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Panel: The "Excellence" European University Model and its Evaluation

Politics and University: Can Slow and Steady Win the Race?

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Abstract

Modern university comprehends two directorial ideas: the Kantian concept of reason and the Humboldtian idea of culture. The latter was conceived by German idealists from Schiller to Humboldt and it was Humboldt who established this idea of culture at the Berlin University which, during the post war period, favored the growth of western education. Just as reason did before, culture played a unifying role amidst the university. In this paper we discuss some of the arguments presented by Bill Readings about the third model in course: the university that organizes itself around the techno-bureaucratic notion of "excellence".

At the university of excellence, the problem of 'value' is shown between brackets, one assuming that the statistic evaluation (of the excellence level) provides defined answers, which subsequently will act on aspects such as financing, resources, income decisions and career. In this paper we will discuss the innocuousness of these indicators and their privatization by important multinational corporations capable of shifting the sense of the European Reform currently taking place in Higher Education.

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Any self-respecting academic, and particularly those dealing with politics, has accompanied the abundant debate founded in the multiple reactions provoked by the so-called ***European University Reform of Bologna***, and the consequent changes and bankruptcy of the liberal education project. Simultaneously teaching has been underestimated in comparison to research. Mourning, criticisms, analyses, either positive or negative, paraphrase the general uncertainty regarding the role of the university and the own nature of patterns from which it may be evaluated as an institution.

Everyone who has ever spent some time in a university knows that this institution is not a model community, since few communities manage to be pettier than the group of teachers of a university. However, the university is supposedly the potential model for a free and rational discussion. Even though the professorship has proletarianised itself as one, facing the rise of the number of short-term contracts and the generalized contractual insecurity of those who have just begun, the main problem seems to lie on the uncertainty of the knowledge produced by the university. The place that the university holds in our society has ceased to be clear, and the intellectuals cannot afford to ignore the change occurring in the institutional structure of the university.

In this paper we bring to public the main arguments taken from a reference work in this area about the question of the underway structural change of the university which emerged in the American debate and that has preceded the European. In the mid 90's of the last century, Bill Readings, in "The University in Ruins", a work published two years after his decease and which made him famous, chooses like every single one of us, as a starting point, the two models traditionally associated with a certain western notion of university.

Modern university comprehends two organizational ideas: the Kantian concept of reason and the Humboldtian idea of culture. The latter was conceived by German idealists from Schiller to Humboldt and it was Humboldt who established this idea of culture at the Berlin University which, during the post-war period, favored the growth of western education. Just as reason did before, culture played a unifying role amidst the university. We discuss the innovative arguments presented by Bill Readings (Readings, 1996) about the third model in course: the university that organizes itself around the techno-bureaucratic notion of "excellence".

This earns descriptive forums of model and paradigm when UNESCO publishes the work "The University as an Institution Today" by Alfonso Borrero Cabral, in which the author clarifies the lines of structural change. The university focuses itself on the figure of

the administrator - and not on the figure of the teacher - as the main figure and establishes the tasks of the university in the domain of a generalized logic of «accountability» in which the university should thrive for excellence in each aspect of its operation. The main figure of the university is no longer the teacher who teaches classes and researches simultaneously but the administrator of the university to whom the teachers must report.

When looking for an explanation to this change, Readings defends that the notion of culture as legitimizing of the modern university is no longer useful, which applies not only to humanities but also to natural sciences, even though it is in the humanities that the delegitimization of culture is directly understood as a threat. The university – he claims – no longer participates in the historical process to mankind that it was once legacy by the enlightenment: the historical project of culture. Such change happened due to the removal of the university, as an institution, from the Nation-State.

The current transformation of the university would be, above all, determined by the downfall of the national cultural mission which has until now been its reason to exist. The relative downfall of the Nation-State which accompanies the economic globalization process as the main reproductive instance of capital worldwide has as a direct consequence the transformation of the university into a bureaucratic company connected with governmental and inter-governmental cells or working independently as an analogy with a transnational company. The speech of «excellence» replaces the ideology of (national) culture in different institutions and countries.

The new interest in attaining excellence indicates a change in the role of the university. The idea of national culture is no longer able to offer a comprehensive ideological guidance to what currently happens in the university and, as a result, what one teaches and produces as knowledge matters each day a little bit less. What is taught or researched matter even less than the fact that it is taught or researched with «excellence». This domain of «excellence» does not carry along a political or cultural guidance, since it is not determined by having a direct relation with a recognized instance of political power. The university looses the role of being an ideological instrument of the State, just like Althusser stated, and is now a relatively independent bureaucratic instrument.

The university becomes analogous to a series of different institutions – for example, institution such as national airline companies – which face massive reductions on its financing from States (which are every day weaker) that no longer consider them to be privileged factor of investment by the popular, will.

The «excellence» as a university's motto develops itself within the university, as an idea in which the university focuses and through which becomes understandable to the outside world. As a rhetorical weapon with the greatest odds of achieving overall approval, «excellence» is a concept that the majority of us may agree upon, because it's not an ideology, in the sense that it does not have an external referent neither an internal content. It is possible to urge everyone to fight for excellence since the applicability of the concept is directly connected with its emptiness. Hence, for example, in any application, when one states that the «excellence of the proposed investigation is the main criteria applied in the evaluation process», means that the used criteria will not be revealed, because «excellence» is not set out to be an evaluation pattern but it is a descriptive pattern whose meaning defines itself by being related with something else. In this way the arbitrariness emerges from the importance attributed to different factors and to the dubious character of the different quantitative indicators of quality, therefore neglecting a series of essential questions about the «quality» of education which are, essentially, philosophical and incapable to grant a cognitive certainty or definite answers.

The logic that requires clear measures to determine the performance of a certain university leads us into a path in which any substantive doubt be seen as a resistance to the public accountability and lies in the fundamental idea is that there is an unique pattern, a level of «excellence», in the light of which all universities may be evaluated. From now on the question of the university will focus itself mainly on the question of the relation price/quality, placed at students seen as consumers and not as someone who wants to think. In this sense, excellence is supposed to enable a comprehensive accounting and connecting the university to a similar network of bureaucratic institutions.

The university proposes to be a constant process of self-evaluation, on the basis of criteria that allows us to evaluate the «quality, excellence, efficiency and relevance». If all these concepts are withdrawn from the economical jargon and if they embody themselves in an accounting lexicon, we get an idea of a consequence in which the social responsibility of the university turns into a matter of service provided in exchange of payment.

If Humboldt placed the university as a merger between the process and the product which not only produced knowledge of culture (in research) but also instilled the culture as a process of learning (in teaching), today the university as a place of «development of human resources», not only creates job places (through research) but also offers professional formation (through teaching). In the same way, if the functions of the dean of a

university (in the Kantian university) were purely disciplinary, formulating decision regarding conflicts between faculties, basing himself on reason, in the university founded on culture, the dean would impersonate the pan-disciplinary ideal of a general cultural orientation, turning himself into the figure of the university itself; at the university of excellence however, a dean can only be a simple bureaucratic administrator who moves effortlessly around the auditorium, the sports pavilion or the VIP room. From judge to moderator, from executive to fund-raiser, he no longer expresses his opinion in public or issues judgments of value of any kind.

So, the call to excellence points out the fact that there is no idea of university or it has rather missed the content. As a unit of non-referential value which is completely internal to the system, excellence does not mark more than the moment of self-reflection of technology. To picture the university «after» the era of culture implies making an appeal to the thought, making it imperative that the university responds to the requirement of accountability, refusing at the same time to conduct the debate on their language of accounting whose trade currency is excellence.

The replacement of culture by the speech of excellence constitutes the way how the university has responded to the crisis of 1968. In the face of the criticism from students regarding the claim of the university being a custodian of culture and its increasing dedication to bureaucracy, the university gradually abandoned his dedication to culture. Forced to describe itself as idealistic or bureaucratic-administrative, the university chose the second definition. And the speech of excellence is able to integrate the radicalized speech of the 60's as a proof of excellence of life on campus or as a proof of the student's engagement.

None of this means that one is not able to resist to the speech of excellence. One must think about a different means of resistance. To whom or to what should the teachers, students and institutions report to? In the university of excellence, the problem of 'value' is showed under commas since we assume that the statistical evaluation (of the level of excellence) provides final answers, which then have an effect in financing, resources, wage and career decisions. However, the question of *value* in teaching is a *matter* that *can be opened* with regard to pedagogy, which does not mean nor accept the logic of accounting of bureaucrats, or simply ignore it on behalf of any transcendental value inherent to education.

Eugene Garfield, founder of the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI), now part of Thomson Reuters and also known as the father of the *bibliometrics* which consists of a

set of methods to quantitatively analyze scientific and technological literature such as citation analysis. He developed the *Impact Factor* that is a measure reflecting the average number of citations to recent articles published in science and social science journals. It is regularly used as a substitute for the relative significance of a journal within its field, with journals with superior impact factors considered to be more important than those with inferior ones. During the past decades, the implementation of these research methods that started to be applied to the natural sciences and are now applied also to the social sciences has led the academic performance to reach the highest levels possible of competitiveness and productivity.

Voices of dissatisfaction began to echo within the academic community as a reaction to the changes operated in the model of evaluation and development of the university which established a new academic order. One of these voices came out from a new movement called *Slow Science*, influenced by two core values of the Slow Food Movement: pleasure and creativity. These have become keystones for the Slow Science movement supporters (Gosselain, 2011). Curiously, and even though Eugene Garfield has advanced this quantitative and innovative analysis, he has also inaugurated the Slow Science Movement by publishing in The Scientist Magazine, in 1990, the article "Fast Science vs. Slow Science, Or Slow and Steady Win the Race"(Garfield, 1990).

The paradigm has been built on a framework based on statistic tools to manage the academic and scientific careers. Despite the positive remarks about this sort of classification as being a good development of the academic standards and an upholder of the diversity of European scientific cultures, it has increased nevertheless levels of pressure over the researchers and reinforced the hegemonic position of certain universities. Moreover, the pressure exerted by the public opinion on the researchers through the funding policies and expecting for immediate results has become a reality. Garfield points out to the actual inequity between the types of «curiosity driven» research and «objective driven» research. He believes that all kind of research has its share of uncertainty and requires considerable time to achieve significant results. This has become the reason for the development of a project named «Slow Science Academy», in Berlin in 2010. The founders of this project launched a manifesto arguing that they do not question the current functioning of science (which they all make part), but they refuse to reduce it to quantitative characteristics and deadlines demands which opposes the need of time to understand the information and make progress (Slow Science Manifesto, 2010).

To move away from the current model the supporters of the Slow Science provided two sorts of answers: one that recommends specific improvements, to rethink the type of research evaluation. Another that puts forward the idea that in order to avoid the volatility of funding policies it is important to better inform the public of the condition of research. In sum, the *Slow Science Movement* pretends to transform the values that underpin our perspectives about research and attitudes adopted in the academic work. Such an attitude is not conducive to the race to the ranking or the academic career. Instead, it brings a reward far more important: the opportunity to take pleasure and pride in work.

Another reaction to the notion of «excellence» dates from January 2012 when Annick Stevens, a Belgian professor of philosophy, made public her resignation letter and pointed out the reasons of her disenchantment with the university of the 21st century (Stevens, 2012). In her view, this paradigm accentuates the pressure to guarantee fellowships and grants, big research teams and good positions in international rankings. The letter triggered a wave of solidarity animating an international movement as well as debates which culminated in a *Manifesto for universities that live up to their missions* (Univendat Manifesto, 2012) that represents a critique on this new model of university and has been signed by nearly 3.000 people to date.

The Manifesto claims that "traditionally, publicly subsidized universities ought to fulfill three missions – teaching, research, and service to the community – as defined by their objectives and their mutual implication". Different purposes underlie these missions including the preservation of knowledge by "producing new knowledge and passing on both old and new knowledge to as many students as possible along with the questions they have prompted"; to capacitate students in "research methodologies, in critical analysis of the social consequences of scientific issues, practices and findings, in the development of free thinking, avoiding any form of dogma, with the common good as an objective as well as the acquisition of competence for a responsible professional activity"; and "contributing to the reflection of social systems on themselves" (Univendat Manifesto, 2012).

They assume on the manifest, that contemporary approaches of governance in modern universities confront the stated above definition of the essence of the university. Their basic axes of management are efficiency, profitability and competitiveness. The new concept of university turns the institution into a vehicle of maximum production in a record time, which aims to educate competitive scientists and professionals who are able to face the market's particularities – the universities will be scrutinized in order to understand

whether they are contributing both to the "improvement" of humanity by educating professionals who are able to produce and promote economic growth and develop technical breakthroughs, and to create a "critical mass" of academics. For that reason, it has become common to universities to be the subject of the recurrent international assessments and audits whose goals are to examine the levels of productivity reflecting their places in the several rankings published worldwide.

Even though we stand up for the idea that the university should be subject of regular evaluations in order to understand their performance, we do believe that basing assessments on such circumscribed criteria, which are normally formal and rely on standardized practices; that this leads into a big competition shaped as a race to publish by universities which are competing between one another and consequently to the production of papers only due to this competition neglecting academic purposes. All this reaffirms the place of the university in a world which obeys to the logic of markets and globalization – the universities have become "slaves" of this logic.

Apart from the minimum endowments provided to universities, the research that is able to be allocated with a grant is normally determined by the reputation and size of the teams who are applying and by the system of calls for tenders. This type of situation will lead to a distortion of the university's role in research since it should promote diversity and innovation helping less experienced and smaller teams of the academic community, for instance, neglecting in this way projects that would generate further knowledge instead of perpetuating a vicious cycle of those who have already accomplished to participate.

Funding granted to universities often results from the students' communities. When universities "hunt for students" the direct consequence arises as the decrease of the quality of teaching and the escalating risk of neglecting and undermining smaller departments. The university's teachers are supposed to clarify what professional forms of knowledge they aim to develop in their students. On the one hand, it is crucial to instruct students about the skills that they will most definitely need to develop their professional activities. On the other hand, enhancing these skills might lead teachers to undermine useful and practical knowledge at the expense of critical knowledge. In addition, the implication of the university personnel in domestic management and representation is increasing and this fact increases the spectrum in which the university staff is subjected and may, hypothetically, damage the ideals of the academics and researchers.

So the question seems to be how to measure "quality" in universities? We can look for three options: i) the survey, made by a few thousand "experts" but which entails a problem since nobody in the world has comprehensive expertise if only about a small number of universities; ii) the citation analysis, made by researchers citing other researchers or, iii) a link analysis, made by huge audiences.

The most acknowledged international rankings use the abovementioned criteria that we shall examine. The *Universitas21* developed a Ranking of National Higher Education Systems Research with the aim of highlighting the importance of creating strong contexts so that higher education institutions can contribute to the economic and cultural development of their countries. This international network of leading research universities in 15 countries includes approximately 833,000 students, 145,000 working staff and has around 2.5 million alumni. This way, Universitas21 has created the ranking as a benchmark for citizens, education institutions and governments. The innovation of this study in relation to normal rankings is that it compares higher education systems instead of higher education institutions.

However, this is not the first exercise of its kind since in 2008 smaller first ranking had been made, where 17 OECD countries were analyzed. The authors at the *Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research*, of the University of Melbourne, looked at the most recent data from 48 countries and territories selected across various different measures and selected having into account the list of countries well positioned in the results of research rankings of "National Science Foundation" regarding the study year of 2006/2007.

Their explanation permits to conclude that the range of measures can be grouped under four headings: *resources* (investment by government and private sector), *output* (research and its impact, as well as the production of an educated workforce which meets labor market needs), *connectivity* (international networks and collaboration which protects a system against insularity) and *environment* (government policy and regulation, diversity and participation opportunities). And, population size is accounted for in the calculations. In this case, we could therefore conclude from the first of these items that small countries where the degree of investment in higher education is relative and whose population is minute, can hardly be found in the group of top world universities.

The world-class top universities are, as a consequence, an elite group which is settled by the Top of 500 best ranked institutions in the *Global Ranking of Universities*

(started by Shanghai Ranking in 2003). Normally, this group of top universities are highly related to the traditional "US research intensive university" model, which analyses the impact that these universities have on national/international policies and how they have been answering to an even more globalized academic market. It is certainly not the best way to compare the universities around the world, since the basic criteria are not identical to all because they include incomparable geographic, political and economic elements.

According to the *Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social*, those rankings only permits to setting up a few prestige universities, mostly focused on quality research (and their publication record), by merging and/or providing extra funding. The only current key variable seems to be the international impact of research results through citations, highly cited scientists, and prizes, such as the Nobel Prize winners.

One can stumble upon several analyses as for instance *The Times Higher Education World University Rankings.* This ranking is based on a survey of around 17500 academics in the world, going through a phase of identification of the sphere of knowledge and knowledge assessment questions in the areas identified. The academics are asked to choose up to 30 institutions of their region which they regard as the best in its area of action. The selection of scholars has as a source two databases (one of Singapore and another of Mardev) as well as a formal invitation to the ones already filled in previous years.

When ranking a university there are five larger categories that are taken into account which are: *Teaching:* worth 30 per cent of the overall score and it is based on the learning environment; *Research:* worth 30 per cent and analyzes the volume, income and reputation; *Citations:* worth 30 percent, the influence of research – based on the study of the number of citations a university research papers get by analyzing about 6 million journal article whose main goal is to reward high-quality instead of high-quantity research.

In the previous year, some came to the conclusion that a couple of extremely highly cited papers would boost the overall score awarded to relatively small universities. Due to that the minimum publication threshold for inclusion has been increased from 50 papers a year, to 200. The final parameters are *Industry income:* innovation (2.5 per cent); and *International outlook:* staff, students and research (7.5 per cent). According to these variables the conclusions are almost identical to the ones from the previous study.

Among the most important world rankings, *Academic Ranking of World Universities* (ARWU) has gained relevance. First published by the *Center for World-Class Universities* and the *Institute of Higher Education of Shanghai Jiao Tong University*,

China, in June 2003, the ARWU is updated on an annual basis and also makes use of six main variables to rank universities, such as the number of alumni and staff winning Nobel Prizes and Fields Medals, number of highly cited researchers selected by *Thomson Scientific*, number of articles published in journals of Nature and Science, number of articles indexed in *Science Citation Index - Expanded and Social Sciences Citation Index*, and per capita performance with respect to the size of an institution. Every year, ARWU ranks over 1000 universities and the best 500 get to be published online.

Even though the initial goal of ARWU was to understand the place of Chinese top universities in the world, this study has drawn an attention wave not only from universities but also from governments and public media at a global scale. In 2005, The Economist published a survey on higher education and described ARWU as "the most widely used annual ranking of the world's research universities". Besides this, Burton Bollag, a reporter at Chronicle of Higher Education also wrote that ARWU "is considered the most influential international ranking". Notwithstanding the existence of variations, this ranking though does not allow to change previous conclusions.

Lastly the *QS World University Rankings*®, which is made available annually in September/October, regards currently consider over 2,000 and assesses over 700 universities worldwide and ranks the top 400. There are plans for this work to be broadening not only in terms of the number of institutions scrutinized but also on the detail which is provided to users. This methodology once again relies on six different variables which are put together to build an international ranking of universities: academic reputation from a global survey (40%); the employer reputation from global survey (10%); citations per faculty from SciVerse Scopus (20%), faculty student ratio (20%); proportion of international students (5%) and proportion of international faculty (5%). What changes is the percentage of analysis of each indicator, stressing in this case the weight of internationalization as a measurement vector of excellence.

Different examples will not provide us with better indicators. In the case of the *UK Higher Education Funding Council For England* (HEFCFE) in the Research Excellence Framework, the aim is to maintain the ability of higher education to promote world-leading research by focusing on a wide range of academic disciplines and leading to not only economic growth but also to national well-being and to transmit knowledge to a greater number of people.

In any case, the rankings base themselves on electronic research platforms such as *Thomson Reuters Web of Knowledge SM* (formerly ISI Web of Knowledge) which is currently considered to be the best research platform, aiding researchers to find, examine and share information regarding social sciences, arts, humanities and sciences. One gets access to literature of great use by resorting to this unified platform that puts together a great variety of content and search parameters, with the greater goal of helping in the production of knowledge.

This private agency is consulted by the ranking of ARWU, Times, QS and Webometrics Ranking of World Universities. This last one measures the previously mentioned Web Impact Factor (WIF). The Webometrics mesure the *Size* (the number of pages recovered from four engines: Google, Yahoo, and Bing Search), the *Visibility* (the total number of unique external links received by a site, according to Yahoo Site Explorer), the *Rich Files* (after evaluation of their relevance to academic and publication activities and considering the volume of the different file formats, the following were selected: Adobe Acrobat (pdf), Adobe PostScript (ps), Microsoft Word (.doc) and Microsoft Powerpoint (ppt), and the *Scholar* (the date is a combination of items published between certain years). These data are extracted using Google, Yahoo and Bing.

On the one hand, the information is a mixture of items published between the years of 2006 and 2012 integrated in Google Scholar and the global output (2004/2008) accessed through Scimago SIR. The unit for analysis is considered to be the institutional domain, therefore merely universities and research centers which have an independent web domain are measured. By taking into consideration the recommendations of UNESCO, the directory of institutions includes not only universities, but different higher education institutions as well. The official release was in 2004 and it is updated every 6 months with data collected in both January and July and published in the following month. On the other hand, the European Science Foundation was responsible for the conception of the classification of journals in the field of social sciences in Europe since the year 2000 with the *European Reference Index for the Humanities*.

We shall now examine in a systematic way the various rankings in the following chart (we also include the ISI Webometrics parameters).

ARWU	The Times	Universitas21	QS	ISI Webometrics
(More than 1000 universities are actually ranked by ARWU every year and the best 500 are published on the web)	(in concert with the ranking data - Thomson Reuters; on expert views of 17,500 experienced academics, collected from 137 countries)	(48 countries and territories 20 indicators)	(considers over 2,000 and evaluates over 700 universities in the world, ranking the top 400)	(only universities, research centres and higher education institutions with an independent web domain are considered +/- 20.000 institutions)
Number of staff winning Nobel Prizes and Fields Medals	**Teaching** the learning environment (worth 30 per cent of the overall ranking score)	**Resources** investment by government and private sector	40% - academic reputation	**Size – 20%** Number of pages recovered from the engines: Google, Yahoo, and Bing Search
Number of alumni winning Nobel Prizes and Fields Medals	**Research** Includes volume, income and reputation (worth 30 per cent)	**Output** research and its impact, the production of an educated workforce which meets labour market needs	10% - employer reputation Ratio	**Visibility – 50%** number of unique external links received (inlinks) by a site, according to Yahoo Site Explorer
Number of highly cited researchers selected by Thomson Scientific	**Citations** research influence (worth 30 per cent)	**Connectivity** international networks and collaboration which protects a system against insularity	20% - citations per faculty	**Rich Files – 15%** Adobe Acrobat (.pdf), Adobe postscript (.ps), Microsoft Word (.doc), Microsoft Powerpoint (.ppt)
Number of articles published in journals of Nature and Science	**Industry income** innovation (worth 2.5 per cent)	**Environment** government policy and regulation, diversity and participation opportunities	20% - faculty student	**Scholar – 15%** items published between 2006 and 2010 included in Google Scholar and the global output (2004-2008)
Number of articles indexed in Science Citation Index - Expanded and Social Sciences Citation Index	**International outlook** staff, students and research (worth 7.5 per cent)		5% - Proportion of international students	
Per capita performance with respect to the size of an institution			5% - Proportion of international faculty	

Source: Sarmento, Vargas & Duque, 2012.

Facing this scenario, and as a result of it, those responsible for universities, research centers and institutes of higher education have implemented strong measures in the institutions to develop the parameters and indicators to allow the rise of institutions in the international rankings.

Taking into account that in most cases, the not classified or poorly classified institutions in the rankings don't have the structural ability to change the parameters of geographical and economic size, number of students or conditions for supporting research, having also no means of measuring external impacts of its activity in the field and on innovation, have accentuated the pressure on internationalization, the hunt for a bigger number of students and the policy of institutional citations as a means for positioning themselves in a more immediate and rapid way.

So, the pressure on teachers to publish articles under Thomson Reuters Web of Knowledge SM patterns has reached the point of being ' awarded ' with the replacement of the teaching activity, among other phenomena of teaching downgrading.

The universities' main public widened blindly and teachers pedagogically most reputable are often deprived or deprecated. Competitiveness has created new selection mechanisms and the ultra-competitive approach has distorted the goals. As we stated before, these same goals apparently favour the creation of evaluation mechanisms and their privatization by important multinational corporations capable of shifting the sense of the reform currently taking place in higher education. Finally the performance criteria earn its greater accuracy in time or speed in which universities form their students, produce knowledge or innovation.

However, the pedagogy has specific qualities that are radically strange to the concept of time, which is independent on the excellence of bureaucratic management and accounting management. The *value* of teaching and learning is a complex framework of *obligation* to *ethical practices* that do not overlap with the transmission of scientific knowledge.

Though, much of the current hype in relation to higher education has to do with simple contradiction between the time required to teach and the business logic that privileges the efficient transmission of information.

Instead of autonomy, independence, traditionally attributed to the act of teaching and its consequences, pedagogy can be a relationship, a *network of obligations*, that doesn't

work as an answer but as a question. Teaching as a practice is covered in function of an ethical awareness that belongs to the realm of justice and not of truth.

In conclusion, with Readings, one would say that what matter the most is to rethink the thesis that the university provides a rational community model, a microcosm of the public sphere.

The complaint of an ideal community still exerts some influence, despite its inaccuracy, but we must recognize that the university is not the model of ideal society, but a place where the *impossibility of such models must be thought* – thought-out in practical terms and not ideals.

The university can become a venue, among others, where the matter of *being together can be thought of*, with an urgency that has its origin in the absence of institutional structures – as the Nation-State – which historically served to involve this issue. And, this is undoubtedly a central issue for the thinkers of politics. In reality, the question seems to be whether can *slow and steady win the race?*

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