

The Public University has established its principles in three main objectives: Teaching, Research and Extension. Therefore, the premise of being **laic**, **autonomous**, **democratic** and **critical** has been indispensable for entirely achieving these objectives.

Criticism, as a precept, has alluded to permanently seeking for quality, pursuing excellence not as an end in itself, but as means for performing its activities, looking into free education as the basis for an egalitarian society. The practice of criticism has also ensured the university's autonomy and its democratic posture, and in continuum, has submitted the individual to the natural universe and respect to the environment.

Public Universities have aimed to transmit knowledge in order to develop individuals who are qualified by excellent Higher Education; to generate technological knowledge and progress and to promote social and human development within the University's operation field. Therefore, the Academy can be seen as a school of citizenship, where citizens have been prepared with a high level of knowledge, creativity and who have taken their ethical responsibilities. These have included actions to exercise talent and promote multiplication of procedures in order to make the necessary changes in its field and region of action.

Hence, democracy is a principle and an agent for the complete management of the University, providing support and stimulating the polemic, the contradictory and the questioning, which represent the basis for the logical thinking and for edifying ideas and ideals.

The Federal University of Jequitinhonha and Mucuri Valleys is a regional school and, thus, has established an identity that holds in high regards the improvement in its field of action. This regional feature will always raise interesting and challenging questions: What are our dimensions? Which are the boundaries (if any) for social, geographic and knowledge actions? What do Jequitinhonha and Mucuri Valleys represent to the Academy?

Some guiding principles are, in fact, the University's essence, whose horizon has included the path of (and for) knowledge that promotes scientific research support through science and employed for regional growth and complete expression of ideas. The 21st century has been

designed as dramatic for the future of humanity. The University should lead discussions and actions, firstly by defining strategies and priorities which should include the immediate raising of awareness of the academic community itself. This would lead them to rapidly cross their barriers, bringing up and keeping discussions within the civil society through schools and all other spheres, as well as through the media. Environmental education for all citizens is, therefore, vital and urgent.

The Federal University of Jequitinhonha and Mucuri Valleys has specific problems, inherent to the area where it is settled and which transcend poverty, the adverse weather conditions and the low Human Development Index – HDI. Brazilian universities were founded and have historically been attended by the country's elites (at least, significantly). This has favored the distance between Higher Education Federal Institutions and the external communities, especially the population from the poorest areas, which have primary and/or secondary schools with explicit deficiencies.

This scenario might have seemed to generate lack of interest, which has led to a historical lack of effective interaction between these populations and Universities. The low school level of the population and the difficulties of access to the poorest areas have accounted for our people's lack of interest in responsibility, which should be theirs, in the public patrimony, including in the University. Those two factors have systematically contributed for the maintenance of this undesirable situation.

The Federal University of Jequitinhonha and Mucuri Valleys Rector Office, in the quadrennium 2007-2011 has already been facing these challenges, aiming to widen the access to its admissions, especially for poor populations, through affirmative policies with the objective of taking the academy to other cities in the valley. We will also promote a more effective interaction with the external community through both the University media itself and the Council of Community Integration.

Ultimately, we manifest that we understand Education as the shortest way to freedom, which has its plenitude in work and self-determination. These have been hostages of social-economic and political organization which, on the other hand, has merely been consolidated by accessing an unrestricted, continued and top-notch educational process.

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