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Opinion – I'm Science: For more Helenas in Science

In the midst of so many complex and difficult news for education and science in our country, this week we had an important moment of celebration and oxygenation, with the entry of the first woman to the presidency of the Brazilian Academy of Science (ABC). This is Helena Nader, a professor at Unifesp's Escola Paulista de Medicina, who has also presided over the Brazilian Society for the Progress of Science (SBPC).

ABC is a century-old institution that has been performing magnificently under the management of Luiz Davidovich, who performed a magnificent and aggregating work as president. Now, in an unprecedented act in its history, the Academy will swear in the first woman to direct it. An emblematic fact that inspires other women and young people in the academic world.

We have already mentioned how women in science experience historical disparities in their workplaces, in opportunities for professional development and advancement, and even more so in achieving leadership roles. That's why it's so important to celebrate Helena Nader's achievement, which also belongs to all of us.

Alongside the celebration, the fact that moments like these are still few and far between. Everyone, especially decision makers, needs to move forward so that women gain greater representation in leadership roles in science, and wherever else they want. Likewise, women in leadership roles must open up and create policies to promote spaces for more women and their capabilities. A movement that requires systemic changes and strategies and practices to recruit, retain and promote women.

In a survey based on data from February 2022 from the Portal da Transparência, researcher Alexsandro Cardoso Carvalho, from SoU_Ciência, showed that there is a great disproportion between men and women in prominent positions in the management of Brazilian universities, considering the level of salary and the status of the position/function they occupy.

?The following chart, which is part of the study that will be published soon, clearly shows that the higher the position/function, the lower the proportion of women:

When talking to Professor Helena Nader, who is also a member of the scientific committee of SoU_Ciência, her tireless struggle, for a long time, for the right of everyone to science and for the appreciation of scientists is evident.

Interestingly, there is an important meeting between his election and the growing trust of public opinion in science and in scientists, according to data from the latest opinion poll carried out by SoU_Ciência and Instituto Idea BigData, published in Folha de SP.

In this research, we see a significant increase in the appreciation of the scientist and science, compared to previous research. Brazil, today, thinks about science, wants to debate science and wants to listen to scientists.

We still have 40% of the population that wants to read scientific articles, which demands greater communication power from scientists with society and from politicians a greater elaboration of public policies for inclusion and expansion of the right to science.

The federal government's encouragement of research and higher education in Brazil, on the other hand, has been regrettable. A context aggravated by budget cuts and the pandemic of the new coronavirus. Research by Sou Ciência also showed that employment and hunger are factors that are of greater concern to young Brazilians than education.

Depending on the direction, in the current political moment, the necessary advances to science and education could be even more compromised, given the last turmoil in the MEC, with scandals about the sale of bibles, illicit schemes involving pastors and mayors with the use of resources from the National Fund for the Development of Education (FNDE) and the departure of another minister. The fifth minister who arrives at the portfolio at the beginning of the fourth year of the Bolsonaro government, an additional element that proves the neglect of management with education.

Our young people deserve a future and it is urgent to work to offer them different possibilities for personal and social growth through quality, public and secular education.

?Universities that train qualified professionals so that we have new discoveries, advances, development, more diversity and equality in all spaces. So that we have more Helenas occupying strategic and prominent positions in science.

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