

Five memories of history: Educational Policy and Administration in the Implementation of IFPB-Campus Picuí (2008 – 2014)



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ABSTRACT

Our article presents a certain reading, specificity given by the theoretical foundation and methodology used by us, of the testimonies given by those who were responsible for the management and political mediation in the process of choosing, creating and implementing the IFPB-Campus Picuí. The interviewees emphasized the importance of the Campus for the Seridó Oriental region; more specifically, for 11 municipalities near the city of Picuí, in the semi-arid region of Paraíba. They also expressed the importance and sentimental place occupied in their lives by the Federal Institute of Education, Science and Technology of Paraíba (IFPB), reporting links of more than 40 years with the institution, and the meaning of the Picuí Campus in their lives. The testimonies elucidated how the political articulation that resulted in the inclusion of Picuí in Phase II (2007-2010), of the Expansion Program of the Federal Network of Professional and Technological Education, a process known as "internalization of the IFPB" took place. The dialogue and negotiation with the technicians of Setec (MEC) for approval of the project and bidding, as the negotiations between the city hall and the rectory took place, the process of choosing its first board of managers. Present, visions of what should be an institution dedicated to Professional and Technological Education and its challenges. The following were heard: Rubens Germano da Costa, Mayor of Picuí (2005-2012); Professor João Batista de Oliveira Silva, Rector of IFPB (2008-2014); Professor Verônica Lacerda Arnaud, General Director of IFPB-Campus Picuí (2009-2014); Professor Maria das Graças Medeiros de Negreiros, Director of Teaching Development at IFPB-Campus Picuí (2009-2014; Aguinaldo Tejo Filho, Director of Administration, Planning and Finance of IFPB-Campus Picuí (2009-2014).

Keywords: Professional and Technological Education, Thematic Oral History, IFPB-Campus Picuí, Memory, Politics and Education, Educational Management.



1 INTRODUCTION

The testimonies recorded in this book are the result of a research project developed by the Center for Studies in Languages and Humanities (NEHUL) of the IFPB Campus Picuí, between April and December 2022, within the scope of the Interconecta Call 01/2022. The project "Five Memories of History: Educational Policy and Administration in the Implementation of the IFPB-Campus Picuí (2008 – 2014)", heard and systematized as a source for investigations, the discourses of five subjects who were responsible for the direction of the IFPB (2008-2014), for the political action that enabled the creation of an IFPB Campus in the city of Picuí (2007-2011), and for its management in its initial years (2009-2014).

They were heard: the Municipal Mayor of Picuí at the time of the implementation of the Campus, Rubens Germano da Costa. The directors responsible for the Educational Administration of the Picuí Campus, from its creation in 2009 until 2014 – General Director: Professor Verônica Lacerda Arnaud; Director of Teaching Development: Professor Maria das Graças Negreiros de Medeiros; Director of Administration, Planning and Finance: Aguinaldo Tejo Filho. And the Rector of the IFPB at the time Professor João Batista de Oliveira Silva.

The testimonies inform us about the perception of managers and political agents about the process of choosing, creating and implementing the IFPB-Campus Picuí and its importance for the Seridó Oriental region; more specifically, for 12 municipalities near the city. The interviewees also emphasized the importance and sentimental place occupied in their lives by the institution, reporting links of more than 40 years with the IFPB, and, more recently, the meaning of the Picuí Campus in their lives. The interviews also elucidated how the political articulation that resulted in the inclusion of Picuí in the second phase of expansion of the IFs took place, the dialogue and negotiation with the technicians of Setec (MEC) for approval of the project and bidding, how the negotiations between the city hall and the rectory took place, and the process of choosing the first managers. Also present are visions of what should be an institution dedicated to professional and technological education and its current challenges.

It is the production of a type of source, said to be voluntary or testimonial, full of intentionality – either in the statements of the interviewees and the interviewees, or in our choices of the interviewees, of the scripts of the interviews, choices in tune with the theoretical-methodological contribution adopted by us. The questions sought speeches/answers – and the methodology of semi-structured interviews and the procedures of the Thematic Oral History guaranteed us to a large extent this question/interested listening –, which elucidated how the creation of an educational equipment that changed and has transformed the lives of thousands of young people took place. As Rubens Germano da Costa says,



[...] these things make a mark, and it's important for us to rescue, because sometimes people come here at IF, now, and don't know anything about what it was 12, 13 years ago. So, there are some facts that were remarkable and we stay in the memory. [...]. This is very important, because, with absolute certainty, this new class, which is entering, needs to know this history. Sometimes it arrives, sees the Campus very beautiful or even begins to put defect, such, and does not remember the legacy of 11,12,13 years ago, and what we did to consolidate this wonder that we have today there.

By disseminating these narratives we are making available for other listening, discourses that were structuring the concrete of the existence of the IFPB-Campus Picuí.

Our theoretical perspective was, on the one hand, to situate how research and its writing on educational management have systematized knowledge in this field. It is observed the prevalence of a look that perceives two faces of the exercise of school direction, the administrative and the pedagogical. Also the most recent researches tend to emphasize that the directors are dedicating themselves more to the administrative actions, by pressure of the bureaucratic apparatus of the institutional system of education and/or by conception of the director, which puts in the background the pedagogical work. Finally, according to the same researches, there is a greater openness to the mechanisms of democratic management. The presence of the School Councils and the Political-Pedagogical Projects, the election of school leaders and the strong political mark of their performance, the recognition of the plots and networks of power that are woven in the daily relations in schools, inform the dominantly political character in the dispute for spaces of power within schools and in school management. It is visible the displacement in the bases of the studies on the Educational Administration: the empirical space of the school as topos par excellence of the investigations would have succeeded conceptual studies of Marxist theoretical influence, which had succeeded the primacy of the prescriptions for the school management based on the theoretical apparatus of the business administration. (SOUZA, 2017, p. 13-17)

In educational policies, according to studies carried out in the so-called "field of public schools",¹ there is a greater concession of autonomy to schools², by giving space to their own and specific forms of teaching-learning situations, to different levels of participation of the internal subjects of the school and the community in the decisions, and margin, although reduced, in the implementation of government guidelines. At the same time, educational policies began to seek greater control over the results, evaluating productivity and performance of servers and instituting nationwide evaluations

¹ When we talk here about Public Policies, we are talking, on the one hand, of the actions implemented by governments, and on the other, in the study of these actions. Initially influenced by political science, the so-called "field of public" began to be constituted from the end of the 1990s, with the emergence of training programs on specific topics, and also with the emergence of undergraduate and graduate courses focused on public policies and public management. (FARAH, 2016, p. 13-15)

² In Professional and Technological Education, the institutionalization of autonomy occurs in 1959, with the transformation of the Federal Technical Schools into autarchies, with autonomy of management and didactics. (WINCKLER & SANTAGADA, 2012, P. 2-3)



at all levels of student learning. Thus, from the perspective of the State, the economic-business criterion, data and numbers, underpins the evaluation of school management, alongside the relative autonomy granted. This concern with the evaluation of the performance of the educational system in Brazil becomes more visible, and is institutionalized, from the 1980s, and occurs concomitantly with the beginning of the constitution, in Brazil, of a field of studies of Public Policies. (MAIA, 2020, p. 3-4)

According to these studies, from the end of the 1980s, in Brazil, government decisions and actions began to have to deal with a tension between the demands for rights arising from social movements, demands that were institutionally supported by the 1988 Constitution, and the conjuncture of stagnation of economic growth, fiscal crisis and external indebtedness, combined with the pressure of sectors of society, bearers of the neoliberal discourse, which defended the fiscal adjustment and the minimum participation of the State. (SOUZA, 2006, p. 14)

In the 1990s, government actions will configure what studies have called "the new public management", or "new public managerialism", in the midst of a broad reform of the State in the sense of weakening its intervention capacity and, in its management, the application of private sector management techniques, aiming at greater control and efficiency in the application of public resources. The restriction on the role of the State was accompanied by the delegation of actions, before the sphere of public agents, to institutions of civil society. (SOUZA, 2006, p. 15)

The creation of the Federal Network of Professional and Technological Education and, in the midst of this, of the Federal Institute of Education, Science and Technology of Paraíba, IFPB, is based on a scathing criticism of the educational policy immediately before, in the 1990s, for its "fragmented view of education", in which the levels, stages and modalities were approached in a compartmentalized way, separated from each other, "as if they were not links in a chain that should reinforce each other." This fragmented perspective stemmed, in the words of the formulators of the Education Development Plan (PDE) of 2007, "from managerialist and fiscalist principles, which took investments in education as expenditures, in a supposed context of fiscal restriction." Such a perspective gave rise to "false oppositions." One of them, the opposition "between high school and vocational education." (BRAZIL, 2008, p. 7-9).

In the new configuration proposed in the PDE of 2007, its proponents defended the need to think modalities and educational levels "from the necessary links of education with the ordering of the territory and with economic and social development, the only way to guarantee to each and every one the right to learn as far as their aptitudes and will allow." The intention of adding to the academic training the preparation for work was explained, in search of a "contextualized professional and technological formation". (BRAZIL, 2008, p.6)



It was from these theoretical guidelines that we listened to the narratives, a possible listening, we believe, attuned to the dilemmas, problems and reality of professional and technological education as we live it, as subjects of it on a daily basis. Other listening is possible, and listening that we do not even imagine will surely come in future times.

The methodology used by us was that of Thematic Oral History in which there is a precise delimitation of the subject that will be addressed with the interviewees, who have in common the fact that they participated in the same event or historical process. In this case, the creation of the Federal Institutes of Education, Science and Technology (2008), and the implementation of one of its campuses, linked to the Institute of Paraíba, in Picuí (2009-2014).

In the questions that were addressed to the interviewees, there was the intention of obtaining information about the political and institutional dynamics that resulted in the choice, creation, implementation and management of the Picuí Campus in the initial years of its existence, activating the narratives of the protagonists. These narratives also inform about affective relationships and about conceptual and symbolic components present in the realization of the Picuí Campus.

Thus, it is more correct to speak of a researcher/listener, interested in the story and how it is told by the deponents. At no time were the interviewees questioned or questioned in the sense of contradictory or controversial. Our listening sought to be attentive to the way the testimonies construct today, from their places in the present, their memories of the event. The interviews were conducted in Picuí, and at IFPB, Campus Jaguaribe, in João Pessoa, between July 2022 and October 2022

These testimonies are recorded in the form of videos: a set of five videos edited exclusively with the speeches of the interviewees and the interviewees. The testimonies are also recorded in written form: a set of five literal transcriptions of the audios of the testimonies, without the questions; a set of five transcriptions, in which typical elements of orality, present in literal transcriptions, were eliminated: adverbs such as "né", "aí"; Repetitions; introductions to answers such as "then", "so"; small adjustments of meaning when it only shows itself in speech, but is lost when transcribed; or adjustments to the formal standard of the Portuguese, without this leading to a change in the terms used. There was extreme care not to change any word of the interviewee. There was also editing of the text in the sense that discontinuous speeches on the same subject were grouped together. It is the transcriptions of the testimonies that make up the core of the book presented here. The recording of these narratives is part of the passage and transformation of those memories into history.

In the testimonies of the four managers heard – Veronica, Agnaldo, Maria das Graças, João Batista – the affective, familial relationship with the institution draws attention. "The IFPB is an extension of my home." (Mary of Graces); "... I entered this institution, still as a student, in 1974" (Veronica); "[...] I am Professor João Batista de Oliveira Silva, teacher of this house for many summers, and winters as well. I came to this house as a student in the 70's"; "... it's been 39 years,



leaving for 40, with a lot of dedication and always believing in the potential of the institution" (Agnaldo); "We have a very strong identity with this institution." (John the Baptist).

This identity with the Federal Institute of Education, Science and Technology of Paraíba – also considering its previous history, as Federal Technical School of Paraíba, and Federal Center for Technological Education –, we can say, was already consolidated when the Picuí Campus was created. It was not merely professional, "technical" managers who were responsible for its implementation. They were people with a history of living in the institution, whose bond was not restricted to the professional bond. The experience resulted in a loving, affective bond with the institution.

Also, in reading the testimonies of the managers who were responsible for the implementation of the Picuí Campus of the IFPB, it is fundamental to keep in mind three specificities of that educational management: it is the implementation, therefore, of the beginning of a work, of structuring an educational equipment, in the semi-arid region of Paraíba. And of an integrated educational institution, that is, that offered a Technical/Professional training and, at the same time, the formation of High School.

In the testimony of Professor Verônica, responsible for the General Direction of the Campus at the time, evident the protagonism in the realization of an institution that changed the lives of many and many adolescents in the region, and transformed the city.³ This protagonism has occurred since the definition of the physical location of the Campus.

"Buba (Mayor Rubens Germano da Costa), the JK" – that he offered a plot of land there in JK – "JK is already highly valued! There's the Cenecista. Let's go there?" He said, "But there's a dump there!" I said, "You take out the dump [...], I just want the Campus to be there!"

Its management was guided by two vectors: the administrative action, of supplying the institution with the necessary materials, providing teachers and students with access to equipment seen as the most appropriate for a technical, vocational school in the semi-arid region of Paraíba, and enabling a quality pedagogical work – also technical visits and training courses abroad. In the words of Professor Veronica, "I wanted Picuí to be the best campus. And it was. [...] Everything you wanted was in Picuí." And, the other vector, the political action together not only with the mayor of Picuí, Rubens Germano da Costa (Buba), whose relationship was the best possible, but also the relationship with the mayors of the 11 municipalities of origin of a significant portion of students of the Picuí Campus, a particularly difficult relationship.

³ "I've already arrived in Picuí and said, 'My God, where am I?' That erased thing, it had nothing. You looked at the trade and it didn't work. Today, you see the construction industry in Picuí. What has internalization brought to Brazil? Wealth, because education is wealth. Both she took knowledge and development. And the opportunity to have a Federal Institution, of quality education, with qualified teachers." Professor Verônica Lacerda Arnaud, testimony given on 08/22/2022.



But if I didn't, if the student couldn't afford it, the city wouldn't pick it up, I would take it, even in my car, "I'll take you home." I took it. You can't leave a minor, what was he going to do? How was he going to get home? When I was going to leave, I was also going to talk to the mayor, I was already taking the opportunity to go and say "You have committed and you are not complying. If you don't comply, we go to the radio." You have to threaten. And my students won't go without attending class. Thank God, during the time I was in charge of the Campus, IF changed the lives of several teenagers.

The pedagogical part, the responsibility of the Director of Teaching Development, Maria das Graças Negreiros de Medeiros, was also characterized by the structuring actions: to get teachers – at the beginning, before the opening of the competition, in 2010, substitute teachers, and teachers from the campuses of João Pessoa, Campina, and even de Souza, who made themselves available to cover some disciplines in Picuí –; the "curricular organization of the courses [...], to adapt the curriculum to the reality of the students [...]. That the reality of Picuí is not the same as that of João Pessoa, nor the same as that of Campina"; also "to adjust the workloads, because the workload for the Integrated Technician to High School is one, and for the Subsequent Technician is another"; to enable the needs common to the courses, "in terms of laboratory, field visit, internship"; to make students, and also teachers, aware because most of them are novices or from the private and state education networks, "that the pedagogical dynamics, the pedagogical work of the IF, is different from the others. We have a differentiation, precisely, because we are/have these Technical courses allied to the Middle Ones".

Professor Maria das Graças emphasizes the need to think of new higher education courses, "that would absorb our students from the technical course", assuring the IF student a continuity, which would work as an additional attraction to link him to the institution, "because we know that the budget comes according to the number of students". This concern to get students is also central to the testimony of Professor Veronica.

Let's do the enrollment of these people, call, because not everyone knew the IF in the region. If you weren't *on the spot* – "I'm here today to enroll" – (if not) you'd go into high schools and "come, enroll, to do the PSCT," you couldn't. And we got a lot of students like that. I went, Professor Graça also went, Agnaldo also went at the time. "Let's go after student."

According to Professor Maria das Graças, "we have a great challenge, which I see in Picuí, the biggest for those who are in Picuí: not to leave the Campus, that wonderful structure, not to have clientele."

Professor Maria das Graças emphasizes the help of the various managers of the IFPB at the time, but mainly the teamwork on the part of the first managers of the Campus.

We had a lot of harmony, and there was also help, a lot of the pro-rectors, the Rector, the campus directors.

Look, about my management as Director of Teaching Development in Picuí, I do not do an isolated evaluation, I do an evaluation of the management as a whole, because we worked like this. We were one whole. Thus, not only was it the Teaching Direction, not only was it the



Administration Directorate, and only the General Direction. We were one whole. In fact, I put Lígia in this middle there⁴, because she was the support, mainly, of Professor Veronica, but also mine. I think it was a very positive whole. We've achieved a lot for the Campus.

This collective spirit, of a collegiate management, is also highlighted by Agnaldo Tejo Filho, Director of Administration, Planning and Finance of IFPB-Campus Picuí, from 2009 to 2014:

We would sit down, the three of us, to discuss the problems and we would be able to implement a lot. Many mistakes, many successes too, this is common in any management. But all with a lot of dedication, with a lot of respect, because what the three of them wanted was for it to work in the best possible way. Each one with its principles, ideologies, concepts, with its prejudices, but we managed to make a trail, let's say so, quite interesting, quite united, we completed each other in each other's difficulties.

Agnaldo also notes that the arrival at the Picuí Campus of "younger teachers," with "other ideologies, other behaviors [...], new thoughts [...], oxygenated our understanding, our training, even politics." For Agnaldo, it was the conviviality, and the respect, with the contradictory, that was shaping "this collective", which "made this Campus one of the most successful in our history of the IFPB".

Agnaldo Tejo Filho brings us, in his testimony, the look of the one who was not from the region, and of his "mission, as a public servant", in that reality.

When I arrived in Picuí, I saw the region, the poverty of the region, the need of those people. That's when I saw that my obligation, it had to be a little more [...], because those people deserved something like IFPB. Not because it is simply IFPB, but in the social mission that it must fulfill, which is to socialize knowledge; And through this knowledge, people, for sure, achieve better days, socially speaking, economically, in every way.

The first "great challenge", while responsible for the Directorate of Administration, Planning and Finance (DAPF) of the Campus, was not to have "a defined staff", to be able to "implement the necessary actions to start working", to "develop a set of activities in a planned way. There even came a time when I was the buyer, that I was the receiver, distributor, there was no segregation of assignments, because of this lack of personnel." With the arrival of "some technicians", the challenge was to do teaching, the hiring, the execution of the budget – the budget editions began in 2010 – "because otherwise the budget would come back and if it came back it would be a difficulty for us to rescue what happened."

Agnaldo explains that the IFPB's budget is unique. The rectory, in turn, makes the distribution for each Campus, according to a "budget matrix", determined by CONIF (Council of Federal Institutes). This matrix has as main criteria "the number of students, the type of Campus if it is agrarian or not." The endowment received by the Picuí Campus was taken "to discuss on the Campus. We gathered the Director of Education, the General Director, some coordinators, for us to discuss the use of that resource."

⁴ Lígia Cabral, Chief of Staff of the General Directorate (2009-2013).



The execution of the budget, at the beginning, in 2010-2011, was due to occupying the "grand" structure of the Campus in the Cenecista neighborhood, with 48 classrooms, laboratories – "to get an idea, the Monteiro Campus began with 16; We started 3 times bigger." Wallsets, furniture, air-conditioned rooms, interactive whiteboards, Datashow, speakers, laboratory equipment. Subsequently, when the demands of research and extension began to emerge, the funds began to be distributed so that each coordination "had its fair share", with the monitoring of its execution by DAPF, "always in a democratic, transparent way. We understand that the budget, it is not the manager's, it is a public budget, it has to be debated, it has to be shown its execution."

Agnaldo recalls that the Picuí Campus, in his time, "executed more than 100%" of the budget. This was possible, because DAPF always had projects, participated in bids in other agencies, and also when "some Campus failed to execute; Often, some resource arrived that was not executed, and we, with a process ready, we were already accredited for the use." Thus, a part of the equipment was in Picuí, and another part went to the Campus that had not executed the entire budget. In this way, the Picuí Campus "acquired a lot of equipment for other campuses [...], because we had a process and the other Campuses did not foresee, did not work in this direction."

Another source of extra funds was that, from 2008 to 2014, there was a lot of resources made available by the federal government, and the resources that were properly destined to the rectory of the IFPB were not always fully executed. This "quantity beyond, which we got in the rectory", made possible, for example, the acquisition "of the bus that has in the Picuí Campus, and all those vehicles that have there."

Until 2014, according to Agnaldo, the budget of each IFPB Campus "was around 1 million reais and today, to give you an idea, the general budget of the IFPB for 2023, in investment, is 650 thousand reais." The Picuí Campus, through participation in bids from other agencies, obtained "1 million and 500 thousand, 1 million and 600 thousand, because additional resources arrived, [...]. On a daily basis, I followed the bids of [...] many other agencies, at the national level, throughout Brazil."

In the choice of Agnaldo Tejo Filho, for the Board of Administration, Planning and Finance, two elements are present: the openness, on the part of the rector João Batista, to the effective participation of the general directors of the new campuses in the definition of his team; and the importance of the professional vector in the choices. Professor Veronica reports:

When everything was already organized, it was that Agnaldo, who at the time was there in Campina Grande – already knew Agnaldo from here in João Pessoa – and Professor João said: "Hey, who is going to be your Director of Administration? Choose!" He gave that opportunity to us as well. I said, "I have Agnaldo and someone else; I name two, and you choose one." He chose Agnaldo, but initially he only had me and Grace for everything.

In the report of Professor Maria das Graças, the professional trajectory is explained as a criterion of choice:



I had already worked with him here (at the João Pessoa Campus) in the same sector. [...] Because Agnaldo had a whole structure. He worked a long time in Brasília, there at MEC, in a sector of the MEC.⁵ We got a lot through him because he had the contacts."

It is also observed, by the testimonies of the leading cadres, the presence of a dialectic between personal relationships (in which affective ties with the place are inserted) and professional relations, which was decisive in the choice of the management cadres of the Picuí Campus in its beginning. The choice for the Direction of Teaching Development is emblematic in this sense. Even having supported Professor José Rômulo Godim Gouveia, in the elections for Rector of the IFPB, in 2006, and held positions in his administration, Professor Maria das Graças Negreiros de Medeiros was appointed by the elected Rector, João Batista de Oliveira Silva, to the board of directors of the Picuí Campus in 2009. Professor Graça points out that her support for Professor Rômulo does not

He prevented Professor João from inviting me, later, to the Picuí Campus, to the Teaching Direction. [...] My history within the school, the institution, contributed a lot to this, because I worked with him (professor João Batista) a lot, when he was coordinator of the Electrotechnical course, and when he was director of teaching. So, he knew my work, and I went to Picuí a lot to see my land and the people who are from Picuí.

Professor Veronica reports: "[...]Graça, who is my cousin, a teacher here (IFPB) as well, and is from Picuí; then, I said: 'João, let's invite Professor Graça to go with me to Picuí, she as Director of Education'. So it was the two of us to start."

Professor João Batista summarizes that dialectic when talking about his choices for the board of directors of the Picuí Campus:

[...] To choose these people, I sought out those people I had an identity with. Professor Verônica, for example, General Director, in addition to a very great friendship – we were contemporary students here in this institution, a friendship of many years – she also, when in my first management, as General Director of CEFET-PB, in our organizational structure, was Director of the João Pessoa Unit. [...] And Professor Veronica was this bond of friendship, of trust, of competence, of grit. And a very interesting fact, knowing the region because daughter of Picuí.⁶ This was a fact, as Graça Negreiros is the daughter of Picuí; even today she has her parents, brothers who live in the city.

In the choice for the General Directorate of the Picuí Campus, the connection with the policy of the municipality contemplated with the IFPB unit, is thus placed by Professor Verônica:

when Professor João Batista invited me, when we went to IF, the rectory began to graduate, he became rector, he said: "You go to Picuí, you are from there! You will!" And I: "No, no problem, I will. For sure, I'll have the mayor's support." Then I went there. Buba (the then mayor, Rubens Germano da Costa) welcomed me very well and we started there at JK.

⁵ Agnaldo Tejo Filho worked at MEC, from 2004 to 2009, at the Internal Affairs Office and at the FNDE (National Fund for the Development of Education).

⁶ Professor Veronica clarifies: "[...] I'm from there in quotes; I was born in João Pessoa, but my family is from there and my childhood was there, every vacation I went to Picuí."



This connection with the municipality's policy was already made explicit in the criteria for choosing the cities that would be contemplated in Phase II, of the Expansion Program of the Federal Network of Professional and Technological Education. Started in 2007, Phase II had as

goal the creation, in four years, of more than 150 new federal institutions of technological education within the framework of the Expansion Plan of the Federal Network of Technological Education. The institutions were distributed in the 26 states and the Federal District, contemplating 150 different municipalities chosen by the MEC itself and through expression of interest by the municipal governments. (BRAZIL, 2018)

The manifest interest of the Mayor of Picuí was translated into concrete actions.

If memory serves me correctly, [...] in 2007 he opened the call for proposals for the IF. Professor Renan was my secretary and [...] we determined, when I became aware of the edict, that he go to Brasilia, get all the details, see what was possible for the municipality to run, so that I took the steps as a manager to participate and that is exactly what we did. In the edict, the only requirement of the counterpart was the donation of the area. [...], but I went further. In addition to the donation of the area, [...] the municipality financed the architectural design of the Campus [...]. The municipality paid an architect and we offered the architectural project to the Ministry.⁷

The political articulations, according to the Mayor of the Municipality at the time, Rubens Germano da Costa (Buba), began already in 2007. Alongside the political action of the mayor, the importance of the then Federal Deputy for Rio Grande do Norte, Maria de Fátima Bezerra. Also present, in the field of politics, is the strength of personal relationships and the affective relationship with the place. According to Rubens Germano da Costa,

The first joints were like that. I met with the deputy, at the inauguration of the Campus of Currais Novos, and she made an appeal, a sentimental appeal, even for saying that she is a neighbor of my land, that she studied here in Picuí. The political articulation started from this principle. [...] The fact is that she managed, in the Ministry of Education, to expand from 4 vacancies, in Paraíba, to 5.⁸ [...] Fátima Bezerra is our countrywoman, she studied her life here in Picuí, here in Nova Palmeira. [...] I know Fatima here from the Student House on Rua 24 de Novembro, my neighbor. My parents, we were born on Rua 24 de Novembro. She, Conceição, the sisters have this relationship with us, in our childhood and youth.

The then Rector, Professor João Batista de Oliveira Silva, reports the pressures and questions that came to him by mayors, who were not satisfied with the choice of Picuí – "Picuí, Princess Isabel, two small municipalities and the people of Guarabira, the queen of Brejo." Even in Brasilia, there was questioning from MEC technicians: "Me and the mayor at the time, Buba Germano, went to Brasilia to discuss the implementation of the project. [...] the guys looked at it like that and said, 'How can you? The municipality, with so many square kilometers of area, does not reach 20,000 inhabitants in

⁷ Testimony of Rubens Germano da Costa.

⁸ The 4 units were already directed to Monteiro, Cabedelo, Patos and Princesa Isabel.



the city." According to Professor João Batista, the focus was not the city of Picuí, but "the region or mesoregion, polarized by a municipality [...], which covered around 11 municipalities. Municipalities bordering Rio Grande do Norte: Cuité, Nova Palmeira, and others".

But, decisive in the choice, it seems to have been the political force of the then Federal Deputy for Rio Grande do Norte, and born in Nova Palmeira, in Paraíba, Maria de Fátima Bezerra, of the Workers' Party. According to Professor John the Baptist,

The choice depended on several factors. There were studies on our part, there were the political influences, the vocational axes. Mayor Buba, and the current governor of Rio Grande do Norte, Fátima Bezerra, had influence at that time. [...] Fatima Bezerra herself, to defend her interests, always came close to us. [...], for the political interests of implantation, because Nova Palmeira is very close to Picuí. She is very friendly with that region, and she was that person who, always helpful, was around. And whenever we needed support for a decision, she was one of those who joined our entourage to help with consignments, projects, resources, and so it was.

The political strength of the then Federal Deputy for Rio Grande do Norte⁹ is evident in two moments experienced by Mayor Rubens Germano da Costa.

[...] I even remember that, there in the Ministry, they said: "Fatima, you find little of the IFs that you are already taking to Rio Grande do Norte; now you want to take one more to Paraíba?"

And another thing that struck me, was that when we went to receive, officially, the key of the IF, from the hands of President Lula, he still looked, and I remember, next to Dilma, he looked: "You see, Dilma, our government gives a technical school to a mayor of the PSDB." Then I laughed, I said, 'But public policy has no partisan legend, no.'¹⁰

Agnaldo Tejo Filho emphasizes precisely this point: the union of two political forces of opposing parties, as the enabler of an institution with the capacity to transform the lives of hundreds of adolescents in the region, but also to significantly change the way of life of the city, not only boosting business, originating a new neighborhood, attracting students from neighboring cities in the Seridó-Curimataú region; with the ability to operate a transformation in the very perception that its inhabitants had of their place.

Picuí was not contemplated with a Campus. It was just Cabedelo, Monteiro, Princess Isabel and Patos. There was no forecast for Picuí. And Mayor Buba allied himself – Mayor Buba, at the time it was PSDB and aligned with Fernando Henrique in opposition to the PT government – allied himself with Fatima, who was from the PT, and together they managed to take the IFPB there, at that time. It was the greatest achievement, that maybe I will die and we will not

⁹ Maria de Fátima Bezerra, in addition to her training in Pedagogy, and having worked as a teacher in Rio Grande do Norte, had a legislative trajectory linked to education. In 2006, he was head of the Permanent Commission on Education, Culture and Sport. Also in 2006, he served as second vice-president of the special commission for the PEC, which created FUNDEB. In 2011, he held the presidency of the Education Commission, in addition to serving on the Special Commission that discussed the Bill regarding the National Education Plan (PNE), responsible for establishing guidelines for Brazilian education until the year 2020. CPDOC/FGV. Entry: Fatima Bezerra. Biographical Dictionary, 2014. Available at <https://www18.fgv.br/CPDOC/acervo/dicionarios/verbete-biografico/bezerra-fatima> Accessed on 12/19/2022.

¹⁰ The mayor of Picuí, Rubens Germano da Costa, belonged to the PSDB, which was opposed to the government of President Luís Inácio Lula da Silva.



see another conquest in that region. Not for the conquest, for the monument, but for the social mission, for what he does, for what he manages to build within the mind and appreciation of people, through knowledge.

This "social mission", which the IF has the capacity to carry out, by "building within the mind" of its student a new cultural dimension, is also highlighted by Professor Verônica Lacerda. According to her, the presence of qualified teachers

It brings a very great cultural development to the city. People's thinking changes, because there are other qualified people, who have arrived there in the city, and you bring up the way to express yourself. The first few classes, you felt that they spoke differently, and when they finished, you already felt another vocabulary.

Perhaps, more important than economic transformations, is the power that a quality education has to enable students a more elaborate understanding of reality, by expanding their vocabulary, by teaching students other signs of expression, thus enabling the attribution of new meanings to things. As Agnaldo Tejo Filho said in his testimony: "That there" – the Picuí Campus, nestled in the semi-arid region of Paraíba – "was a great irreverence."

Our intention, when we disclose the testimonies of those who were responsible for the implementation of a public policy of professional and technological education in the semi-arid region of Paraíba, which significantly altered the social, economic, cultural configuration of Picuí and its surroundings, and, mainly, directly impacted the lives of thousands of young people from the Seridó-Curimataú region, is to contribute to a better understanding of the reality present today in the region of influence of the Campus, by bringing to the disclosure to the community of how it came to fruition.

Information on the criteria that guided the choice of its first board of directors. In addition to the technical dimension, and the administrative rationality, it was possible to identify the presence of the strength of personal relationships and the ties of knowledge/affectivity with the city.

Information on the conceptions of educational administration and on the principles that should guide professional and technological education in our region, on the part of those who directed the Picuí Campus in its first four years. Of course, with the changes in the Campus board of directors, starting in 2014, new conceptions and principles were introduced, and other perspectives were placed. However, it is possible to identify a structuring mark that remains: the conviction that the Picuí Campus is the best campus of the IFPB, and the permanence of the work for continuing to be so.

Information about the political arrangements, which made possible the choice of a city that, it should be said, did not have the population and economic expression of other cities in Paraíba, cities that were not contemplated at the time. Alongside the concrete and decisive actions undertaken by the Municipal Mayor Rubens Germano da Costa, the technical excellence of the project presented to the MEC, present the political influence, at the level of the federal administration, of the then Federal Deputy Maria de Fátima Bezerra, whose political action also brought the dimension of the affective



relationship with the region, and with the city of Picuí.

We believe that this book presents elements for the understanding of how the materialization, in a city of the semi-arid region of Paraíba, of concepts and principles of an educational policy, implemented in the country, from 2008, whose "reason for being is precisely in the need to structurally face the inequality of educational opportunities", (BRASIL, 2008), and which continues to underpin, we believe, education at the Picuí Campus.

We believe that this book carries an important pedagogical dimension: to make accessible to the IFPB community speeches, properly said, of the importance of education and politics in the construction of a less unequal country, and of possible ways to make that importance effective.



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INTERVIEWS

Rubens Germano da Costa - Rubens Germano da Costa - Interview conducted in the office of his home in Picuí, on July 20, 2022.

Professor João Batista de Oliveira Silva – Interview conducted on August 25, 2022, in room 2 of the Electrical Engineering Block, of the Jaguaribe campus of IFPB, in João Pessoa.

Professor Verônica Lacerda Arnaud – Interview conducted on August 22, 2022, at the Coordination of the Mechanical Engineering Course, of the Jaguaribe campus of the IFPB, in João Pessoa

Professor Maria das Graças Negreiros de Medeiros – Interview conducted on September 6, 2022, at the Coordination of the Chemistry Course, of the Jaguaribe campus of the IFPB, in João Pessoa.

Agnaldo Tejo Filho – Interview conducted at IFPB, in João Pessoa, in the room of COPSPAD, Pro-rector of Administration and Finance, on November 4, 2022.