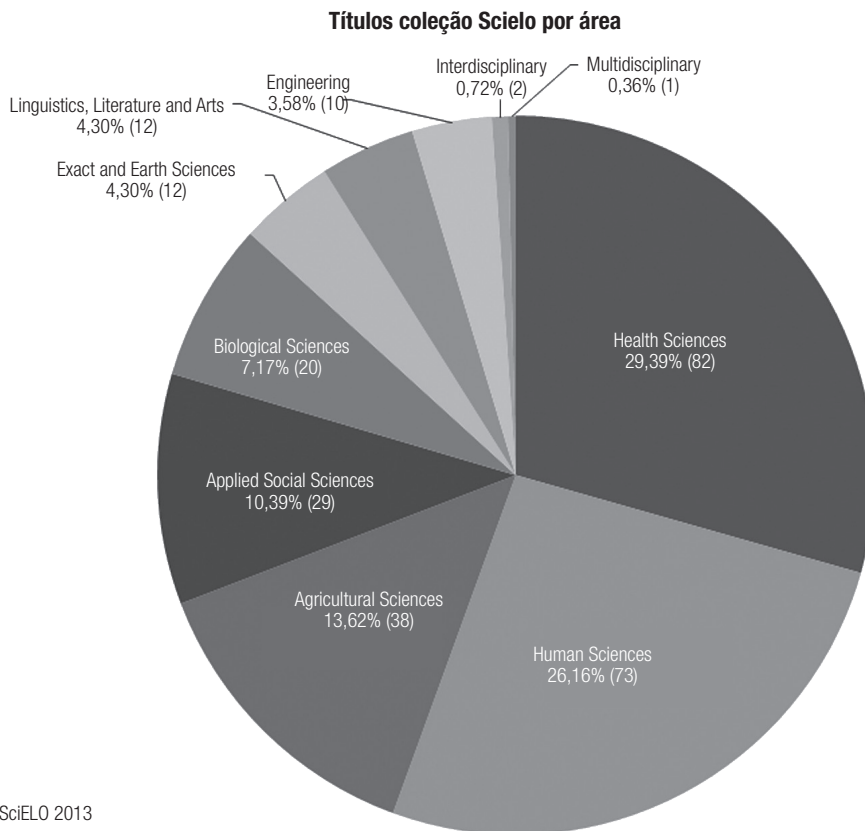
This datum would not be surprising if the tradition of publishing and evaluating research and researchers in social sciences and humanities were the same as that of exact and natural sciences. We know this is not true. On the contrary: for researchers in humanities, publishing in specialized journals and having one's prestige measured by the number of articles or by the so-called impact factor of one's text has been a recent demand.

Until a few years ago, these researchers used to share their thoughts, findings and results of studies through books, book chapters, dissertations and theses. Scientific journals were not privileged or valued, among other reasons, due to the pace, nature and characteristics of the academic production in this field (ORTIZ, 2008).⁸

The significant participation of journals of social sciences and humanities in the collection can be understood as an indicator of recent changes (in Brazil and in different parts of the world) in the vehicles usually adopted to give visibility to the knowledge built in those areas.

8- In the book *A diversidade dos sotaques: o inglês e as ciências sociais*, Renato Ortiz (2008) provides a lucid analysis of the important differences between natural sciences and social sciences. Such differences seem to be ignored by public policy makers today, particularly those the evaluation and funding of research programs.

Chart 1 - Distribution of journals by thematic field (SCIELO, 2012)



Source: SciELO 2013

Besides recognizing that, from the historical point of view, publishing in scientific journals is relatively new to human sciences, it is necessary to consider other specificities: the topics studied in this field tend to be more focused on national issues. Therefore, journals are less internationalized and have a relatively lower impact factor than other areas. Brazilian journals of humanities are making a great effort towards internationalization, following what happened in the journals of other areas in the past. Therefore, there has been not a delay in the humanities, but a historical cycle specific to this area of knowledge.

Since I started attending the said committee meetings, I have always made a point of stressing these and other particularities. Fortunately, I have noticed that the coordination of SciELO program is very concerned with

understanding the idiosyncrasies of each field of knowledge. For example, in terms of demand, one of the criteria established by the committee for a journal to be part of the collection in the humanities is that it publishes at least 18 articles per year and that the minimum frequency is semi-annual. The table below indicates that, in other areas, these figures vary widely (up to 60 articles per year and quarterly frequency in the case of exact sciences). That is, the criteria adopted is flexible because SciELO recognizes that each area has its own reality, history, path of knowledge, and a different pace of work and preparation, which must be considered. In short, at SciELO, it is understood that the flow of scientific production of each journal (which involves periodicity and number of articles published per year) should be evaluated based on reference values for the thematic field

in which the journal is classified, since it is assumed that these depend on the opportunities and pace of communication of each field.

The following table indicates, for each major thematic field, the frequency and minimum and desirable number of articles per year established in SciELO today:

Table 1 - Frequency and number of articles per field

Thematic fields	Frequency		Number of articles per year	
	minimum	desirable	minimum	desirable
Agriculture and Exact	quarterly	bimonthly	40	48
Biology	quarterly	bimonthly	60	72
Human Sciences	twice a year	three times a year	18	24
Linguistics, Literature and Arts	twice a year	twice a year	12	18

Source: SciELO

Another aspect of the experience in the committee deserves to be mentioned, since it expresses many of the problems that now exist at macroeditorial level. In recent years, the number of submissions to human and social sciences journals which claim their inclusion in the collection has grown exponentially. In principle, this should not be bad news. On the contrary, it could mean that we are doing more research and, thus, in need of more space to divulge results, share the accumulated legacy, receive contributions and criticism from peers, inform society, and ultimately, disseminate information and ensure the continuity of the process of knowledge construction. However, if we consider the quality of the avalanche of new journals evaluated by the board, the impression we have is quite different.

After successive and varied opportunities to scrutinize the set of journals submitted, we found that most of the journals applying are visibly weak and immature. They may vary in terms of origin, format, editorial mission, sources of indexing etc, but are similar in one respect, a very disturbing one, by the way: many seem to have been organized hastily, pressed by the urgency of numerous demands

of government and funding agencies. When considered together, except for one or two increasingly rare journals, most of them evidence they are just vehicles to dispose of the production of researchers, research centers, universities and colleges from different areas of knowledge and various regions of Brazil. They are documents that evidence the effort of subjects increasingly pressed by the need to publish to show and prove that they are producing, and not to fulfill a commitment to the dissemination of knowledge (CASTRO, 2010; GUEDES, 2011). One has the impression that we are wasting time, money and energy. Is this the best way? Who is interested in this mass production of journals? What is the relation between this phenomenon and the evaluation policy adopted today in graduate programs? What are the consequences of these practices for science and scientific communication work?

Interestingly, the experiments that I have done at microeditorial level, especially as the editor of one of the leading journals in the scenario of the scientific production on education in Brazil, leads me to the same findings and concerns: in the academic world today, there is a great waste of human, material and financial resources, forced by a clumsy policy aimed at increasing productivity. The daily contact with the demands of managing a scientific journal allows me to state that there is a proliferation of poor quality articles produced in nearly industrial scale quantities. Many of them end up congesting the already overburdened editorial secretariats of the journals which enjoy some sort of prestige.

The texts rejected by the journals that have a more demanding selection policy have a predictable destination: in a short time, they will be published in insignificant journals, which will be little read and not divulged at all, but that, for now, have served their role in supplying the points needed by researchers and their institutions to be better evaluated by government or funding agencies. The same questions asked before on the macroeditorial

level apply again: is this the best course of action to stimulate researchers? Does not the policy adopted today to evaluate graduate programs bring damaging consequences for science and scientific communication work? Do we have to repeat the mistakes already made by other countries?

The diagnosis and the questions are not new. A number of authors from different areas of knowledge have been discussing, criticizing, warning, lamenting, denouncing and, in a way, giving answers to this set of questions for quite some time. Among these authors are Alcadipani (2011), Bianchetti (2010), Bianchetti and Machado (2007), Chauí (1989), Coimbra (2009), Duarte Jr. (2010), Godói and Xavier (2012); Ortiz (2008), Reinach, (2013), Schmidt, (2011), Sguissardi and Silva Júnior (2009), Trein e Rodrigues (2011), Vilaça, M. M., Palma, A. (2013); Vilaça, M. M.; Pederneira, I. L. (2013), and Waters, L. (2006). Among these works, some show particular concern with the theme of the metric adopted to measure the quality of scientific production – the Impact Factor (STREHL, 2005; WALTER; HUNT, 2003) –; others, with the very logic that guides peer review in science and in the academy (BOTOMÉ, 2011).

From this set, I highlight the analyses by Renato Ortiz of the historical origins of productivity and the mechanisms that support its functioning, a dimension generally little known and examined. His analyses are masterfully presented in the chapter that has the suggestive title “Cientificidade, cientometria e insensatez” (Scientificity, scientometrics and unwisdom). One example is his reflection on the questionable assumptions that underlie the measuring instrument introduced by the Institute for Scientific Information to assess the impact factor of a journal:

The foundation of this solid construction is fragile. It rests on a circular logic: works are cited because they are good; therefore, they are good because they are cited. (...) Statisticians know that a correlation is

distinct from a relation, scientometric studies prudently avoid this issue. They claim repeatedly, without demonstrating, that the quality/quantity relationship is revealed in the correlation between good scientists and their prolixity. In no time are the contributions themselves considered, quality has no individuality, it is sufficient to group them by their numerical expressions. The analysis also assumes the oneness of science, which is a system in which all subjects are leveled. (...) (2008, p. 142)

It is worth stressing that, for Ortiz, the problem is not scientometrics itself, but rather its use, as “it can be really useful in the construction of indicators relevant to certain studies. The unwisdom manifests itself when such indicators are perceived as the reality of the scientific field.” (ORTIZ, 2008, p. 142). According to the author,

These assumptions are clearly inadequate when applied to Social Sciences. Scientometric studies themselves indicate that books are the most used support in social sciences. In this case, the econometrics of citations makes little or no sense. Moreover, the notion of obsolescence contradicts the status of the very knowledge that one wants to understand; therefore, the research conducted points, along with the preference for the book, to a host of authors who in principle should have disappeared in the “information age” (Marx, Lenin, Weber, Parsons etc.). Imagining the existence of an impact factor applied only to journals as a mechanism of research is still a huge misunderstanding. (ORTIZ, 2008, p. 151)

It is interesting that the productivist policy is criticized not only by researchers and editors of journals in the humanities, as was to be expected, since the lifetime and rate of citation of articles follow a very different logic

from that of the so-called hard science⁹. Instead, they echo everywhere and are delivered by academics from almost all areas.

A good example is the well-known and important manifesto DORA (San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment), prepared by the American Society for Cell Biology (ASCB), along with a group of editors and biological science researchers who participated in a conference in San Francisco, California, in December 2012. The document was first signed by over 150 scientists and 75 academic organizations, and eventually became a declaration with worldwide reach, which has received signatures and support from researchers from different areas¹⁰ until today. The manifesto calls attention not only to the need to eradicate the tyranny of the impact factor, but also to the urgency of finding alternatives to verify the scientific value of research or published work.

Before reflecting on these matters, I will briefly present some aspects of the activity as an editor of a human science journal. I will highlight in particular some challenges and demands typical of a journal that is prominent in the Brazilian and Latin American scene. I will probably discuss aspects quite known to journal editors with the same profile, which today face relatively similar obstacles. As discussed above, it is interesting to note that while taking an alternative route, we will reach the same diagnosis: the pressure to publish has damaged – perhaps irreversibly – the contemporary academic and scientific culture.

The challenges faced to publish a scientific journal

Since its creation, although it has undergone different phases and orientations, *Education and Research* has maintained its original commitment to be a sensitive journal, open to

9- For the humanities, the "half-life" of an article is longer. In other words, the pace of obsolescence is different. The peak of citations happens between the fifth and sixth year after publication. As for exact and biological sciences, it happens in the second year.

10- For more information, see <http://am.ascb.org/dora/>

quality research and reflection⁹ produced in the educational scientific field, without restrictions to any theoretical and methodological trends. The academic spirit that values plurality, openness to new and different views and critical perspectives of the educational reality around us has remained as in other times. However, we are aware that, especially in the last decade, the journal has faced dilemmas and obstacles, and that, therefore, has matured and gained new contours.

Despite the difficulties inherent to publications of this nature and size, there have been significant achievements in the last two decades.¹¹ Currently, *Education and Research* has indicators which would make any editorial board proud,¹² but which actually impose many challenges ahead.

The first challenge is related to the large number of articles submitted to the journal spontaneously and hence to the considerable increase in the volume of work required by the entire process of manuscript evaluation, and communication with the authors and publication. To address this challenge, we have developed a set of actions that aim to minimize delays in the procedures of article evaluation as well as to coordinate the entire workflow. Among these actions, the following are noteworthy.

There have been improvements in infrastructure (including the expansion of the editorial board and database of ad hoc reviewers

11- Throughout this period, it has acquired quarterly frequency (which has enabled the publication of approximately 50 articles per year), with punctuality of releases, it has been totally revamped, it has achieved greater financial independence (the journal has different funding sources, such as CNPQ, SIBI-USP, subscription sales and sales in bookstores, exchanges between libraries etc.). In addition, it has met all the basic requirements that qualify it as a high-level scientific journal: it meets the highest standards of editing; it has a very selective policy of choice of articles (its current rejection rate is 82%); it has international distribution; as I said before, it is sold in bookstores, it has subscription services and exchanges between libraries; it is published simultaneously in print and electronic version; and its entire collection is fully digitized and available for open access.

12- The journal is indexed in the major search portals and databases in Brazil and abroad; it receives articles developed in research institutions across the country and abroad. As an expression of the recognition of the scientific community, it has always received the highest score (A1) in Qualis / CAPES evaluation, which accredits it as one of the best publications in the field of education among national and international journals.

and improvement of procedures). Moreover, we have adopted (since 2010) the Electronic Submission of SciELO, which speeds up the whole process of articles submission and review. Today, the average processing time of an article is around four to six months. Publishing ahead of print is another useful tool that we have adopted for faster dissemination of approved articles. It consists of the advance publication, in electronic format, of the articles approved by the editorial board, while they wait for the composition of an issue. As the text is made available in its final version, it can be consulted and cited by the research community. In addition, in early 2009, the role of co-editor was created, as mentioned above, so that two people could share the responsibility for the editorial coordination of the journal and for following the work routines.

The second challenge concerns the increasing difficulty to publish texts of academic excellence, capable of arousing great interest and inquiries among education researchers and the scientific community in general, thanks to their originality and theoretical and analytical consistency. And finally, there is the challenge of achieving greater inclusion of the journal in the international scene.

If, on the one hand, the high rate of rejection of manuscripts demonstrates the seriousness and rigor of opinions and of the editorial policy adopted, on the other, it is indicative of the journal's difficulty to attract quality articles, given the fragility of the production of the area and / or the migration of authors to other international journals with a higher impact factor. This leads immediately to another question. Our journal's biggest challenge is to enhance visibility among tens or hundreds of international solid journals. How can we differentiate ourselves in the international environment, already saturated with offers?

In view of such a major challenge, the editorial board of *Education and Research* has been making constant efforts to increase the quality of what is published and to provide the journal with greater integration and visibility

in the international scene. Among such efforts, I highlight the following.

- We have adopted a more proactive editorial policy that balances the publication of originals sent spontaneously by researchers with the publication of manuscripts from calls for articles for thematic issues or sections. It is worth noting that the articles from such calls are also rigorously evaluated.
- We are expanding and diversifying the composition of our team of proofreaders, editors and editorial board members, and including new members from the international community.
- Our goal is to translate into English all the articles published in each issue (today we translate about 30%), but to do it we have to overcome problems related to the cost of translation work.
- We are encouraging collaborations between Brazilian and foreign authors through partnerships established by Universidade de São Paulo with other universities in Brazil and abroad. We have encouraged these interactions to result not only in attracting and publishing unpublished texts, but also in interviews with authors of international renown.
- In order to achieve greater visibility, we are enhancing the electronic communication and dissemination of the journal among the research community. Such work has involved the preparation of releases, press releases, interviews with authors and design of specific calls. This material has fed the journal's page, Facebook and the blog recently launched by SciELO (I will comment on this further on).

In short, we, editors-in-chief and assistant editors of *Education and Research*, have developed a series of actions to manage our scarce financial resources and simultaneously improve and professionalize the entire editorial work. With great difficulty and always having to reconcile this with other demands in our already burdened academic agenda of researchers and university professors. While acknowledging that the task is not easy, we

have been committed to achieve greater quality of what is published and greater integration and visibility of the journal in the Brazilian and international scene.¹³

After this long introduction, it can be stated that, from the point of view of both macro and microeditorial experience, efforts are being undertaken. But it seems to me that we have a much more serious problem ahead, which is related to the way science is being evaluated and promoted in the Brazilian and international context. If this problem's root is not tackled, it could undermine much of the investment being made today. I believe that at this moment we can return and reflect on the question asked in the meeting mentioned above.

Beyond professionalism, internationalization and sustainability of editorial processes

As already mentioned, the question proposed by the organizers of the 15 years Conference was: "what services and actions are expected of the SciELO for your journal to strengthen the professionalization, internationalization and sustainability of editorial processes?"

The document previously sent had three lines of action for the years 2014 to 2016, aiming to increase visibility, as well as support the development of journals indexed in SciELO: professionalization, internationalization and financial sustainability, as described below.

- **Professionalization** comprises assistance and support for the structuring and functioning of editorial boards in accordance with the standards set for all SciELO network and support for processing the editorial workflow, by means of the products and services certified by SciELO Network.

- The **internationalization** of the editorial tasks and processes of SciELO journals comprises the set of conditions and practices that promote

13- For more information on this topic, consult the enlightening article by Meneghini (2012).

journals' international penetration and that are reflected in international visibility and impact measured by the number of hits, downloads, foreign authors and citations from abroad.

- **Financial sustainability** comprises, first, the regular funding of the operation and management activities of national collections, and secondly, of individual journals. The search for sustainable funding, development and operation of both collections and journals is one of the priority lines of action of the SciELO program.

All the propositions of the document are extremely well founded. However, I believe that if we give exclusive attention to these three lines of action (professionalization, internationalization and sustainability), we may lose sight of a fundamental dimension: the structure of the scientific production which the universe of indexed journals is part of.

While important, the emphasis on professionalization, visibility, strengthening of training actions and control of ethical procedures in the development of journals not only leaves such structure untouched, but also tends to reinforce it. It is as if nothing in its core deserved criticism, as if it needed was "lubricating" the machine by means of a rigorous control of the people who operate it. Would not it be appropriate to take a step back, create some temporary suspension to reflect on the problem of scientific production and communication in a broader context? Would not it be appropriate to address productivism and the discomfort it is causing in the academy? (TREIN; RODRIGUES, 2011; VILAÇA; PALMA, 2013)

I believe we should take the opportunity to conduct consequent discussions about the direction of contemporary research. We know that policies on research evaluation adopted in Brazil today and around the world can hinder scientific advancement in general as well as scientific journals in particular. Before, this discomfort seemed restricted to the world of the humanities, which claimed another time

and criteria better suited to their universe of production and dissemination, but today, more than ever, the complaints are widespread.

We know that research evaluation policies in Brazil, reflecting international procedures, define the destinies of most researchers today, and affect the course of scientific journals. There are already some concrete data on the perverse effects of the strength of this influence, and some evidence of how it can be even more devastating in the future. The misuse of the impact factor, for example, has been distorting the real meaning of this indicator, exerting a deleterious effect on the development of journals as it stimulates artificial actions to increase citation indexes, often not following the code of ethics of scholarly communication.

The need for collective action among editors of scientific journals

That is why I advocated vehemently at the conference that gave rise to this article that SciELO network should develop political action to combat the ills of the current system of production, evaluation and communication of science today. I believe this can be a very important forum for us editors to help each other to politically fight, so that this alarming situation changes. I am convinced that we can no longer condone misconduct in science. It is no use to fight alone for our journals to simply reach higher levels of acceptance and citation. Our journals reflect the way science has been conducted in Brazil and worldwide.

It is also for this set of reasons that, during the conference, I dared say that I considered the proposal of the document we received quite noble, and important, but incomplete. I explained that, in my humble opinion, the document should include a fourth line of action, as presented below.

Political action, with regard to the system of production, evaluation and communication of science:

- Ensure the integration between editors (work/ act in network, since we have shared interests and face similar difficulties)
- Encourage this interaction between editors to become a permanent forum, a space for exchanging ideas, experience, and especially to sum efforts to find alternatives to tackle or mitigate the perverse effects of productivism, which today haunts the quality of scholarly production and communication.
- SciELO network and its editors can help formulate public policies, assist in creating lines of support from funding agencies, as well as in creating specific programs geared to quality scientific production and dissemination.¹⁴

I remain convinced that we need to find safe ways to expand the relevance and quality of what we publish. However, I understand that it is not enough to concern ourselves with increasing the visibility of the journals, nor exclusively prioritize the increase in article citation rates. It is necessary to develop strategies for attracting articles on issues of the frontiers of knowledge, capable of mobilizing the interest of the scientific community. And this is directly related to how research has been produced and evaluated. Therefore, it is not possible to address scholarly communication and scientific production separately. In other words, one must think in a serious and careful way about the consequences, for journals and for the progress of science itself, of the practices adopted by many researchers to meet the quantitative criteria used by public policy makers to evaluate, promote and remunerate scientists.

As previously mentioned, unfortunately, it seems that the universe that currently surrounds the scientific production and publication is

14- A good example of work in this direction is the newly created blog SciELO em Perspectivas – Humanas, which was launched during the conference celebrating the 15 years of the program. The idea of creating the blog was gestated in a meeting held in June 2013 in São Paulo, with editors in the humanities, with the purpose of not only creating a space to give visibility to the results conveyed in research journals from the SciELO Brazil collection, using the web, social networks and services of international dissemination of research, but also enabling greater interaction between the editors and researchers. For more information, visit: <blog.humanas@scielo.org>.

not promising at all. In Brazil and around the world, there has been an increasing number of cases involving misconduct in scientific research, such as manipulation, falsification or fabrication of data or results, plagiarism, self-plagiarism (total or partial submission of texts published by the same author as if they were previously unpublished), as well as the rather common practice of artificial co-authoring.

Obviously, this set of practices has a number of impacts on journals and all other forms of science communication (in terms of credibility, reliability, multiplication of tasks for editorial teams, waste of resources, etc.). If nothing is done to create real obstacles to these practices, the likely consequences will be disastrous for science. However, before taking any kind of action, it is prudent to ask ourselves about the origin and motivation of such behavior: is it a problem related to researchers' misconduct or researchers', poor moral, ethical or scientific training? Or may other factors be related to the phenomenon?

The perverse cycle of productivism: when medicine becomes poison

On a personal level, productivism and the ills arising from it (such as scientific misconduct) can lead to two very different and seemingly irreconcilable perspectives and reactions, which make supporters of the measurement and its detractors oppose each other, in a very similar manner to the old dispute between the apocalyptic and the integrated. On the one hand, a kind of conformity and adherence to the rules that apply today, whose motto might be summarized like this: "Publish to exist and be cited in order not to disappear or be forgotten". On the other hand, a disturbing and profound sense of hopelessness, translated into disenchantment with scientific production and everything related to contemporary academic life. The question that best expresses this tendency can be summarized as follows: "How long before I can retire?"

At the broadest level, that of public policies, everything will depend on how we understand the source of the problem. In other words, actions are directly related to the way of justifying the adoption of such behaviors. For this reason, it is important to accurately reflect on the explanations and answers commonly given to this question in our academic environment. Generally, the most common ways in which misconduct are understood can be grouped into two poles.

For the representatives of a pole, ethical lapses are related to researchers' lack of scientific or moral education. They argue that, as in other occupations, science is not immune to the presence of people in need of moral and ethical education. They recommend educational prophylactic and preventive measures, which emphasize the practices, parameters and recommendations of what may and should be done.

For the advocates of the other pole, the problem is related to impunity. They advocate for the adoption of a strict punitive system, which is able to control and prevent improprieties and has drastic consequences (ranging from recoil, suspension of funding, devolution of resources to the peremptory termination of the researcher's link with his or her institution).

Interestingly, although they variously explain the origin of the problem and propose different solutions, both poles seem to share the belief that the difficulties are always punctual and personified (i.e., are solely the researcher's responsibility), and possible measures should have a single purpose: to develop strategies to monitor, detect, judge and promote ethics in publishing results of scientific studies.

For the advocates of both positions, the documents that proliferate today, created by government agencies, universities and research funding agencies, may be sufficient, as they present specific guidelines and internal rules to deal with the problem of ethics in publishing results of scientific studies.¹⁵ They

15 - A good example of this type of material is the *Code of Good Scientific Practice*, recently launched by Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico (CNPq - National Council for Scientific and

might also be content with the numerous - and often merely bureaucratic - commissions of inquiry or ethics committees that are beginning to multiply in universities and scientific associations. They can also feel excited about science rehabilitation programs such as RePAIR (Restoring Professionalism and Integrity in Research), designed by James Dubot, a professor of ethics at Saint Louis University in the United States. The rehabilitation program for researchers who committed misconduct, but want a second chance, charges a high price just like private drug addiction treatment centers: a three-day stay costs \$3,000 per client (DEFINIÇÕES, 2013).

In my view, the poles presented above give partial responses which, in isolation, seem to fail to capture the real scale of the problem. I argue, along with other colleagues, that the so-called misconduct is just the tip of the iceberg. The problem is much more complex than it seems and is related to the policy adopted today to evaluate and promote academic production.

As previously mentioned, a number of authors of different nationalities and areas of knowledge have severely criticized the conditions of contemporary university. Many of these authors seek to understand the phenomenon in a more comprehensive, sophisticated and multifaceted way. In order to escape the polarization, dichotomization or reductionism which have permeated the debates in this field, many of them identify relations between scientific misconduct and the so-called productivism, and especially understand the increase in fraud in research as a result of the increasing pressure on researchers to publish or to compete for funding for future research projects (CASTIEL; SANZ-VALERO, 2007; FANELLI, 2010).

In this sense, Pablo del Rio's severe criticism of the panorama today imposed on human and social science is also exemplary. Although he addresses the Spanish reality,

Technological Development) and by São Paulo Research Foundation (FAPESP).

he brings other elements which elucidate the complex relationship between the current systems of evaluation of scientific productivity and their effects on science:

The entire apparatus of the current academic research is fostering short and medium-term investigations and requiring short-term productivity. This is ominous. It may make sense in areas in which science is subjected to technology, as in the programs of drug development or explanation of a gene, in which one works with an agenda much more marked by industrial productivity [...] Now, in social processes that, by definition, are medium and long term, technology has to be submitted to science. [...] In social processes, we have the advantage that, as there is no industry, nothing rushes us. But they do not give us money for it either. Yet they have applied to us the short-term expectation. (...) Today researchers are under great pressure to perform projects in a short period of time, preferably on topics in vogue (which generally offer more possibility of funding for research). Thus, many end up having a fragmented and reductionist agenda, which makes it very difficult to track the important questions. To work around this situation, researchers devote themselves to doing unofficial investigations and use the time of their nights and vacations. (REGO e BRAGA, 2013, p. 530-531)

Ultimately, what are the main distortions that adopting largely quantitative criteria to evaluate, promote and fund researchers, journals and graduate programs has caused? What are the characteristics of the perverse cycle of productivism which now infects our academic context? How does such cycle affect our production and publications? How does what was planned to improve the investigative task end up impairing it?

Although I do not, of course, aim to exhaust the complexity of this process, I shall

present some of the features identified in these quantitative mechanisms:

- Researchers feel increasingly pressured to publish dozens of articles in various journals, in a short time, since the courses of their academic careers depend on the number of texts published and citations received.
- This results in what some call *salami science*: the proliferation of the submission of immature, incomplete, “sliced“, repetitive or “reheated” articles (sometimes, authors submit texts already published changing only their titles), as well as other unethical practices such as plagiarism, self-plagiarism, one article signed by many authors (not necessarily involved in the research) etc.
- The most prestigious journals are bombarded. The growth of the spontaneous demand for publication increases the work of editors and ad hoc reviewers, in a strenuous routine of reviews. The daily work pressure on editorial boards, which usually have a small number of members, ultimately influences the quality of what is published and results in low impact rates.
- Journals are proliferating, as graduate programs are driven to create their own journals, yielding to the pressure of the evaluation criteria adopted by governmental policy. In an attempt to dispose of their academic production and improve the rates of publication required from them, such programs create publications that are born with a number of problems: they are endogenous, fragile, poorly and unprofessionally managed.
- Obviously, the explosion in the number of journals - with their serious difficulties to survive, to have financial independence, to be punctual and comply with minimum quality standards - does not indicate an increase in scientific production in Brazil. In the national and international scene, they are still rarely or not cited at all.
- Moreover, the phenomenon has started to generate another kind of dark shadow. It is the world of pseudo-academy, which, as

we know, in other parts of the world, has been sustained by predatory publishers that exploded (and enriched) in recent years. Allegedly scientific, such publishers adopt a well-known and profitable formula: low entry barriers (authors are usually “invited” by e-mail), little work (the texts are usually published as submitted) and easy money. Willing to publish virtually any text provided that authors pay the required fee, they launch new journals with names similar to those of already consolidated journals and events. The consequences are obviously tragic, for this certainly further complicates the task of telling serious and well-conducted research from fragile research, conducted with the mere purpose of increasing the number of publications of an author (WOOD, 2013).

- Lastly, this perverse cycle leads to configuring the following scenario: productivism, besides causing deep unease in academia, has led to severe deformities, affecting – perhaps irreversibly – the direction of scientific production and communication in our country and abroad. The outlook is bleak. We have never published so much, we have never had so many journals. But does that mean we are doing more and better research? Or are we turning our talented researchers into bureaucratic peer reviewers¹⁶ or mere managers of the points in their curricula, whose current highest expression Curriculum Lattes?¹⁷

The results of the research undertaken by João dos Reis Silva Júnior and Valdemar Sguissardi, published in the book *Trabalho intensificado nas federais: pós-graduação e*

16- A colleague, who is humorous even in the face of tragedy, made a very funny comment. She told me that, when she began teaching at the university, she felt so fulfilled that she even imagined what would be written on her tombstone after her death: “Here lies an important researcher and educator”. Today, on the eve of her retirement, she worries that, on the cool marble of her tomb, it is engraved only “Here lies a reviewer”.

17- Today, in Brazil, Lattes CV is the main source of information on individual academic production. It is a tool that records professional information of scientists, professors, researchers, graduate and undergraduate students and other professionals. Anyone can create and update his or her Lattes curriculum, by simply accessing the Lattes platform in CNPq site (www.cnpq.br). Curricula entered in Lattes platform can be used individually by their holders and can be accessed by third parties through a search system.

produtivismo acadêmico (2009), (Intensified work in federal universities: graduate studies and academic productivism), somehow respond to the question. The authors evidence the increasingly precarious condition of research professors in the contemporary scene, and particularly its overwhelming consequences not only for higher education professors, but also for scientific and technological development itself.

Although the authors studied the reality of federal universities in southeastern Brazil, they eventually drew a comprehensive overview of what originated and promoted what they call “academic, instrumental and ideological productivism”. The thesis defended by the researchers is that “the reformist movement in the educational sphere is part of the changes of capitalist rationality that result from the globalization of capital” (p. 255). From these reflections, it is possible to draw a broader panel – without ignoring the specificities of each country – on the transformations that have occurred in the academic context as a global movement, as well as the strong power of the United States in this process.

Through a historical analysis based on the work of leading scholars of the nineteenth century to the present day, the authors seek to understand the core of the ideology of academic productivism, as state policy and institutional culture, and some of its serious implications: within the philosophical sphere, pragmatism; in the economic sphere, the commodification of science and technological innovation. In this analysis, they eventually conclude that graduate education has become the pole that generates a reform of the university which tends to subject the university to the market.

The transformations in the scientific academic process have brought about profound changes in the identity of the university and its professors. The authors examine (and denounce) some effects and major damages of the “new logic” prevailing in contemporary university. They focus on the effects of the new demands and pressures, which push professors to extend their

workday, and consequently affect other areas of their lives (such as the personal and family ones).

In summary, this radical change in the identity of the university continually promotes an increase in professors’ productive immaterial work. For the authors, this is the work that ensures good grades to graduate programs, according to the criteria established by CNPq. This is precisely where the perversity of the mechanism lies: reacting to the utilitarian and pragmatic rationality of the reform and pressured to achieve goals and follow guidelines, research professors are obliged to increase by many hours their working week. And at the university, which “should be the privileged place of disalienation” (p. 264), the opposite prevails, since, in this environment, what predominates is “pragmatism, and with it, the alienating utility that subjects most professors” (p. 264). In an increasingly difficult condition, professors “get tired, fall ill and ‘die’ a little every minute of their university practices” (p. 254).

In this essay, I did not intend to exhaust the issues listed for discussion or their approach. This is one interpretation among many possible of the adverse contemporary conditions for those who research and those who are somehow involved in the effort to communicate the results of investigations in a universe marked by the fact that publishing has become a valuable coin, with power to evaluate, reward, punish and seal academic fates. The role of research is not to produce points to promote departments, institutions and professors. And the role of scientific journals is not to disseminate the articles that will provide these meager points. Hence this essay is the continuation of a dialogue that I hope will enable new perspectives on old and almost chronic problems as well as raise controversies and future challenges.

Final digression: the excess of discourse and the poverty of practices

In conclusion, it may be asked: what can one do about a problem of such magnitude? French

historian Roger Chartier gives us some clues. At the beginning of XXI century, he did a classic and interesting diagnosis of the responsibilities of this time to build the future. He said: "In a future that is already our present, these effects will be what we can collectively do with it. For better or for worse. This is now our common responsibility." (CHARTIER, 2002, p. 123).¹⁸

His statement puts into perspective the temporal relationships between past-present-future. Thereby it encourages us to revisit the past, taking into account the current context, the result of what has been consolidated so far, and makes us uneasy with the limits and possibilities of a future that will always be uncertain, which can only be glimpsed. Still it deserves to be and should be imagined. Following his guidelines, with regard to the scenario of science production and scholarly communication, it is prudent to ask ourselves: what does the cycle just described reveal? Among other aspects, that the context we live in today is quite complex and so are the consequences it may have on the universe of researchers, scientific journals and science in general. This condition worsens because, combined with the pressures and demands of every kind, there is paradoxically a rhetoric that values and emphasizes the crucial role of scientists for the development of society. It is curious to note a phenomenon similar to this in education: the discourses which highlight the importance of educational actions are increasingly effusive nowadays. However, the conditions for these practices to be carried out are increasingly precarious.

In 1999, prestigious Portuguese educator António Nóvoa published an interesting article on this topic entitled "Teachers at the turn of the millennium: from the excess of discourse to the poverty of practices". This text has eventually become a reference in the area of education, because the author managed to make a compelling diagnosis of the problems involved in teacher education at the time, as

18- When Chartier made that statement, he was analyzing the effects of electronic communication on traditional publications.

well as to present a shrewd critique of the main factors related to them.

Developing a very interesting line of reasoning, Nóvoa examines the discursive emphasis that permeated most of the texts about education at the end of the century, which according to him was marked by:

the excess-poverty logic applied to the examination of the current situation of teachers: from the excess of political and mass media rhetoric to the poverty of education policies; from the excess of the languages of international experts to the poverty of teacher education programs; from the excess of scientific-educational discourse to the poverty of pedagogical practices, and from the excess of "voices" of teachers to the poverty of their associative practices. (1999).

The author called attention to the gulf between the present time (characterized by precarious practices and policies adopted in the educational system of the time) and the wealth of discourses and arguments put forward by people from different segments (politicians, academicians, intellectuals, managers and even teachers themselves), in addition to the prospective analyses, which always extolled teachers' crucial role in building tomorrow's society (claiming that they are essential to educate the twenty-first century generation or prepare the human resources necessary for the economic development countries). His main criticism was that the discourses revealed an "excess of future" and indicated at the same time a "deficit of present" (NÓVOA, 1999).

Nóvoa's well-known text seems to accurately describe what has happened in the field of scientific production, particularly in the so-called human sciences.

Nowadays, there is also an increasingly abundant and sophisticated rhetoric about the fundamental role of science and researchers to build the "society of the future". In political projects, reformers' discourses, general

guidelines adopted in graduate programs (especially in public universities), documents of the funding agencies, the literature produced by researchers, in the press and in the voices of common sense, we are repeatedly faced with the same slogans, which always exalt the importance of science and the nobility of the task of researchers. These are usually praised for dedicating their lives to unravel complex problems of all kinds.

As discussed in this essay, combined with this uplifting discourse on the role of researchers, new and increasingly difficult pressures are put on those involved with the production of science and its communication.

For quite some time, individuals from different areas have defended the idea that the cutting-edge knowledge developed by academics and research institutes needs be disseminated freely so that other scholars and the broader society can benefit from it. Since the 1990s, there has been a growing movement of dissemination scientific production, especially thanks to the speed, the ability to distribute information at low cost and other practical advantages offered by digital networks. The facilities of the worldwide network of computers enabled the emergence of a series of initiatives that allow researchers to disseminate full or partial data of their studies. In theory, it seems fair: we should really value science and strive to disseminate it. The problem is how and with what objectives we do it.

We cannot just ignore the risks of the unwanted effects of the policies adopted to stimulate the so-called academic productivism, as Schmidt ponders:

Accumulation of tasks to which one needs to devote in a dispersed and discontinuous manner and a feeling of being constantly in debt complete the picture. It is easy to conclude that such a scheme is not conducive to the work of thought. For the instrumental view, however, writing is not necessarily the time of thinking, but possibly a technical task, a report on something ready someplace

elsewhere. [...] publishing to meet quantitative targets set by evaluators leads to the loss of the sense of publication as communication and opportunity for discussion. Isolation is not the result of the intention to hide a secret, but of the lack of time and interest in reading what colleagues write. Thus, some lines of theoretical and/or empirical research become saturated with the same and do not advance towards deepening their themes or even creating room for fruitful discussion. (2011)

We believe that the contributions of the current analysis and studies bring timely and thought-provoking questions which can stimulate and broaden the debate about the direction we want research and scientific dissemination policy in Brazil to take.

We must be aware of the seriousness of the issues reported by the authors. More than that: we must overcome the stage we are at. We hope we can – because it is urgent – leave as soon as possible the stage of complaints and really begin another phase. The road ahead is long, difficult and tortuous. Especially considering that “substantial changes in the context of scientific production in peripheral nations depend on a set of conditions associated with science policies that go beyond the more specific context of the scientific community itself. (YAMAMOTO et al, 2002, p. 169).

Based on rampant productivism, the current science policy in Brazil and in several other countries tells us that the time is critical and requires deep reflection, and especially a change in routes¹⁹. And this has to be done before it is too late. We cannot forget the ambiguity pointed out by Derrida: the remedy that cures can also kill. As an old saying goes, the difference between medicine and poison may be only the dosage.

19 - The articles by Castro (2010), Alcadipani (2011), Schmidt (2011), Machado and Bianchetti (2011), among others, point precisely this and, in a way, suggest elements that contribute to such advancement.

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