

Opinion – Sou Ciência: Darcy Ribeiro's “Necessary University” emerges in the pandemic

Darcy Ribeiro, who would be 100 years old in 2022, had proposed in the 1960s a program for the “Necessary University” in Brazil, published in a book of the same name. There were 55 proposals, synthetic and direct, that constituted the fundamental basis of the University Reform interrupted by the 1964 coup. The anthropologist and educator, who had been Minister of Education and at the time of the coup occupied the Civil House, had been deposed as Jango. But, 60 years later, the pandemic caused the Necessary University imagined by that generation to reemerge.

Even without government support, suffering ideological attacks and successive budget cuts, the public system of higher education, science and technology acted in the defense of life and Brazilian society in an exemplary way, in the most diverse areas of knowledge and regions of the country, as a civilizing force. in the face of barbarism and necropolitics.

Our work in the fight against the pandemic followed some of the most important principles of the “Universidade Necessária” program: a) commitment to the Brazilian people; b) solving problems that affect the country; c) social responsibility in the use of resources; c) communication with society; d) the transformation of knowledge into public service.

Centro SoU_Ciência, in partnership with Andifes (National Association of Directors of Federal Educational Institutions) mapped more than a thousand actions from 39 federal universities during two years of pandemic and produced a multimedia panel telling the story of those who were on the side of life in these dark years. A mapping done in collaboration with the directions of universities and their committees to deal with the pandemic, which sent us numerous data for analysis and public presentation.

The panel, launched last Wednesday, presents a summary of the main actions carried out, including experimental and clinical research, application of tests, vaccine and drug development, epidemiological studies, performance in the care and services of university hospitals and clinics, in the training of professionals and guidance from public managers and production of socio-economic and environmental studies.

The platform also records the development of software and new equipment for monitoring the pandemic, production of abundant and plural communication material, human rights initiative against domestic violence, in support of basic education and vulnerable populations, including, mainly, , the fight against hunger.

With a light and friendly language, the panel presents the actions organized by themes or by universities, and a set of case studies narrating good practices, with texts, infographics and videos. During the second half of 2022, more case studies and videos will be included, as well as the analysis of the production of the almost 10 thousand scientific articles with Brazilian authors on Covid-19. We are still in talks to include state universities and public research institutes such as Fiocruz and Butantan, with their specificities.

The mobilization of public universities, students, technical professors and scientists was and continues to be an impressive reaction to obscurantism. In these years, science began to be recognized in Brazil as an active and even political force in the defense of citizenship. No wonder we were one of the main targets of attacks by the forces of backwardness, with systematic budget cuts and victims of ideological warfare with delusional accusations about the university environment.

The Universities in Defense of Life platform is a source of information for the population and strengthens the defense of public higher education institutions. It will serve as a record for future historians, who will be able to distinguish who was on the side of life or on the side of death in this tragic crossroads that we live.

The performance of public universities in defense of the Brazilian people is a learning experience that will go down in the history of the country and, in particular, will mark the life story of our students – who have resumed, in full adversity, the ideal of a necessary University for the people. Brazilian. With commitment and lucidity, in these years we have trained young citizens and professionals who have already made and will make a difference in the reconstruction and reinvention of our country so urgently.

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