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Opinion – Sou Ciência: Voter, did you read it before voting?

The reading and comparison of Government Programs, even more in presidential campaigns, should be an important task for every citizen interested in a conscious and informed vote. And, once elected, the new government should be held accountable by society as a whole for what it promised to accomplish. But, unfortunately, the programs are generally letters of intent, without further details or measurable goals – and the voter, in the end, does not even read or when he does, he does not guide his vote by what is written.

We know that the current electoral process is guided by more basic commitments to defending the rule of law, democracy and guaranteeing the fundamental right to life (health care and the fight against hunger and poverty). However, we will not fail to make a comparative analysis between the programs of the four main candidates for the areas of higher education, science, technology and innovation (ES and CTI).

In a broader perspective, all Programs, with the exception of the candidate for reelection, recognize the accumulated crises of recent years, deepened by the catastrophic federal management in the face of the pandemic, and propose general guidelines for national reconstruction and resumption of development (with greater or less state participation), with social and environmental justice, and a strong emphasis on public education at all levels.

We present the complete comparative picture on our website, with the following topics compared between the candidates' proposals: Strategic Vision in ES and CTI; National CTI System and National Education Plan (PNE); Financing of SE and CTI; ES, CTI and Development; Public Policies and Guarantee of Rights; Autonomy and Expansion; Inclusion, quotas and permanence; Articulation with Basic Education and Teacher Training; Regulation of Private Higher Education. Here we bring the highlights.

All candidates associate ES and CTI with their strategies and development matrices – which are undoubtedly different (a subject that we do not intend to discuss in this text). It is worth celebrating that everyone recognizes that without strong and quality ES and CTI (some with an emphasis on the public sector, others on the private sector), we will not get out of the current quagmire. Recent learnings in the pandemic with the science-society-public policy connection have been great and no program has left the topic out or in a secondary position.

With the exception of the current president, the three programs link ES and CTI to the reconstruction of the country, to a National Project, with sovereignty, while Bolsonaro's program speaks only of "alignment with market demands" and a "necessary pragmatism" to import technology foreign. Among the four candidates, the only one to remember in his program of the National CTI System and the National Education Plan was Lula, who proposed "retaking the goals and reversing the dismantling".

As for the crucial issue of Financing, once again the current president's program is at odds with the others. While Lula talks about "reinvesting from daycare to graduate school and recomposing the development systems, funds and agencies"; Ciro in "Public Sector Recovering the Capacity to Fund Public Policies" Including Higher Education and CTI; Simone in "ensuring the full execution of the funds, without contingency or cuts"; Bolsonaro recognizes that they are "reviewing expenses and untying expenses" (read, using Education and CTI funds for other purposes) and that the only way is to "increase private resources in CTI".

In relation to the economy, the proposals bring a bit of illusion in promises of quickly connecting to the "4.0 Revolution", achieving protagonism in the "knowledge economy", prioritizing "artificial intelligence" and encouraging many "startups" with "innovative entrepreneurship" . But how to face the unemployment of 10 million Brazilians and 33 million people going hungry, how to overcome the lack of basic sanitation that puts us in the 112th position in an international survey? None of the programs linked universities to facing these and other current or historical ills, thinking about technoscience from the problems that most affect the people, giving them protagonism and self-management in solidarity economy networks and social technologies. More than cutting-edge science, expensive and with limited benefits, Brazil needs public science that reaches the daily life of 90% of the population, which allows the fight against inequalities and the guarantee of quality of life for all.

Inclusion, quotas and permanence policies were the subject of three programs, again with the exception of the current president. Lula, Ciro and Simone propose to continue or even expand affirmative policies. The Tebet Program, probably at the request of his deputy, is the one that most details inclusive actions, for different segments and at various levels.

On pedagogical autonomy and freedom of thought and research, a topic dear to universities, even more so in times of "School without Party" and persecution, only Lula mentions the topic. In the connection with Basic Education, there is little

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detail, but all guarantee policies for the training and continued qualification of teachers and school managers.

Finally, a blind spot for everyone: nobody talks about regulation or qualification of Private Higher Education, which today concentrates 78% of enrollments. As we have already discussed in texts here on the Blog, including the vertiginous growth of Distance Learning (EAD), and in the Private Sector Expansion Panel, this is a key theme, which involves the definition of goals and strategies for the segment that understands education as a commodity, and also for better quality faith-based or community universities. The only mention of FIES, due to student debts to be renegotiated, is made by Ciro. The PT, which during its government expanded FIES to such an extent that it became unsustainable, did not mention anything about the program, placing more emphasis on resuming the goals of the National Education Plan (PNE).

We wish you all a great election this Sunday, the exercise of citizenship, democracy and the choice of the best for Brazil. The challenges of national reconstruction are numerous and we cannot sleep on point. Science and democracy, for life and equity.

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