A 20 year Perspective of the University with a Marker Model: The Relevance of Opinion

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This paper reports the proposal, validation and application of a model of markers to perspective the university of the next 20 years, supported by a theoretical framework based on the essence of the university, its organizational models (Boyer, 1990; Conceição, Durão, Heitor, & Santos, 1998; Feijó & Tamen, 2017; OCDE/CERI, 2004; UNESCO, 2003; World Economic Forum, 2016) and projection of scenarios (Chermack, 2011; Sayers, 2010). The authors Tavares, Oliveira, & Alarcão (2016) have previous work, an inductive study that framed an initial set of 14 markers that constituted a first version of the model: minds, affection, autonomy, technology, methods, organization, buildings, financing, contexts, equipment, behaviour, employability, democracy and internationalization. The research team designed three diverse university scenarios with the model's markers to provoke initial reflection and critique during the empirical test obtained in focus group sessions with 51 participants (students, researchers and professors) of the University of Aveiro, invited to discuss probable "future university" scenarios. Scenario A - a very competitive, open university, challenging, questioning, creative, ethical, decentralised, cultural, autonomous, free and responsible. Scenario B - an elitist, 'ivory tower' university, distanced, rigid, conservative, centralised, hierarchical, authoritarian, subservient, and submissive. Scenario C - a university of total openness, unstructured, visionary, challenging, questioning, creative, decentralised, cultural, utopian, laissez-faire.

This research approach privileges a constructivist ideology supported by subjectivity, comprehension, dialogue, interactivity, contextualization, multiple realities, induction and relativism (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The priority was the participants' opinion, their convictions, their perplexities, their reflections confronted with the reflections of others. The focus was on the individual, what she/he thought, felt and said. Researchers valued experience, the symbolic, subjectivity and inter-subjectivity as elements of human individuality and social reality (Minayo, 2017; Lipovetsky, 1983) and the awareness of the role of each individual in society and in the construction of knowledge. The fundamental concern is related with the empirical component namely the process of analysing qualitative data and the validation of the model. Research data collection included audio-visual recording and used mixed techniques: work sheets, questionnaires, observation and opinion valorisation scales.

The main contributions are related with: the systematization of the participant's reflections and the impact on a future perspective of the university; the validation of the marker model; the transferability of the research process to other contexts and the use of innovative mixed techniques (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011) to process and represent qualitative data supported by descriptive statistics to valorise opinion alongside holistic visual info-graphic representation of results. Some of the major results were: the marker model was confirmed by the 51 participants but with sufficient arguments to reduce the model to 12 markers - due to redundancy 6 markers were collapsed into 3
markers and a new marker, "sustainability", was introduced; there is no evidence that the initial stimuli, in the form of 3 hypothetical university scenarios, biased the discussion and results; the results obtained from the application of the marker model are context dependent and consequently not generalizable but the research process revealed evidence of generalizable applicability in other contexts.

**Keywords:** markers, training, innovation, research, qualitative analysis.

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**References**


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