

Opinion – I'm Science: Every disaster movie starts with scientists being ignored

Bolsonaro is absent from the scene, but his project of destruction continues to terrorize Brazilian science. As we saw in last week's news, the situation would have been severely complicated for the federal universities and research institutes, if there had not been a retreat, and there would have been no way to pay the bills at the end of the year, as well as the scholarships of scientists, resident physicians and students in a dramatic end of the year.

The first measure was the budget blockade of federal universities (the third in 2022). As we know, Brazil has 68 federal universities, distributed throughout the national territory and which carry out a significant part of the research in our country. Therefore, the attack on universities is part of the attack on Science.

Realizing the great movement and great support from society for universities, the MEC announced the return of resources. However, on the same day, the Ministry of Economy tried to withdraw them again. Then backed up once more. Mess or disrespect?

As if the lack of respect for the institutions was not enough, a few hours later the MEC also announced that it would not have the resources to pay CAPES scholarships, as well as the salaries of medical and multiprofessional residents. Now backtrack...

The Transition Working Group in the area of ??Education, coordinated by former Minister José Henrique Paim, has been leading the transition with a strong presence and knowledge of the sector, but instead of dealing with planning the first steps of the future government, it has sought to help to resolve the turmoil that marks the current government in the area. There were four years of repeated news and measures that led to the destruction of Higher Education and Science.

CAPES, an agency linked to the Ministry of Education, is primarily responsible for master's and doctoral scholarships from public and private universities and research institutes. With the announcement of the abrupt withdrawal of its financing, exactly on the days of payments to scholarship holders, fear was installed among those who depend on scholarships and salaries for their subsistence. A question soon arises: why did the government threaten the academic community with this measure at the end of the last year of its mandate?

Would it be the mark of revenge against young and future scientists, after so many cuts in resources, lack of research conditions, pressure from all sides, in addition to the persecution of researchers and scientists?

Despite the retreat, the situation remains dramatic on all sides. The government of Jair Bolsonaro was the one that most cut funds for Education and Science. Institutions have been struggling to pay transportation and food allowances to low-income undergraduates in their Student Assistance programs, and have been confronted with the instability of the scholarship situation for their master's and doctoral students.

It is important to point out that scholarships are essential for the training of new scientists, as we are talking about trained professionals who work exclusively in scientific research. Graduate students are fundamental for the development of projects and without them, Brazilian Science will die.

For this reason, we warned in a recent article about the need to review the values ??of scholarships that have been unchanged for 9 years and at very low values ??for professionals from different areas. Now, in addition to the low values, the threat of late payments.

Brazilian Science has lived through four long years of storms and needs to return to stability. The future depends on the scholarship holders, they will be the ones to lead research, develop science and technology and help the country out of the situation of backwardness in which it finds itself in its economic and social development.

The title phrase of today's text was printed on a poster during a demonstration in São Paulo, against the threat of suspension of scholarship payments. A day of many demonstrations in different locations. With a few words and an image, our young people express how much this government played with ignorance, which is the true promoter of catastrophes.

As our young scientists have shown, we can no longer be patient with the excesses of Bolsonaro and his economic team. We need to occupy a prominent place and avoid the destruction that contempt for Science can generate. It is about putting an end to violence in the treatment of institutions and professionals working on behalf of the country, who were vilified during the pandemic, even though they were protagonists of actions that saved thousands of lives and did not stop for a minute.

End of ignorance. Catastrophe will not take the place of Science.

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