

The Program to Support Restructuring and Expansion Plans of Federal Universities (REUNI): articulations with the new public management*¹

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Abstract

The article analyzes the institutional policies of the UFSCar and their repercussions in the evaluation and management practices based on the current processes of reconfiguration of the evaluation and regulation policies and procedures of Brazilian higher education, in the context of the *Program of Support for Restructuring and Expansion Plans of Federal Universities* (Reuni). From a documental study and semi-structured interviews with institutional agents, it takes as object of study the control mechanisms, having as categories and subcategories: contractualization procedures (definition of goals); institutional policies (actors: roles and responsibilities; management actions); and performativity (regulatory processes; distance control; evaluation processes; and accountability). The results indicate that, despite the convenience of UFSCar's adherence to Reuni, due to the compatibility

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of the objectives of expansion and the managerial model adopted, the program ended up intensifying mechanisms of the New Public Management that were already present in the management of the university. This had a direct impact on the management of the institution: the internal bureaucracy incorporated external control mechanisms, meeting the demand for distance control, generated new demands and emphases, creating new administrative problems, and making explicit some of the university's deficiencies from its expansion process through Reuni.

Keywords

New public management - Reuni - Administration of higher education.

Introduction

The concern with administration and public management reform began in the first half of the twentieth century, but it was only at the end of this period that the term New Public Management emerged (TOONEN, 2010), often named in Brazil as Managerial Administration. For Peters and Pierre (2010), such concept brought fundamental changes to the role of the public manager as a manager. According to Paula (2005), the management culture relates to an administration in which managers can solve problems, increase efficiency, effectiveness, and productivity, giving visibility to decentralizations.

Another important point is that, if on the one hand, this conception tends to value the ideas of efficiency and effectiveness in the public sector, on the other hand, it tends to undervalue both the specificities of the public nature of management in government, and the need to reflect on the values of the public sector, which are not based on the search for economic efficiency. It also emphasizes the idea of partnerships with the private and third sectors to achieve its goals. Although these partnerships can increase the effectiveness and legitimacy of government, they also present problems related to control and accountability.

Such thoughts were incorporated into public management in Brazil as of the 1990s and resulted in two rationales: the idea of the minimal State and the idea of combating civil servants who received high salaries, called at the time "marajás" (maharajas). Thus;

[...] there was the dismantling of various sectors and public policies, in addition to the reduction of essential state activities. As the civil servant was transformed into the scapegoat for national problems, a sense of distrust of Brazilian public administration spread. (ABRUCIO, 2010, p. 539).

The State Reform began to be advocated by various sectors of society that aspired for a restructuring of public organizations, based on an economic rationality and "[...] concepts, paradigms, values, and ideas traditionally applied to the market. (COSTA; CUNHA, 2012, p. 2).

Azevedo (2016) states that the New Public Management induces the consolidation of evaluation indicators based on international rankings that establish the standard of quality expected in the Brazilian educational field.

This process of educational evaluation intensified in the 1990s. Adrião and Peroni (2005) point to a movement, at first sight paradoxical, of decentralization of the State's actions, concomitantly with the centralization of other actions. Thus, while actions about evaluation and curriculum, for example, are centralized, policy execution actions are decentralized to the local level, that is, control mechanisms are created to influence and determine general and structuring issues, delegating autonomy to institutions to execute them. Lima (2012) points out the contradictions of this discourse in the field of educational evaluation, highlighting that evaluation is pointed out as a necessity to give greater autonomy to educational institutions. A model of state control of the results done a posteriori replacing the process control.

The same process of central control was identified by Afonso (1999) in the 1980's/90's at the international level, when he highlights that the new policies

[...] were marked by a singularity of their own: a combination of the defense of free economy, of liberal tradition, with the defense of the state authority, of conservative tradition. At the base of this bipolarity, non-interventionist and decentralizing decisions coexisted with highly centralizing and interventionist ones, revealing the ambiguity inherent to this political articulation. (AFONSO, 1999, p. 141).

In this sense, it is considered that this process is one of the catalysts of other elements of transformation in the systems. Sá (2009) states that evaluation has served as a form of control over what is worked in educational institutions, a control over the final product and not the process. This is an international trend, configured, for example, in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), which has great influence on public educational policies in several countries, which are aligned to the assumptions of New Public Management. (LEMOS, 2014).

Thus, the regulation, classification, and contemplation of the quality of education in developed countries are used as models for comparison of global educational "good practices" that do not take into account the stage of education in Brazil and resort to economic theories linked to organization and performance, which indicates that the "good practices" compared are inspired by competition and the mercantile conception of education. Moreover, for Afonso (2007), such external evaluations ignore the local or regional reality and overvalue quantitative indicators, without considering the different educational contexts and other public policies aimed at education.

In Brazil, the application of the *New Public Management precepts can be observed in the Program of Support to Restructuring and Expansion Plans of Federal Universities*, the Reuni, established in 2007 by Decree No. 6096 (BRASIL, 2007). Reuni was a policy of reformulation and expansion of higher education that did not occur by legal determination, but through a contract with the Federal Institutions of Higher Education (FIHE). In other words, the adhesion to the program and the elaboration of the action plan were voluntary

actions of the Institution. In the contractualization, the Ministry of Education (MEC) defined the objectives and general goals for the FIHE that, in turn, presented their own operationalization proposals (RAMOS; ROTHEN; FERNANDES, 2020).

Adherence to Reuni and its funding was linked to the university's acceptance of its double objective of reformulation and expansion. The reformulation consisted in the adherence of universities to the principles of the New Public Management the elaboration of a strategic plan and the administration by indicators - and to the model of the New University⁴ - especially, the restructuring of undergraduate education.

The research The New Public Management and the reconfiguration of the evaluation of higher education: the case of UFSCar, already completed, served as a basis for this article, which has as its theme the New Public Management (NPM) in higher education institutions, as an instrument that aims at performativity - whose centrality is in the regulation and evaluation of performance - electing the Federal University of São Carlos (UFSCar) as a representative institution for the study. Facing such a theme, this article aims to analyze the institutional policies of the UFSCar and their repercussions in the evaluation and management practices, based on the current processes of reconfiguration of the evaluation and regulation policies and procedures of Brazilian higher education, as well as their relationship with the means of state supervision in the context of Reuni. To analyze this context, the mechanisms of control were taken as an object of study, with reference to performativity.

Documentary analysis and semi-structured interviews were adopted as methodological procedures, which were conducted between the months of May and August 2019, with nine institutional agents responsible for the bodies in charge of the production and organization of performativity indicators, as well as leaders in charge of the implementation of management contracts in the context of Reuni. As provided for in the Informed Consent Form (ICF), the interviewees had their names omitted in the analyses, as per the project approved by the Research Ethics Committee at Plataforma Brazil (Opinion Number: 2.708.094).

The documentary research regarding the implementation of Reuni at UFSCar was based on the materials published by the three internal university bodies that produce and organize performativity indicators: the General Secretariat of Institutional Planning and Development (SIPD), the Own Evaluation Commission (OEC), and the Internal Audit (AudIn), in addition to the material available on the Reuni page on the UFSCar website. (UFSCar, 2004, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011a, 2011b, 2012, 2013a, 2013b, 2014, 2016, 2017, 2018).

After collecting and selecting the material, the data were organized into the following categories and subcategories: contractualization procedures (goal setting); institutional policies (actors: roles and responsibilities; management actions); and performativity (regulatory processes; distance control; evaluation processes; accountability), which highlight the results of the analysis presented below.

4- Universidade Nova: The Universidade Nova project was launched in 2007, almost concomitantly with Reuni, having as creator the former rector of the Federal University of Bahia, Naomar Almeida. This project consisted in the consolidation of the New Curricular Architecture, the need for Basic Cycles in undergraduate courses. (SILVEIRA, 2015).

Contracting procedures

The Contracting Procedures concern the understanding of the relationship between the State and one of its agencies for the realization of a State action which, in the specific case of Reuni, is the restructuring and expansion of higher education. According to Araújo and Pinheiro (2010, p. 656), “the logic of the contract is a logic focused on the result to be achieved,” based on a search for “rationality, efficiency and effectiveness to public spending.

The idea or the perception of the realization of a contractualization between the state and the university, consequently of the adherence of managerial practices, was not present in the institutional documents of accountability of the university. In the institutional documents analyzed, the main reference on contractualization between the MEC and UFSCar was found in the material on the preparation of contracts and on the implementation of Reuni, which can be found on the Institution’s page dedicated to the Program.

The establishment of a contract with a managerial focus presupposes the establishment of objectives or goals to be achieved by the contracted party. In the analysis of the institutional documents we found, for the contract between UFSCar and the MEC, two procedures for establishing goals. In the first, meeting the demands of the MEC, the global goals of Reuni to be achieved by the university in the agreement signed are repeated. In the second, they are found in the electronic form, in which the university determines, for each of the items of the proposal, the goals and indicators for the monitoring of its execution.

The interviewees pointed out that the preparation of UFSCar’s proposal to join Reuni was decided in the University Council (ConsUni). A committee was created to prepare the proposal, formed by the vice-directors of the university centers. Besides this commission, there was a team composed of five institutional agents. The work done by the Vice-Directors’ Commission and the Rector’s Office team was parallel. The Commission formed by the Vice-Directors had as its main role to negotiate with the Departments the proposal that would be forwarded. The discussion was how each Center, and more specifically each Department, would participate in the Reuni proposal.

It is worth mentioning that the starting point of the discussion for the elaboration of the proposal began with the issue of trust among the agents that negotiated it. In the interviews, it was observed that the university was not confident that the federal government would deliver what it was promising because, in the past, several times, MEC projects had their execution interrupted by the Ministry itself. This history led many of the institutional agents to distrust the proposal and fear that the same thing could happen. Once the initial distrust was overcome, the next stage was the interpretation of what could or could not be done. The elaboration of the proposal was fragmented, each Center of the University elaborated the way it would participate in Reuni.

The contract between UFSCar and the MEC implies in the discussion of university autonomy and the interference of the State in defining its directions.

The Program of Support for Plans of Restructuring and Expansion of Federal Universities was configured, as seen, in a policy of reformulation and expansion of higher education effected through a Contract between the MEC and each IFE. We note that, although the process of

adherence to the Program was voluntary by the IFE, MEC's action in the university through Reuni was invasive, reaching the university autonomy by demanding from the institution an action proposal in dimensions, objectives, and procedures previously detailed and defined by MEC, and that would serve as a basis for future elaboration of the Contract between the instances. (RAMOS; ROTHEN; FERNANDES, 2020, p. 20).

In the document analysis and in the interviews, it was observed that the university did not feel its autonomy was curtailed, because, as stated by Interviewee 5:

[...] we never had that autonomy. So, it didn't change. We kept fighting for autonomy, fighting for autonomy, to have more didactic and scientific autonomy. We never had financial autonomy. Our budget was already tied up.

The restructuring requirements did not contradict the principles of the university, which, for one thing, had already adhered to a managerial vision in its administrative practice.

We didn't need to do more, because we were already doing it, so when the ministry talked about planning, we already had planning. He talked about institutional development, we already had the PDI [Institutional Development Plan] ready, we delivered it to the ministry. So, UFSCar was one of the few universities that already had these management instruments. And the IDP was a ten-year plan (Interviewee 5).

In this sense, it was understood that Reuni was an expansion policy that met the university's old aspirations:

[...] it [the expansion] was already within the principles, within the guidelines or within the Institutional Development Plan (IDP) of the university, which was to expand free public education with quality. So, there wasn't much difficulty." (Interviewee 3).

When analyzing the IDP/UFSCar-2004, it was noticed a convergence, similarity, or alignment of this document with the Reuni guidelines (RAMOS; SILVEIRA; MARTINS, 2020). In this sense, the adhesion to the Program established an adhesion contract for the materialization of UFSCar's expansion policies, evaluated in the early 2000s. It is important to emphasize that the analyzed IDPs, both the one from 2004 that is prior to Reuni and the one from 2013 that is posterior, did not make direct mentions to the Reuni program, only their strategies aligned with the proposal in 2007 and our analyses highlighted that there were convergences and conveniences on the part of UFSCar in joining Reuni.

The view that the Reuni proposal would be aligned with what the university was already doing became noticeably clear in the analysis of the electronic form filled out with the university's proposal. In most of the form, the HEI, when diagnosing its situation, presents the idea that it already performs activities requested in the form and that its goal was to expand what it already did. For example, in the dimension "Occupation of Vacant

Positions”, in its diagnosis, the HEI states that it had policies to fill vacant positions generated by dropouts and that its goal was to “increase the number of vacancies made available for external transfers” (UFSCar, 2007, p. 10), in addition to conducting studies to identify the cause of dropouts in courses in which they are more frequent.

Institutional policies

Institutional Policies refer to the set of proposals of the institution aimed at its defined purposes, including the themes actors and management actions. As Araújo and Pinheiro (2010, p. 665) note, Reuni, besides being responsible for the expansion of federal educational institutions, also promoted “their internal restructuring, which directly impacts the decision-making model, as it has the ability to redefine the power of traditional actors”.

Reuni was shown as a MEC action to meet an old demand from Brazilian Federal universities, the expansion and democratization of higher education, and that had long been present in the discussion agendas of the National Association of Directors of Federal Institutions of Higher Education (Andifes). One can say, therefore, as observed in the speech of Interviewee 5, that Andifes, as an external agent to the MEC, would have indirectly contributed to the creation of Reuni by bringing to the Ministry such demand, which materialized initially through the creation of the Program for the Interiorization of Universities and later Reuni, envisioned by federal universities as “an ‘invitation’ to restructuring and expansion, with a seductive appeal”, for the resources linked to it (LÉDA; MANCEBO, 2009, p. 54). Not coincidentally, among the guidelines of Reuni were the expansion of the supply of public higher education, with increased vacancies for admission, especially in the evening period; the reduction of dropout rates and the occupation of vacancies; and the social commitment of the institution (student assistance programs, as well as inclusion policies and university extension). (BRAZIL, 2007).

In the case of UFSCar, it can be said that its link with Reuni occurred because it was presented as an essential factor for the consolidation and implementation of the goals set out since 2004 in its PDI (UFSCar, 2004), since mechanisms for expansion and democratization were already foreseen in it. This PDI showed itself, in the period, as a differential of the UFSCar in relation to other federal universities regarding planning (Interviewee 5), considering that, since the 1992-1996 management (UFSCar, 2013b), the university was guided by a strategic planning model (Interviewee 9). Thus, the use of indicators (Interviewee 5) had the managerial management model as the reason for this link. The PDI/UFSCar-2004 had among its guidelines the idea of training, expansion, access, and permanence, as well as the organization and management of the university, from the use of goals, actions, and indicators (UFSCar, 2008).

The UFSCar adherence to Reuni, in 2008, was placed as a political action of convenience of the university management to access funds in order to consolidate the goals of PDI/UFSCar-2004 (RAMOS; SILVEIRA; MARTINS, 2020), being the Program interpreted, according to Interviewee 1, by part of the UFSCar community, as the only way to expand and democratize higher education, at that time. Nevertheless, the interviewees pointed out the opposition of the student movement, which feared the decrease in the

quality of education with the expansion of the university via Reuni, and the resistance of some faculty members, who were concerned about the non-fulfillment of promises made by the MEC.

Interviewee 2 points out what was previously stated that the initial adhesion to the Program occurred through the ConsUni's action and, in parallel, the team from the Dean of Administration (ProAd) had the role of understanding the Program, and each center and its departments participated in the subsequent discussions. The Planning Secretariat and ProAd followed up on the statistical part of the Program and its impacts on the university, the latter also acting on the budgetary part. The Secretariat of Administration, in turn, was responsible for including the statistical data in a formula that had been internally determined (Interviewee 2). The UFSCar Chancellor's Office acted in the renegotiation with the Federal Government on issues arising from the Reuni implementation process at the university (Interviewee 6).

In this implementation process, several convergences between UFSCar's management policy and that provided for in Reuni can be highlighted, notable in the 2007 and 2008 activity reports (UFSCar, 2008; 2009), as well as Reuni's strategic role in consolidating the goals of PDI/UFSCar-2004, which were around The planned and sustainable expansion of the number of vacancies and undergraduate, graduate and extension courses; the prioritization of the expansion of night courses; the development of support actions for the expansion of opportunities for access and permanence of students, in order to confront social exclusion; the promotion of integration between graduate and undergraduate courses; among others. (UFSCar, 2008).

However, as observed in the documents surveyed and in the interviews conducted, despite the convenience of the UFSCar adherence to Reuni, the aforementioned Program ended up having an impact on the institution, including because it occurred in parallel with the affirmative action policies launched by the MEC in the same period, as emphasized by Interviewee 8, requiring an early review of the PDI/UFSCar-2004 by the university, as pointed out by Interviewees 7 and 9, in order to intensify regulatory actions and policies at UFSCar, with a view to fulfilling the contract of adherence to Reuni (BRASIL, 2008), signed with the Ministry in a context of precarious budget.

For such reason, the new UFSCar PDI of 2013 (UFSCar, 2014) brought other guidelines for the institution to operate in the implementation of Reuni, as well as intensify actions present in the PDI/UFSCar-2004, focusing on what the university would be able to operationalize, given the resources of the Program for this purpose. Therefore, some interpret that the UFSCar IDP was not "corrupted" by Reuni, but helped in its implementation (Interviewee 7), since it supposedly did not change the UFSCar management model, but brought new challenges on account of the expansion (Interviewee 2) - despite the parallel signaling of the increased bureaucracy of internal and external accountability by the university, due to Reuni (Interviewees 2 and 8).

It is understood, therefore, that the indicators from Reuni did not change the internal policy of the UFSCar, being left under the responsibility of the Implementation Commission of the Program - notably the teacher/student ratio -, being placed as targets to be achieved, but not as policy, since the university, according to Interviewee 7, was already working with

its indicators and with a management model. Not by chance, because of annual external audits conducted by the Public Ministry, the Federal Audit Court (FAC) and the Office of the Comptroller General (OCG), motivated by different factors, the UFSCar itself created an internal audit area, hiring two auditors (Interviewee 5).

Within the decisions for the operationalization of Reuni, UFSCar defined that the resources would be internally distributed, considering the number of students, as well as the number of technical-administrative employees in each department (Interviewee 3). In the specific case of the expansion policy, UFSCar made a conservative choice and its departments, in general, according to Interviewee 7, opted to increase the number of openings in existing courses and to create courses in traditional areas of the university.

In this context of expansion, the emphasis brought by Reuni in the new PDI/UFSCar-2013 was on aspects concerning the pedagogical, curricular, and social actions of the university as a strategic action to reduce the dropout rates, considering the new public of the institution, who joined by Reuni and by the affirmative action policies. (RAMOS; SILVEIRA; MARTINS, 2020).

According to Interviewee 7, UFSCar, in compliance with the Ministry's regulations, defined that the vacancies for hiring professionals received from Reuni would be used only for this Program, and not for replacement of retirements. As a result, some departments were left with a quantitative deficit of professors, especially those from new departments, since the older ones, in a way, already had enough professors to meet the demand. In this sense, it was believed that the impact was greater on the graduate courses, especially in the case of new departments that did not have such programs yet, since Reuni was aimed only at undergraduate courses.

Thus, it can be considered that, although the internal management of UFSCar has not been radically changed by Reuni, the expansion process inaugurated by this Program has generated many administrative adversities. For Interviewee 8, one of the most important difficulties highlighted was related to his "unpreparedness" in face of the new amount of works and jobs demanded by the expansion. It is also understood that there were failures in long term planning in the use of Reuni funds by the UFSCar centers, which ended up using them for the works of the first stage, making the resources scarce for later demands. Another point is that the university opted to invest more in construction than in personnel, worsening the deficit of vacancies that already existed at UFSCar.

In view of the difficulties pointed out, it was understood, according to Interviewee 3, that the university management areas began to organize themselves in a "more professional manner", with the creation, within the Dean of Administration (ProAd), of "a structure" to conduct the bidding required for the expansion of the university. In this sense, the action of holding "risk management courses" by UFSCar is also noteworthy, considering the expansion of its managerial responsibility.

Interviewee 3 emphasized that the increase in administrative processes implied the need to increase the number of employees, focusing more on the procurement sector, which had become "a sensitive area" due to the expansion. According to the Activity Report 2010 (UFSCar, 2011a), despite the hiring of new servers from 2006 to 2010, such contracts were not enough to meet the demands of the expansion, considering that the

implementation of courses created within the Reuni program also generated a lot of work in other areas, such as: process of creation and analysis of course projects, approval of new courses, changes in existing ones, data entry into computerized systems at the university, etc. This has also meant that these systems have progressively required more maintenance and improvement interventions to adapt them to the new needs.

These factors explain why the UFSCar, in the name of a managerial policy, has subsequently expanded its bureaucratic policy, overloading itself with procedures and focusing more on medium actions to the detriment of final actions (Interviewees 2 and 8). Therefore, the number of employees of the end activities was reduced, and the number of employees of the middle activities was overloaded, to meet a bureaucracy generated by the very control mechanisms resulting from the managerial management used (Interviewee 2), despite the computerization of procedures (Interviewee 3). This computerization proved to be insufficient in view of the large expansion process, since the technical and administrative procedures remained in the dependence of employees to be conducted, installing at UFSCar a large volume of managerial adversities for the local administration. For this reason, according to the 2012 Activities Report (UFSCar, 2013a), the university hired interns with intermediate or higher education as a strategy for action on the problem.

This revealed that, despite the achievements attributed to Reuni in the interviews and documents analyzed, it is evident that these were not sufficiently supported in financial terms by the MEC, in view of the expansion materialized. According to the 2009 *Activities Report* (UFSCar, 2010), despite the Reuni project at UFSCar having been of great importance for the expansion of undergraduate and graduate studies, “the resources agreed upon proved insufficient for the execution in the entire horizon foreseen for the project”. (UFSCar, 2018, p. 37).

Thus, despite the convenience of adherence to Reuni by UFSCar, because of the links arising from the compatibility of objectives and the management model adopted, the referred Program ended up having great impact on the management of the Institution by generating new demands and emphases, creating other administrative problems, and making explicit some deficiencies of the university from its expansion process by Reuni.

Performativity

Considering that the New Public Management (NPM) in higher education institutions was understood as an instrument aimed at performativity, aiming at the regulation and evaluation of performance, it was sought to understand in the documents and in the reports of the agents interviewed, what were the elements that relate to performance, the goals expected of the subjects involved and the institutional visibility from performance indicators and inputs. Ball (2002, p. 8) points out that performative culture “involves the use of a combination of devolution, goals, and incentives to effect institutional replanning.”

Among the documents analyzed, the management reports offered greater breadth of data, organized in several tables with the main performance indicators of the Federal University of São Carlos Foundation (FUFSCar), requested by the TCU. The indicators

referred to undergraduate, graduate, extension, number of servers, number of students, physical area built and indicators from the Forum of Pro-Rectors for Planning and Administration (FORPLAD/TCU). These indicators allowed us to visualize the rapid and expressive growth of the university because of Reuni, which resulted in a larger number of courses and vacancies, hiring of technical-administrative and teaching staff.

According to the agents interviewed, the performance indicators at the university were fundamental in the implementation of Reuni, being widely discussed. As pointed out by Interviewee 2, Reuni was a period that “greatly expanded the university [...], greatly increased the number of courses, number of students,” which triggered profound institutional changes. Reuni had “certain milestones, certain productivity requirements,” which involved the “teacher/student ratio, number of students that had to grow within the university, in undergraduate studies.” (Interviewee 1). In this sense, the implementation of Reuni at UFSCar resulted in significant hiring of teachers, although some departments still have a quantitative deficit of teachers, as mentioned above, especially the courses in new departments, which could not compose enough teachers to meet the new demand.

A performance indicator that worries the interviewees at UFSCar is the low number of technical-administrative (TA) employees hired, which turned out to be insufficient to meet the new demands resulting from the expansion. There is an imbalance in the growth of the number of TA in relation to the number of teachers in the institution. This concern was also pointed out in all the management reports of the university during the Reuni period, being pointed out as the major problem of the university, including for the proper resolution of the daily problems of accountability. However, according to Interviewees 1 and 5, the number of administrative technicians at UFSCar has always been exceptionally low. As emphasized by Interviewee 5, “we had an extremely lean staff, our ratio of the number of administrative technicians compared to teachers has always been a small ratio compared to large universities”. In this sense, Reuni would have improved this ratio, but did not solve the problem that remains until today at the university.

Another aspect highlighted in the interviews refers to UFSCar’s quality indicators. The most significant element, in the perception of the institutional agents, concerns the course success rate, that is, the ratio between student entry and exit. This indicator of the institution’s success was the main point of evaluation and collection by MEC regarding the resources employed by Reuni. The institution’s contract with MEC foresaw an increase in the student success rate to 90%, thus reducing the university’s dropout levels.

When investigating the performativity of a public university, one of the indicators that has been gaining greater visibility, about research, are the partnerships that are established by initiatives of the researchers themselves or through links to research groups and accreditations of professors from other universities in graduate programs. Partnerships are also consolidated through national and international cooperation agreements. In 2012, UFSCar approved 23 cooperation agreements with national and international institutions that resulted in the registration of patents, computer programs, trademarks, and technology transfer (UFSCar, 2013b, p. 29). Thus, it is possible to state that the different indicators presented in the reports and in the interviewees’ statements

show the expansion of UFSCar from the Reuni implementation period, explaining its performance over the years.

The analysis of the performativity issue also involves understanding the regulatory processes that permeate universities, focusing on the regulations that guide the actions to be developed by the institution. The interviews, as well as the management reports of UFSCar showed elements of external regulation by the TCU and internal regulation of UFSCar by AudIn.

In the interviews it was possible to note the relative weight of the legal guidelines that regulate the actions in the institution. According to Interviewee 2, the external demands

[...] almost always come as a legal force, [...] sometimes there is a law, a decree that regulates, as is the case of the law of access to information, which was implemented, sometimes it comes through another type of normative instruction, more lenient, but anyway there is a demand, and then the university takes a little while, because it has to do all this internal study, this adaptation, but it ends up having to meet it.

However, it was observed that the external regulatory processes and their control mechanisms were not perceived in the same way by the university managers. When UFSCar started implementing Reuni, in 2007, there was no information about external control. Managers knew only that they needed to fill the university data in the Integrated System of Monitoring, Execution and Control of the Ministry of Education (SMECM) for further verification of the expansion progress. And, as pointed out by Interviewee 3, the external control bodies were not very present either, starting to improve their structure as of 2002, which corroborates the statement of Interviewee 6, who believes that Reuni was a proposal for expansion, because there were indicators to guide, but this was not felt as a charge.

Another aspect to be considered in understanding the performativity of higher education institutions refers to the distance control, which presents mechanisms from both internal management and external management to UFSCar. The reports analyzed indicated that the registration of the information related to the performance of the actions of the MEC, and its units was done in SMECM. One of the institution's concerns was to show that the indicators used came from reliable and auditable sources, such as the following computerized systems: ProgradWeb; Nexos; Pluriannual Plan; Integrated Platform for Management of the FIHE; e-MEC; CAPES Collection; Census of Higher Education; PingFIHE; Intern Control Service (SerCE); and e-Contas.

According to the interviewed agents, before Reuni there was not an automated accountability system at UFSCar, everything was sent on paper. From the Reuni period on, the accountability system started to be registered in a virtual environment, the SIMEC, in specific and detailed topics. The implementation of such control was decided by the centers and the rectory, which, in turn, created a commission to provide this data. According to Interviewee 2, the use of computerized systems of internal and external control by the university was a result of the growth of the institution itself, of the number of students, but the big problem that still arises and has not been solved is the integration of all systems.

The understanding of the performativity of the institution can also be verified in the institutional evaluation procedures developed at UFSCar in the context of its adhesion to Reuni. This is because

[...] because it is a program with a defined time for its existence and in the implementation phase, it opens a huge range of questions about its ability to substantively change the bureaucratic culture of the institutions and consolidate, in its place, a culture of results. (ARAÚJO; PINHEIRO, 2010, p. 665).

However, prior to this period, Interviewee 3 points out that UFSCar began systematizing its strategies and goals in the context of the Brazilian Universities Evaluation Program (BUEP) in 1993. Nevertheless, UFSCar did not have an expert in assessment as part of the team at the Dean of Undergraduate Studies (ProGrad), despite this, the process was set in motion, with the limitation of the absence of this expert figure, “it is very different if you have someone from the area, but the process was already halfway started and that’s how it was” (Interviewee 3). On the other hand, Interviewee 2 highlights the joint work of the Special Evaluation Committee (SEC) with the General Secretariat of Planning and Institutional Development (SPDI) to monitor the expansion of the university after 2004, when the SEC was established.

This joint work was detailed in management reports and annual activity reports prepared by SPDI. The management reports showed an institutional evaluation process focused on three aspects: the internal control structure of the Jurisdiction Unit (JU), environmental management and sustainable bidding, and the UJ’s Information Technology (IT) management. The evaluation of internal controls used as a parameter the information extracted by the team members of the pro-rectories, secretariats, and advisory offices, together with the internal audit unit of the UFSCar. (UFSCar, 2012). In a framework of institutional assessment regarding environmental management and sustainable bidding it is observed that the UFSCar has established guidelines with sustainable criteria for the acquisition of materials and equipment. (UFSCar, 2011b). Regarding the IT Management, the evaluation process used a questionnaire answered by the manager of the IT Unit or by the teams of each specific area. (UFSCar, 2011b; 2012).

In the annual activity reports it was observed issues related to pedagogical evaluation processes. It was highlighted the monitoring of undergraduate courses by the team of the Coordination of Pedagogical Performance (CPP), about the implementation of the pedagogical projects of Reuni courses and previously implemented courses, and the development of evaluation scripts of disciplines, undergraduate courses, and graduates, highlighting the participation of CPA in this process. (UFSCar, 2011a). The 2015 Activities Report (UFSCar, 2016) and 2016 Activities Report (UFSCar, 2017) highlighted that, in 2011, the fifth evaluative cycle of the CPA/UFSCar was carried out which focused on the evaluation of the newer UFSCar courses that were being implemented.

Another aspect to be considered in the understanding of performativity was accountability, understood as the definition of procedures to support the supervision of spending and to present to society and/or the state the results of investments made. In

this sense, the UFSCar is obliged to be accountable to society and to external and internal control agencies, because “the university, as a public institution, needs to be accountable to society. How do you evaluate whether the role of the university is being fulfilled or not?” (Interviewee 3).

The evolution of expenses showed the growth of UFSCar, with the implementation of new courses and the implementation of the Sorocaba Campus. There was an increase in the hiring of personnel, especially teachers, and an increase in expenses with tickets and per diems. The outsourcing expenses resulted from the expansion process and the implementation of Reuni with the expansion of courses, especially at night, which requires more attention to security and cleaning of classrooms. Finally, it should be emphasized the increase in outsourced services in the University Restaurant due to the increase of incoming students and also because of retirements of servers without replacement (UFSCar, 2010).

The management reports allowed us to follow the evolution of the university’s expenses and demonstrate UFSCar’s growth, with the implementation of new courses and campuses (Sorocaba and Lagoa do Sino). The rendering of accounts explained in the SPDI management reports were presented according to the statements established by the UFSCar. All accounts rendered were approved in higher courts, “which demonstrates that the work done has been performed efficiently and effectively. (UFSCar, 2011b, p. 31). Thus, as pointed out by Interviewee 3, in general, UFSCar underwent “audits in almost every year, in some years not, because we had obtained good results and with that, we were sidelined from the audit process”. It is understood that the increase in investments brings with it the creation of control mechanisms, expressed, for example, in the demand of the control bodies in indicators and indexes.

In the internal UFSCar sphere, some committees were created over time, such as the Administrative Processes Committee and the Risk Committee, thus the institution met the external demand for control provided for in the legislation but kept its operation internally (Interviewee 2). In this same perspective, the university counts, since 2009, with the AudIn, which is responsible for preparing consulting reports to improve and evaluate the university management.

The TCU determinations, in general, were seen positively by the UFSCar and resulted in the improvement of the set of internal rules regarding the necessary controls to ensure transparency and correctness of the public competitions for professors. In summary, the lack of servers at UFSCar combined with the large volume of work demanded for the proper functioning of the institution, made it difficult to meet the recommendations in shorter periods (UFSCar, 2010).

Final considerations

In general terms, according to data from documents and interviews, it became apparent that Reuni was positive for the UFSCar because, during this period, there was an expansion and democratization of access to undergraduate courses (the expected numbers were achieved); on the other hand, despite the financial convenience of the accession

process - to implement the goals of the PDI / UFSCar-2013 (RAMOS; SILVEIRA; MARTINS, 2020) - this process burdened the university in its physical and virtual structure (online systems), as well as its staff (teachers and technicians).

Reuni, following a trend of adoption of managerial mechanisms of the New Public Management from the State Reform of the 1990s, seeks an institutional reorganization, aiming to obtain results and performances established in contracts. As Araújo and Pinheiro (2010) point out:

Reuni attempts to provide answers to the crisis in the higher education system, while valuing the introduction of new organizational arrangements and new management mechanisms to obtain more efficiency in public spending with the basic assumption that the contracting of results is the right bet to solve the system's expansion problems in the short term. By bringing to the agenda of educational systems the issues of efficiency, efficacy, effectiveness, control of results, productivity, costs, goals, indicators, and the management contract, among other topics, it is intricately linked to the managerialist guidelines that have deeply marked the discussion on the reform of the Brazilian state, producing important changes in the way institutions operate. (ARAÚJO; PINHEIRO, 2010, p. 665).

UFSCar's concern with its performance, its goals and quality indicators already existed before Reuni. Evasion, failure, grade repetition, number of vacancies, etc., were issues that permeated the management of the entire university. However, as evidenced by the documents and the agents interviewed, with Reuni this concern was expanded, impacting the UFSCar administration. These indicators configure the university's performativity that is perceived by both the internal and external community of the UFSCar. The relevance of the indicators has become more pressing in the university, intensifying the perception of the need to respond to the MEC and to society.

Thus, as positive effects of this process, it was observed the increase of vacancies in undergraduate courses; the improvement in the university's performance indicators; the pre-school assistance to dependents of public servants and employees; the transportation and meal allowances to public servants and employees; the increase in the number of extension courses; the growth in the offer of Curricular Activities of Integration between Teaching, Research, and Extension (ACIEPE); the expansion of the library's collection, the computer area, and the telephony services. Another positive highlight, although insufficient, was the hiring of teaching and technical-administrative staff. Among these aspects, the growth of the FIHE in terms of public service, number of undergraduate and graduate students, and number of professors were mentioned as positive points in the interviews.

On the other hand, it was verified as a negative effect of the implementation of Reuni at UFSCar, the shortage of funds derived from the Program to meet and sustain the new demands presented by the expansion, as well as the insufficient number of technical-administrative employees and the overload of teaching work, assumed by teachers.

Therefore, notwithstanding the convenience of UFSCar's adherence to Reuni, due to the compatibility of the expansion objectives and the managerial model adopted, the program ended up intensifying mechanisms of the new public management that were

already present in the university's management. This had a direct impact on the institution's management: the internal bureaucracy incorporated external control mechanisms, meeting the demand for distance control, generated new demands and emphases, creating new administrative problems, and making explicit some of the university's deficiencies from its Reuni expansion process.

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