

ARTICLE

## EXPANSION AND COMMERCIALIZATION OF PEDAGOGY COURSES: LARGE-SCALE DEFORMATION OF FUTURE PEDAGOGUES<sup>1</sup>

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**ABSTRACT:** This paper brings the analysis of characteristics of the expansion of Pedagogy courses in Brazil, especially in the last decade, based on data from the Higher Education Census and the National Student Performance Exam (known by the acronym *ENADE*, in Portuguese), from the National Institute of Educational Studies and Research Anísio Teixeira (INEP), updated until 2021. The process of expansion of the Pedagogy course follows two trends: at a macro level, there is the process of growth in private Higher Education, especially concentrated in a few financialized groups; at the micro level, there is a set of legal inductions for teacher education to take place at a higher level and the consolidation of the Pedagogy course as a privileged place for teacher education for Early Childhood Education and early grades of Elementary School as opposed to other courses like the course of Normal Colleges (Teacher training colleges which prepare teachers for Elementary School). The results presented by this work point to what was here called “large-scale deformation”, considering the increasing concentration of enrollments in private universities focused almost exclusively on teaching (with little articulation with research and extension), in distance learning courses, with high dropout rates and low scores in *ENADE* compared to federal and state public institutions.

**Keywords:** Pedagogy course, Higher Education policies, expansion of Higher Education, privatization.

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## **EXPANSÃO E MERCANTILIZAÇÃO DOS CURSOS DE PEDAGOGIA: DEFORMAÇÃO EM LARGA ESCALA DE FUTUROS PEDAGOGOS**

**RESUMO:** Este artigo traz a análise das características da expansão dos cursos de Pedagogia no Brasil, especialmente na última década, com base em dados do Censo da Educação Superior e do Exame Nacional do Desempenho do Estudante (Enade), do Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais Anísio Teixeira (Inep), atualizados até 2021. O processo de expansão do curso de Pedagogia segue duas tendências: em nível macro, tem-se o processo de crescimento da educação privada de nível superior, especialmente concentrada em poucos grupos financeirizados; em nível micro, tem-se um conjunto de induções legais para que a formação de professores ocorra em nível superior e a consolidação do curso de Pedagogia como lugar privilegiado da formação de professores para a Educação Infantil e os anos iniciais do Ensino Fundamental em oposição a outros cursos como o Normal Superior. Os resultados apresentados por este trabalho apontam para o que foi aqui denominado como “deformação em larga escala”, considerando a crescente concentração das matrículas em universidades privadas centradas quase que exclusivamente no ensino (com pouca articulação com pesquisa e extensão), em cursos a distância, com altas taxas de evasão e baixas notas no Enade na comparação com instituições públicas federais e estaduais.

**Palavras-chave:** curso de Pedagogia, políticas de Ensino Superior, expansão do Ensino Superior, privatização.

## **EXPANSIÓN Y MERCANTILIZACIÓN DE LOS CURSOS DE PEDAGOGÍA: DEFORMACIÓN A GRAN ESCALA DE FUTUROS PEDAGOGOS**

**RESUMEN:** Este artículo trae el análisis de las características de la expansión de los cursos de pedagogía en Brasil, especialmente en la última década, con base en datos del Censo de la Educación Superior y del Examen Nacional de Desempeño del Estudiante (Enade), del Instituto Nacional de Estudios e Investigaciones Educativas Anísio Teixeira (Inep), actualizados hasta 2021. El proceso de expansión del curso de Pedagogía sigue dos tendencias: a nivel macro, hay un proceso de crecimiento de la educación privada de nivel superior, especialmente concentrada en unos pocos grupos financierizados; a nivel micro, existe un conjunto de inducciones legales para que la formación de profesores ocurra en nivel superior y la consolidación de la carrera de pedagogía como lugar privilegiado para la formación de profesores de Educación Infantil y años iniciales de la Enseñanza Primaria en oposición a otros cursos como el curso normal superior. Los resultados presentados por este trabajo apuntan a lo que aquí se ha denominado “deformación a gran escala”, considerando la creciente concentración de las matrículas en universidades privadas enfocadas casi exclusivamente a la enseñanza (con poca articulación con investigación y extensión), en cursos a distancia, con alta índices de deserción y puntajes bajos de Enade en comparación con las instituciones públicas federales y estatales.

**Palabras clave:** curso de Pedagogía, políticas de Enseñanza Superior, expansión de Enseñanza Superior, privatización.

## INTRODUCTION

The debate about the space and content of teacher education in Brazil is a place of historical disputes, especially when considering the education of those who will teach in Early Childhood Education and in the initial grades of Elementary School. From the Normal School at the beginning of the Republic to the contemporary Pedagogy course, studies and practices, often divergent, were carried out with a view to defining what is necessary and essential for teacher education.

The National Curricular Guidelines (*Diretrizes Curriculares Nacionais – DCN*) of 2006 (Brasil, 2006a) represent a position in the face of these disputes and a political victory for those who understood the Pedagogy course as a general and comprehensive pre-service education program for teacher education. This process of establishing a generalist education centered on teaching for the Pedagogy course is the result of long debates in the field, whether with regard to its identity (Marafelli; Rodrigues; Brandão, 2017; Micheletti; Galian, 2017), or in function of groups that took opposing positions on what should or should not constitute the Pedagogy course (Pimenta; Pinto; Severo, 2022). In the debates about what the Pedagogy course should be, the conceptions of training – generalist vs. specialist; teacher vs. technician; theory vs. practice; bachelor's degree vs. pre-service education program – and the best place for this formation – specialized institutes, colleges or universities are in dispute. Furthermore, questions are raised in relation to the most recent proposals for educational reform and teacher education (Portelinha, 2021) linked to the Brazilian Common Core State Standards (*Base Nacional Comum Curricular - BNCC*) (Brasil, 2018b) and the Brazilian Common Core for Initial Teacher Training of Basic Education (known, in Brazil, by the acronym *BNC-Formação*) – Resolution no. 2, of December 20, 2019 (Brasil, 2019).

Despite the relevance and pertinence of these debates, there is a recent process of financialization in Higher Education, starting with the launch of the first Initial Public Offerings (IPOs) by economic conglomerates linked to the sector, in 2007, and the flexibility, if there is one, of regulation of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) (Seki, 2021), which seems to set in motion what is termed here as a large-scale deformation of future pedagogues.

In this sense, in this paper, we aim to analyze the characteristics of the expansion of Pedagogy courses in the last decade, taking as a reference data from the Higher Education Census, between 2009-2021, and the National Student Performance Exam (*Exame Nacional do Desempenho do Estudante - ENADE*), carried out in 2017 and in 2021, produced by the National Institute of Educational Studies and Research Anísio Teixeira (INEP) relating to these courses<sup>2</sup>. Methodologically, we carried out a bibliographic study and statistical treatment of data from all students/courses in the area of Pedagogy available in the microdata of the Higher Education Census and *ENADE*. Additionally, we made a differentiation between private Higher Education institutions, based on information from the sponsors available in the historical series of the Higher Education Census, combined with the analysis of the pages of private HEIs on the internet. With this, we found those that belong to the ten largest private Higher Education groups (*Anima, Cruzeiro do Sul, Estácio, Kroton, Leonardo da Vinci, Ser Educacional, Universidade Cesumar – UniCesumar, Universidade Nove de Julho – UNINOVE, Centro Universitário Internacional – UNINTER and Universidade Paulista – UNIP*).

As we will develop later, in the data analysis, this differentiation helps us understand the characteristics of the Pedagogy course expansion process. The hypothesis presented here is that, instead of

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<sup>2</sup> In February 2022, the Ministry of Education removed access to historical series of various educational census microdata, arguing that the information contained therein posed a risk of identifying students, which contradicts the General Data Protection Law (LGPD) - Law no. 13,709, of August 14, 2018 (Brasil, 2018a). The analyzes conducted in this paper are in accordance with LGPD and used microdata provided by the Ministry of Education and preserved by the authors before their removal in February 2022.

different training models emerging, deforming practices appear – in certain cases bordering on “non-training” – for a large portion of students on Pedagogy courses.

The dispute over the best place for teacher education becomes strange when large private, financialized and cartelized groups start to offer the largest portion of vacancies for this course in their institutions, known as universities and university centers, completely detached from the logic of university education, which provides for the inseparability between teaching, research and extension, in addition to presenting high dropout rates and low scores in *ENADE*, as we will show in this work based on microdata from *ENADE* and the Higher Education Census (INEP, 2022a, 2022b, 2022c)<sup>3</sup>.

Education in the Pedagogy course is being destroyed, replaced by a large-scale deformation, carried out by large private groups that have been concentrating, over the years, more and more enrollments, especially in low quality courses offered in the Distance Learning modality. This process of commodification of teacher education reverberates not only in the deformation of future teachers, but it has serious consequences for the education of future generations. Educators and the entire Brazilian society seem to experience a paroxysm: the need to defend the possibility of some education occurring through the harsh reality of institutions that carry out deformation on a large scale.

## **THE HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS OF LARGE-SCALE DEFORMATION IN THE PEDAGOGY COURSE**

The large-scale deformation process underway in the Pedagogy course has the macro context of commercial expansion of Higher Education in recent decades and has specific characteristics originating from the micro context of the history of this course in Brazil. At the macro level, there is a broad movement of financialization and cartelization of the educational sector, with large private groups acquiring colleges, university centers and universities, concentrating the majority of enrollments in Brazilian Higher Education (Sguissardi, 2015).

By comparing data from the Higher Education Census with the Internet pages of HEIs and their sponsors, it was possible to compare data from HEIs belonging to the ten largest private groups with other private and public institutions. We observed that around 62% of all entrants into Brazilian Higher Education, in 2020, enrolled in HEIs of the ten largest private groups. In institutions under the management of these groups, 47% of those enrolled are attending courses with low *ENADE* scores (1 or 2) and with a high dropout rate – given that, according to Census data, only 42% of entrants in 2018 were active at the end of 2019 (Bielschowsky *et al.*, 2022).

The tendency to concentrate enrollments in large private groups prioritizes distance learning in courses with little or low regulation by the Ministry of Education. As a consequence of this movement, there is a drop in the quality of courses with low evaluations in *ENADE*, a high dropout rate and an increase in the number of students per teacher (Bielschowsky, 2020). The expansion of distance learning has been used as a strategy to make courses cheaper and precarious (Bielschowsky; Amaral, 2022). This process goes against the social struggles that culminated in the approval of the National Education Plan (*Plano Nacional de Educação - PNE*) – Law no. 13,005, of June 25, 2014, especially Goal 12, which foresees a 40% expansion of new vacancies in Higher Education in the public sector (Brasil, 2014). In the comparison between 2012 and 2019,

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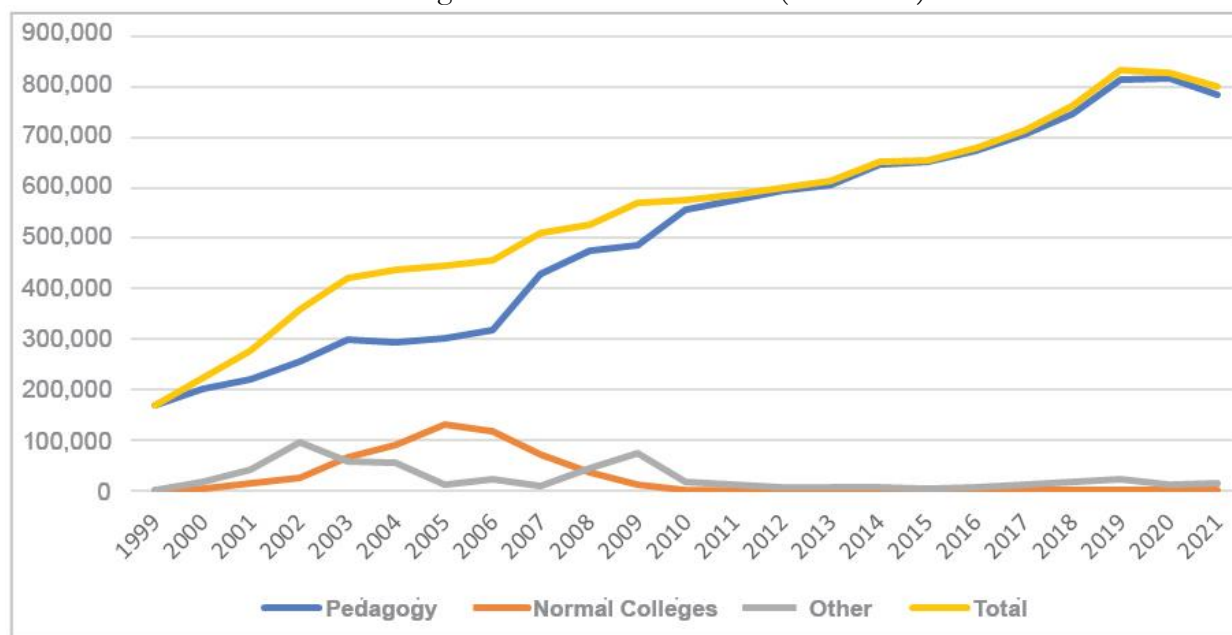
<sup>3</sup> The microdata from the Higher Education Census and the 2019 *ENADE* were stored by the authors based on the microdata available in September 2019.

the National Education Plan Monitoring Panel<sup>4</sup> shows that the participation of the public segment in the expansion of undergraduate enrollments was 11.7%, a number far from the 40% predicted by 2024.

At the micro level, the Pedagogy course historically had different objectives and its identity as a teacher education course for teaching at Early Childhood Education and initial grades of Elementary School is not as consensual nowadays. However, its recent expansion occurs both due to legal and political inducers and due to the expansion of private education.

Figure 1 shows the distribution of enrollments in courses in the Education area, with the exception of those for teacher education in professional disciplines and specific subjects. Thus, enrollments include the Pedagogy course, the Normal College course and other offers, such as initial grades of Elementary School teacher education, teacher education for Special Education, etc.

**Figure 1** – Evolution of enrollments in Pedagogy courses, Normal College courses, and other courses for educating Basic Education teachers (1999-2021)



**Source:** Authors' elaboration based on data from the Synopses and Censuses of Higher Education by INEP.

In the last two decades, there has been a growth in enrollment in courses aimed at educating Early Childhood Education and initial grades of Elementary School teachers, converging, especially since 2006, on the Pedagogy course. Between 2003 and 2006, Pedagogy numbers remained stagnant, in a clear relationship with the growth in enrollment in Normal Colleges. However, with the publication of the 2005 National Curricular Guidelines for teacher education – Resolution no. 1, of November 17, 2005 (Brasil, 2005c) and the specific National Curricular Guidelines for the Pedagogy course (Brasil, 2006a), the Normal Colleges started to lose relevance on the Brazilian scene and headed towards its extinction in the following years. As a result of this movement that resulted in the approval of the 2006 National Curricular Guidelines, enrollments in other Early Childhood Education and initial grades of Elementary School teacher education courses were gradually reduced and the Pedagogy course became completely dominant in this offer from 2010 onwards. In order to comprehend the consolidation of the Pedagogy course as the main locus of

<sup>4</sup> Available at: <https://www.gov.br/inep/pt-br/acesso-a-informacao/dados-abertos/inep-data/painel-de-monitoramento-do-pne>. Accessed on: Sep 30, 2022.

education for teaching in Early Childhood Education and in the initial grades of Elementary School, a brief historical digression is necessary.

An important milestone in teacher education in Brazil was the Caetano de Campos Reform (March 27, 1890) and the institution of the Normal School (*Escola Normal*) as a place for teacher education, more than developing pedagogical theories, for future teachers who would observe and reproduce the teaching practices carried out in Model Schools (Hilsdorf, 2011). At the beginning of the 20th century, the debate about the educational level where teacher education should take place focused on the defense of Higher Education, especially in universities. This defense appeared explicitly in the *Manifesto dos Pioneiros da Educação Nova* [Manifesto of the Pioneers of New Education] (Vidal, 2013).

However, the Pedagogy course was only created by Decree-Law no. 1,190, of April 4, 1939 (Brasil, 1939), which established the bachelor degree in Pedagogy in the first three years of education, being able to obtain the pre-service teacher education degree with a fourth year of the didactics course, within the scope of the training model that became known as 3+1 (Sokolowski, 2013). The course was not intended, as today, to educate children's teachers, but specialists in education, in the bachelor's degree, and teachers in Normal Schools, in the pre-service teacher education degree. Teacher education for Early Childhood Education and initial grades of Elementary School continued at the Normal School, which was later incorporated into High School (Primary and Secondary Teacher Training Courses – called *Magistério* in Brazil) (Gatti *et al.*, 2019). Its curriculum was rigid, consisting of prescribed subjects, and the teacher was clearly understood as a transmitter of knowledge and the students as receivers and reproducers of this knowledge (Brandt; Hobold, 2019).

The second curriculum of the Pedagogy course was the result of the restructuring proposed by Opinion no. 251/62 (Brasil, 1963) of the then Federal Education Council, which dismantled the logic of the 3+1 model, allowing concomitant training in the bachelor's and pre-service teacher education degree courses, changes in the organization of mandatory subjects, and opening the possibility of optional subjects (Brandt; Hobold, 2019).

During the period of the military dictatorship, another change came with Opinion no. 252/1969 of the Federal Education Council (Brasil, 1969), authored by Valnir Chagas, which abolished the difference between a bachelor's degree and a pre-service teacher education degree in Pedagogy, so that all pedagogues trained in some of the qualifications (administration, guidance, supervision, etc.) would also be trained for teaching in the High School teaching course (Sokolowski, 2013). The Opinion also opened up, for the first time, the possibility for pedagogues to teach at the initial grades of Elementary School, claiming that “whoever can do the most, can do the least”; thus, it was understood that, if the pedagogue was responsible for educating the teacher for the initial grades, in the normal course, could also teach at this level of education.

Opinion no. 252/69 established the third curriculum of the Pedagogy course, defining more clearly the qualifications: educational guidance, school administration, school supervision, school inspection, teaching of subjects and practical activities of Normal School courses. Furthermore, it made teacher education, now only at pre-service teacher education degree level, divided into a common part (the basis of the pre-service teaching degree) and a diversified part (training in qualifications) and established, among other things, the curricular internship. From then on, a single Pedagogy course offered different qualifications and the possibility of working in Early Childhood Education and initial grades of Elementary School as one of these qualifications (Brandt; Hobold, 2019).

Subsequently, with the reform of Basic Education in 1971 – Law no. 5,692, of August 11 (Brasil, 1971) –, the minimum training for teaching at the initial grades of Elementary School was established with the “[...] specific 2nd degree qualification [ ...]” (Article 30) and the “[...] training of administrators, planners, advisors, inspectors, supervisors and other education specialists will be carried out in an undergraduate higher education course, with full or short duration, or graduate studies” (Article 33), keeping teacher education and training of education specialists separated.

In the period after the Federal Constitution of 1988, the Brazilian National Education Guidelines and Framework Law (*Lei de Diretrizes e Bases – LDB*) – Law no. 9,394, of December 20, 1996 – defined, in its Article 62, that the education of Basic Education teachers would be carried out “[...] at a higher education level, in a pre-service teaching degree course, full degree, in universities and higher education institutes, admitted, as minimum training for the exercise of teaching in Early Childhood Education and in the first four grades of Elementary School, that offered at secondary level, in the Normal modality” (Brasil, 1996)<sup>5</sup>. And, in Article 87, defined that “[...] only teachers qualified at a higher education level or trained in in-service training will be admitted” (Brasil, 1996). Thus, after the Brazilian National Education Guidelines and Framework Law – *LDB*, the secondary level teaching courses, which were central in the formation of teachers for the Early Childhood Education and the initial grades of Elementary School throughout the 20th century, would be doomed to closure, with the transfer of all teacher education to the Higher Education level.

However, this definition proved to be incompatible with the Brazilian reality, given that Law no. 12,796, of April 4, 2013 (Brasil, 2013) revoked the mandatory admission of teachers with only Higher Education level. Despite this revocation, it is important to remember that the National Education Plan (Brasil, 2014), in the following year, proposed, in Goal 15, “specific higher education training” for all Basic Education teachers, in addition to 50% with a graduate degree (Goal 16).

Another important aspect occurred at the National Education Council/Chamber of Higher Education (*Conselho Nacional de Educação/Câmara de Educação Superior – CNE/CES*) with Resolution CNE/CES no. 1, of February 1, 2005, which authorizes, in its Article 1, the “[...] qualification endorsement for teaching in the initial four grades of Elementary School” (Brasil, 2005b, p. 1), as long as the undergraduates have taken specific disciplines in the area (as well as completed a supervised internship) mentioned in the Resolution. This possibility of endorsement was extended until 2007, with Resolution no. 8, of March 20, 2006 (Brasil, 2006b) and, later 2010, with Resolution no. 2, of January 20, 2009 (Brasil, 2009). Likewise, the possibility of endorsement for Early Childhood Education qualification was regulated by Resolution no. 9, of October 4, 2007 (Brasil, 2007) and by Resolution no. 2, of June 26, 2008 (Brasil, 2008), also establishing 2010 as the final year for those completing the Pedagogy course. The different qualifications of the Pedagogy course are also an effect of this endorsement movement, which are becoming increasingly less relevant to the detriment of generalist education for Early Childhood Education and initial grades of Elementary School teachers.

An important part of this debate focused on the “*universitarização*” [university-based training] of teacher education; however, in Sarti’s (2019) view, there was no effective university-based training (*universitarização*), due to the fact that a large part of Pedagogy courses is offered by non-university institutions. However, this phenomenon can only be understood in a double dimension: the distribution between the places of offering and the number of course enrollments.

Using data from the Higher Education Census, it is possible to observe that, in 2017, 49.6% of Pedagogy courses were offered by colleges, but represented only 21% of enrollments. The number of enrollments in colleges, between 2010 and 2021, fell from 194,019 to 83,024 enrollments, representing just 10.6% of the offer. In this sense, we can say that there is a university-based training (*universitarização*) of the Pedagogy course; however, the specific growth of the private sector and, in particular, of large groups is the hallmark of this process, via the acquisition of colleges. Large private groups are concentrating their enrollments in university centers and universities, however, operating almost exclusively in the undergraduate field, transferring new enrollments to distance learning courses and with little presence of research and extension activities (Bielschowsky *et al.*, 2022).

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<sup>5</sup> In the current version, following the reform of the 9-year Elementary School, the expression “first four grades” has been changed to “first five grades”.

It draws attention to the fact that private non-denominational universities have only 0.7% of their students taking *stricto sensu* graduate courses, compared to 8% of confessional universities, 15% of state public universities and 17% of federal public universities (Bielschowsky *et al.*, 2022). These data call into question whether, in fact, the offering of the Pedagogy course in these private institutions meets what we could call “*universitarização*” [university-based training], or whether part of these private HEIs, precisely those with the largest number of students, are mistakenly being called “university”, when, in fact, these are institutions dedicated almost exclusively to teaching.

As seen, several movements led to the consolidation of the Pedagogy course as a privileged space for educating Early Childhood Education and initial grades of Elementary School teachers, increasing its demand, which will be quickly absorbed by cheap, low-quality courses. The debate about what should or should not be the education of a pedagogue has been overrun by a process that produces deformation on a large scale.

## THE SIGNS OF DEFORMATION: PRECARIOUSNESS AND COMMERCIALIZATION

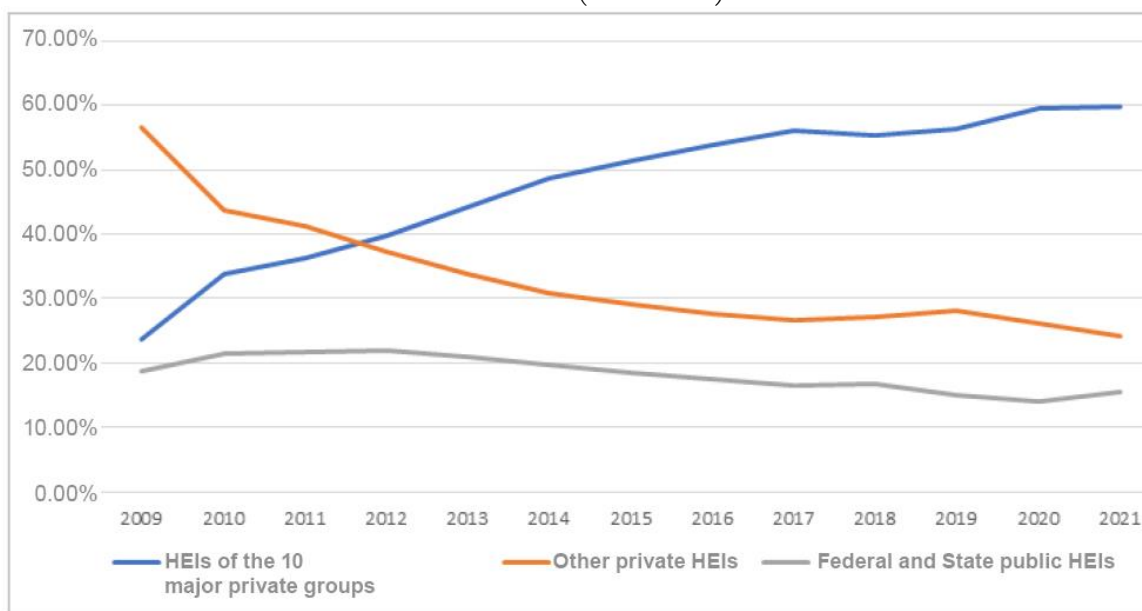
The process of deformation of future pedagogues on a large scale can be observed from the expansion of the private sector, precarious and commercialized, with enrollments and admissions in a few HEIs belonging to large-financialized groups, with academic conditions significantly worse than public HEIs. Pimenta, Pinto and Severo (2022) point out how for-profit institutions receive students with precarious social and academic profiles; however,

[...] if the social and cultural condition of students who attend the Pedagogy course in for-profit institutions highlights the need for a pedagogical project that considers their difficulties, what happens is contradictorily the opposite: in addition to not implementing institutional initiatives that minimize the unfavorable conditions of these students, they further worsen their academic performance by denying the minimum conditions necessary for their professional training (Pimenta; Pinto; Severo, 2022, p. 9).

There is a significant reduction in the public sector in Pedagogy course enrollments, a decrease that is an expression of a “[...] perverse combination of students in more unfavorable conditions entering educational institutions totally uncommitted to the quality of the courses” (Pimenta; Pinto; Severo, 2022). This is a visible fact in the face of a growing process of cartelization in the offer of Higher Education in the country, where just ten large private groups were responsible for almost 2/3 of total enrollments of new entrants in 2020. This process strongly affects the area of Pedagogy, considered profitable by these groups. Figure 2 shows the percentage of students in Pedagogy courses in HEIs that belonged, in 2020, to these ten private groups, in other private HEIs and in public HEIs (federal and state).



**Figure 2** - Percentage of enrollment participation in Pedagogy courses by type of Higher Education Institution (2009-2021)



**Source:** Authors' elaboration based on data from the Higher Education Censuses by INEP.

In 2021, 59.9% of enrollments and 70.8% of admissions to the Pedagogy course were concentrated in HEIs belonging to the ten large private groups. The precarious conditions of the work carried out by these groups are revealed, for example, in the relationship between the number of enrollments and the number of teachers equivalent to 40 hours<sup>6</sup>, which vary between 84.7 and 516.3 students per teacher (Bielchowsky *et al.*, 2022), well above the average of this ratio in private universities in general (excluding confessionals) which is of 35.7. In these private universities, there is a very negligible presence of graduate studies and research. The average of private universities (excluding confessionals) for graduate students is 270, compared to 2,300 for federal universities, and the average number of graduate programs is five for private universities and 30 for federal universities (Bielchowsky *et al.*, 2022). Furthermore, the number of full-time teachers has a median of 31.4%, just below the legal minimum of one third.<sup>7</sup>

Another relevant aspect in understanding this scenario is the growing presence of distance learning for the Pedagogy course, due to the movement to facilitate the opening and regulation of courses of this type. Scudeler, Flores and Pires (2020) summarize the standardization of distance learning in Brazil in three phases: with the *LDB* - Brazilian National Education Guidelines and Framework Law (Brasil, 1996); Decree no. 2,494, of February 10, 1998 (Brasil, 1998); and Decree no. 5,622, of December 19, 2005 (Brasil, 2005a); with Normative Ordinance no. 40, of December 12, 2007 (Brasil, 2010); and with Normative Ordinance no. 11, of June 20, 2017 (Brasil, 2017b), which regulated Decree no. 9,057, of May 25, 2017 (Brasil, 2017a). In this last phase, according to Scudeler, Flores and Pires (2020, p. 9), there are important changes with Decree no. 9,057/2017:

- a) allows the accreditation of HEIs exclusively for offering undergraduate and specialization courses in the distance learning modality; b) no longer provides for on-site evaluation of support

<sup>6</sup> The calculated value is obtained by summing the hours worked by the teachers of the institution, considering 40 hours for full-time/exclusive dedication, 20 hours for part-time work, and 8 hours for hourly employees, then dividing this sum by 40.

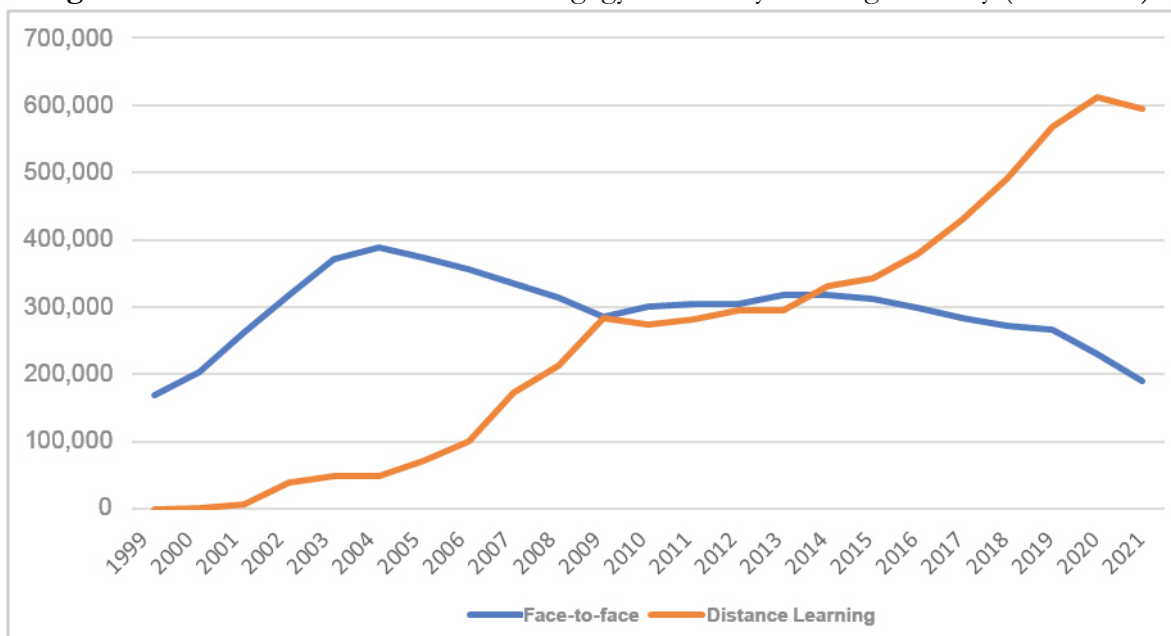
<sup>7</sup> The academic conditions of university centers and private colleges, especially those belonging to the ten major groups, are also quite precarious, as can be seen in this study.

branch campus, defining that on-site evaluation of institutional accreditation and re-accreditation processes as well as authorization, recognition and renewal of recognition processes for distance learning courses will take place at the main campus of the HEI; c) authorization for accredited HEIs to offer the distance learning modality, with the prerogative of autonomy, to offer courses in the modality regardless of authorization, and must only “inform” the creation of the course to the Ministry of Education, “for the purposes of supervision, evaluation and subsequent recognition”; and d) conditions the creation of support branch campus on compliance with the parameters defined by the Ministry of Education, according to the institutional evaluation results.

[...].  
All of this regulation, still in force, allows the large-scale opening of distance learning course branch campus and will further facilitate the expansion of this teaching modality, putting into question the quality of this teaching modality.

According to Article 9, Paragraph 3, of the 2015 National Curricular Guidelines – Resolution no. 2, of July 1, 2015, initial training for teaching professionals should be offered, “[...] preferably, in-person, with a high academic, scientific, technological and cultural standard” (Brasil, 2015, p. 9). However, as Scudeler, Flores and Pires (2020) have already reported, the expansion of the Pedagogy course, in a context in which more than half of enrollments would be in the distance modality in 2015, goes in the opposite direction to that proposed by the National Curricular Guidelines of 2015. We can confirm this with the data presented in Figure 3 below.

**Figure 3** - Number of enrollments in Pedagogy courses by teaching modality (1999-2021)

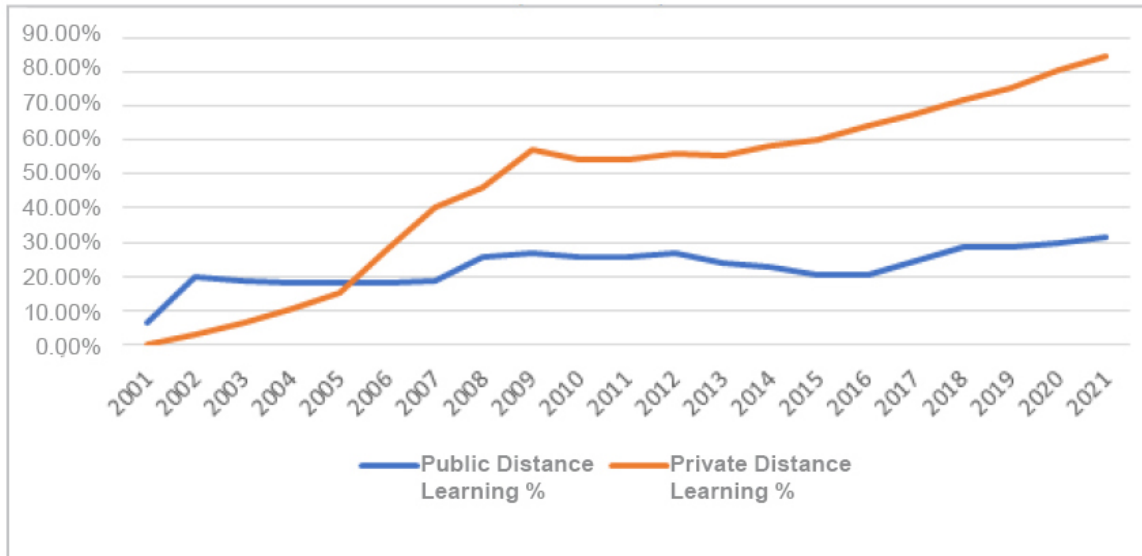


**Source:** Authors’ elaboration based on data from the Higher Education Censuses by INEP.

We highlight the growing expansion of distance learning after 2005, both in the context of Decree no. 5,622/2005, regulating the modality, and in the consolidation of Pedagogy as a privileged course for educating teachers for Early Childhood Education and initial grades of Elementary School. Between 2009 and 2014, when the 2010 distance learning regulations were introduced, enrollments between the modalities were maintained and balanced. From 2015 onwards, however, in a context of new guidelines for teacher

education and, later, between 2017 and 2018, the new regulatory framework for distance learning, there was a new and pronounced expansion of enrollments in distance learning and a drop in face-to-face modality. When this offer in the distance learning modality is analyzed from the point of view of the administrative category of HEIs, it is noted, in Figure 4, the growing proportion that takes up the Pedagogy course in the private sector.

**Figure 4** - Percentage of enrollments in distance learning Pedagogy courses in public and private HEIs (2001-2021)

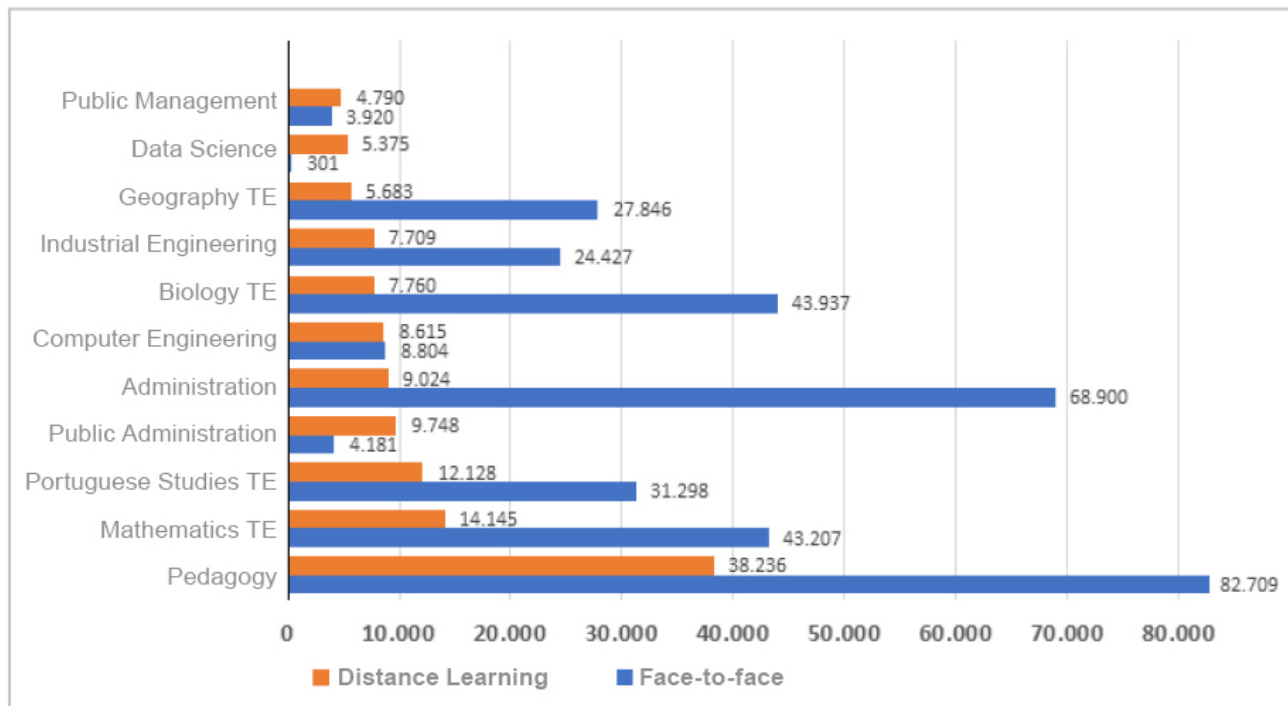


**Source:** Authors' elaboration based on data from the Higher Education Censuses by INEP.

Methodological note: For better understanding of the overall trend of the curves, enrollments in Distance Learning modality from *Universidade Estadual do Tocantins* (UNITINS) and *Universidade Luterana do Brasil* (ULBRA) were excluded between 2006 and 2013. This is because UNITINS was disaccredited for Distance Learning and ULBRA faced restrictions on new enrollments, with students completing their courses from that point onward.

Two observations are important for understanding the curves: 1) in line with what was previously mentioned, after a period of relative stability in the provision of distance learning courses in private HEIs, between 2009 and 2013, as a result of the intense supervision process carried out previously, the proportion of distance learning enrollments in private HEIs grew again and became more vigorous from 2016, with the relaxation of the rules for authorizing the operation of courses and branch campus; 2) the increase in the percentage of students in public distance learning modality, as of 2017, is due to the growing number of enrollments at the *Universidade Virtual do Estado de São Paulo* (UNIVESP), with around 11 thousand students in Pedagogy courses as of 2018, despite the lack of investment in public distance learning courses from the *Universidade Aberta do Brasil* (UAB) system. In public institutions, in 2021, enrollments in distance learning represented only 8.5% of the total, however it is worth mentioning the ten largest distance learning courses in federal and state public HEIs and their respective face-to-face enrollments, as highlighted in Figure 5.

**Figure 5** - The ten largest distance learning courses in Federal and State public HEIs in 2021



Source: Authors' elaboration based on data from the Higher Education Censuses by INEP.

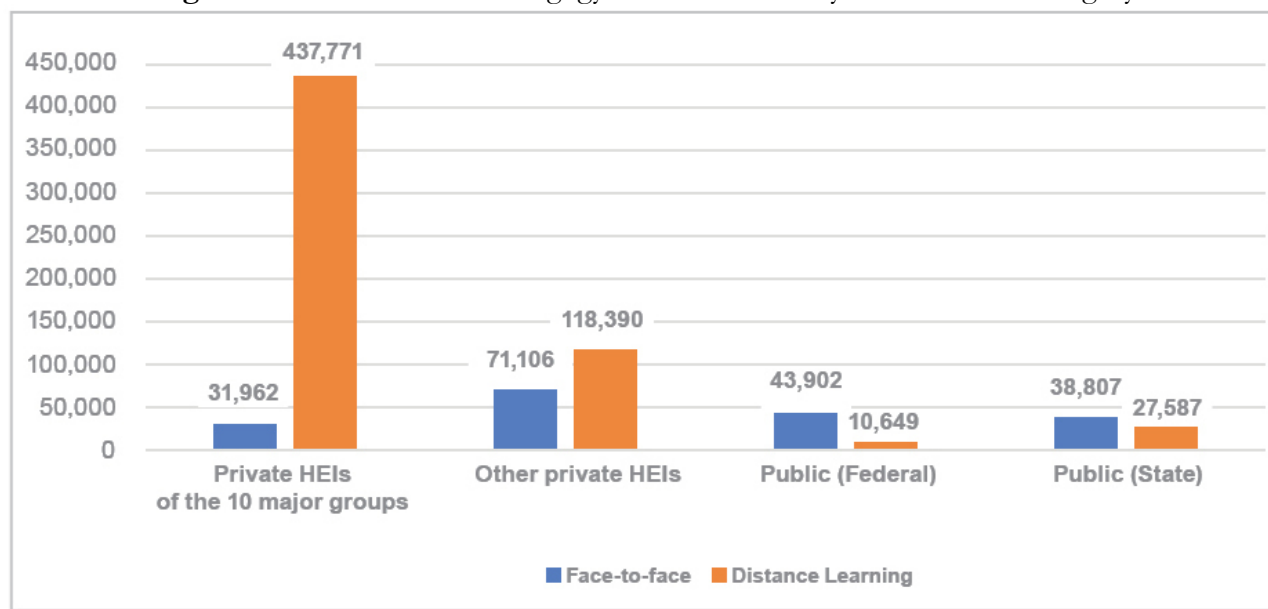
Note: TE refers to Teacher Education.

We can see, in Figure 5, that the only course with a greater distance learning offer than face-to-face is Public Administration, which was the target of a specific action by the Ministry of Education in 2009 to qualify professionals, aiming to improve the country's public management<sup>8</sup>. This offer meets a specific demand for public service training. Of the ten distance courses in public institutions with the highest number of enrollments, five are of teacher education, the result of an action by the Ministry of Education with the objective of reducing the shortage of Basic Education teachers in the country, which included other programs, such as the National Basic Education Teacher Training Plan (*Plano Nacional de Formação de Professores da Educação Básica - PARFOR*), along with the Paulo Freire Platform and the offer of pre-service teacher education degrees by Federal Institutes. We observed that, for pre-service degrees, Pedagogy courses have the highest percentage of distance learning students, 31.6%; followed by Portuguese Studies TE, with 27.9%; Mathematics TE, with 24.7%; Geography TE, with 16.9%; and Biology TE, with 15.0%. Of the 170 thousand enrollments in distance learning at federal and state public HEIs in 2020, 44.7 thousand were in bachelor's degrees (26.3%), 109.2 thousand in pre-service teacher education degrees (64.3%) and 16 thousand in technologists (9.4%). The Pedagogy course alone represents 23.8% of all distance enrollments at federal and state public HEIs.

The academic conditions of HEIs belonging to the ten largest private groups have already been highlighted. For the Pedagogy course, the presence of these large groups is remarkable. Figure 6 shows the number of people enrolled in the Pedagogy course in 2020 by administrative category, separating the HEIs that belong to the ten largest private groups from the others.

<sup>8</sup> This refers to the *Programa Nacional de Formação em Administração Pública* [National Program for Public Administration Training] under the UAB System, launched by Public Notice no. 1 on April 27, 2009. Available at: [https://www.gov.br/capes/pt-br/centrais-de-conteudo/copy\\_of\\_EDITAL\\_N1\\_PNAP\\_DED\\_CAPES\\_2009.pdf](https://www.gov.br/capes/pt-br/centrais-de-conteudo/copy_of_EDITAL_N1_PNAP_DED_CAPES_2009.pdf). Accessed on: Sep 30, 2022.

**Figure 6** - Enrollments in Pedagogy courses in 2021 by administrative category



**Source:** Authors' elaboration based on data from the Higher Education Censuses by INEP.

When looking at these numbers, we can see that only 15.4% of students enrolled in 2021 were taking courses at federal and state public HEIs (face-to-face and distance learning), and that 70.8% of all Pedagogy students were taking distance learning courses in private HEIs, the vast majority (78.7%), 437 thousand students, in HEIs belonging to ten large groups, which highlights the centralizing nature of this movement in these institutions.

Regarding new entrants in 2021, there were a total of 283,150 students in the Pedagogy course at public and private HEIs, of which 246,725 in distance learning courses. Of these, 176,630 were enrolled in distance learning courses at just 15 HEIs, as shown in Table 1 below.

**Table 1** - Entrants in distance learning Pedagogy courses in 2021

HEI	Financial group	Number of entrants in distance learning	Total % of entrants in Pedagogy (face-to-face and distance learning)
<i>Universidade Pitágoras Unopar Anhanguera</i>	Kroton	38,672	13.7%
<i>Centro Universitário Leonardo da Vinci</i>	Leonardo da Vinci	25,078	8.9%
<i>Universidade Anhanguera</i>	Kroton	17,971	6.3%
<i>Universidade Paulista</i>	Unip	16,361	5.8%
<i>Universidade Cesumar</i>	UniCesumar	12,965	4.6%
<i>Universidade Estácio de Sá</i>	Estácio	11,027	3.9%
<i>Centro Universitário Internacional</i>	Uninter	10,373	3.7%
<i>Centro Universitário FAEL</i>	Ser Educacional	8,493	3.0%
<i>Universidade Cruzeiro do Sul</i>	Cruzeiro do Sul	8,473	3.0%
<i>Universidade Cidade de São Paulo</i>	Cruzeiro do Sul	6,682	2.4%

HEI	Financial group	Number of entrants in distance learning	Total % of entrants in Pedagogy (face-to-face and distance learning)
<i>Universidade Nove de Julho</i>	UNINOVE	5,383	1.9%
<i>Universidade de Franca</i>	Cruzeiro do Sul	4,569	1.6%
<i>Centro Universitário Estácio Santa Catarina</i>	Estácio	3,636	1.3%
<i>Centro Universitário Maurício de Nassau</i>	Ser Educacional	3,506	1.2%
<i>Centro Universitário Estácio Ribeirão Preto</i>	Estácio	3,441	1.2%
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>176,630</b>	<b>62.4%</b>

**Source:** Authors' elaboration based on data from the Higher Education Censuses by INEP.

Methodological note: Institutions were considered if the number of entrants in Pedagogy distance learning courses in 2021 was greater than 1% of the total entrants in both face-to-face and distance learning Pedagogy courses.

Only four HEIs total 98.1 thousand admissions to Pedagogy course with distance learning, which corresponds to 34.5% of the total of 284.3 thousand students who entered the Pedagogy course in face-to-face and distance learning courses in public and private HEIs in 2021. It is notable how, in addition to a concentration on distance learning, it is moving towards an offer concentrated in a few private for-profit HEIs, belonging to a few financialized private groups. This situation is growing and will only be reversed through the supervision of distance learning courses combined with regulations regarding the prevention of cartelization in the concentration of enrollments in financialized groups.

What are the consequences of the current context, which is worsening year after year, in which the offer of Pedagogy courses is strongly focused on distance learning in a few HEIs belonging to large private groups?

## CONSEQUENCES OF DEFORMATION BASED ON *ENADE* AND DROPOUT RATES

We took two analysis criteria to observe how the scenario described above results in a process of deformation of pedagogues: *ENADE* scores/ratings and student evasion.

In order to identify where the graduates of Pedagogy courses who obtained an *ENADE* score equal to 1 or 2, on a scale of 1 to 5, are concentrated, the percentage of those who obtained these scores (1 or 2) by different types of HEI, in different teaching modalities for the 2017 and 2021 exams, were separated in Table 2.

**Table 2** - Percentage of enrolled students in Pedagogy courses who obtained scores 1 or 2 in *ENADE* 2017 and 2021, by types of HEIs and teaching modalities

	Distance learning		Face-to-face		Both modalities	
	2017	2021	2017	2021	2017	2021
Private College	92.6%	96.9%	42.2%	48.2%	48.4%	68.1%
Private University Center	42.1%	45.8%	28.1%	30.3%	37.9%	43.1%
Private University	78.6%	88.4%	13.7%	39.7%	64.3%	83.3%
All private HEIs	64.3%	76.5%	31.5%	40.8%	51.4%	69.7%
Federal and State public HEIs	34.6%	18.8%	19.8%	11.2%	22.6%	13.7%

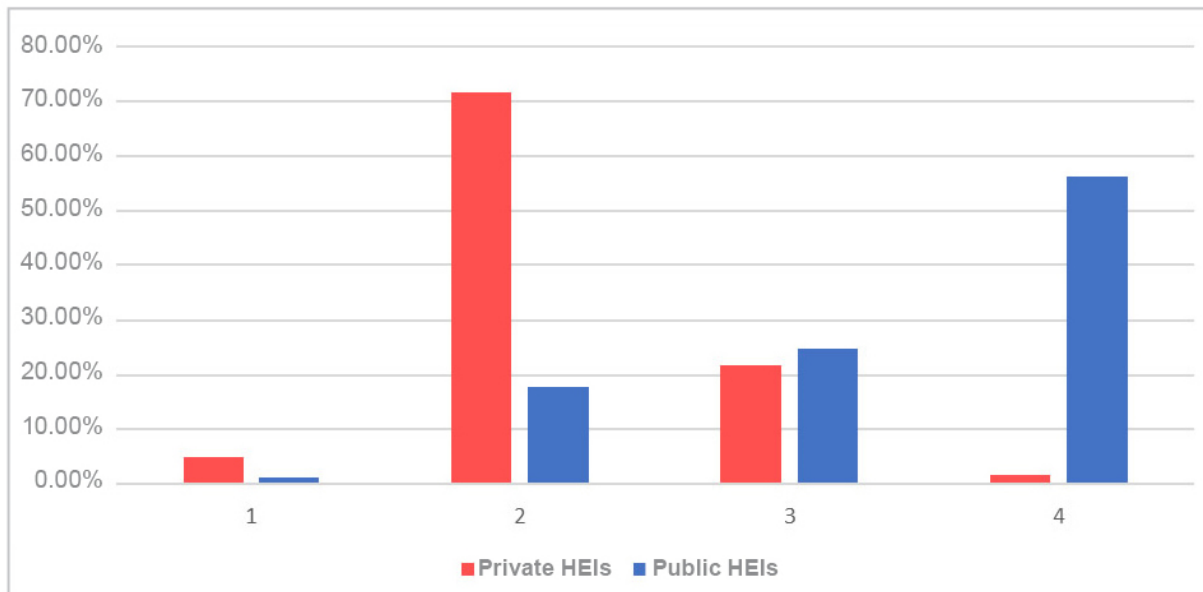
**Source:** Authors' elaboration based on microdata from *ENADE*-INEP.

A great difference in the performance of those enrolled in distance learning and face-to-face Pedagogy courses at private HEIs draws attention, in which 76.5% of distance learning students are enrolled in courses with score 1 or 2 in the 2021 *ENADE* compared to 40.8% of the face-to-face courses, and also in relation to public distance learning, where only 18.8% of students are enrolled in courses with an *ENADE* 1 or 2 score.

The situation is even more serious in distance learning at private universities, as 88.4% of these graduates are enrolled in courses with an *ENADE* 1 or 2 score. There are 56,748 graduates who correspond to almost 40% of all graduates who took this exam in 2021. The question that remains is: What exactly are these universities? How are they still allowed to use the name “universities” and why does the Ministry of Education not take concrete supervisory measures in the face of this situation? As previously pointed out, these are HEIs focused almost exclusively on teaching, which goes against the constitutional principle of the inseparability of teaching, research and extension, with courses whose evaluation in *ENADE* is significantly worse than in public institutions. This is, therefore, a false “*universitarização*” [university-based training] of the Pedagogy course.

Furthermore, it is not an opposition between face-to-face and distance learning, as if private HEIs were worse than public ones because the former offer distance learning courses while the latter offer face-to-face courses. When we compare only the graduates of distance learning Pedagogy courses between public and private HEIs, the difference between the institutions becomes clear, as evidenced in Figure 7, which shows the percentage of distance learning Pedagogy graduates from public and private HEIs as a function of the *ENADE* score of the course.

**Figure 7** - Percentage of distance learning Pedagogy graduates from public and private HEIs as a function of the course’s *ENADE* score



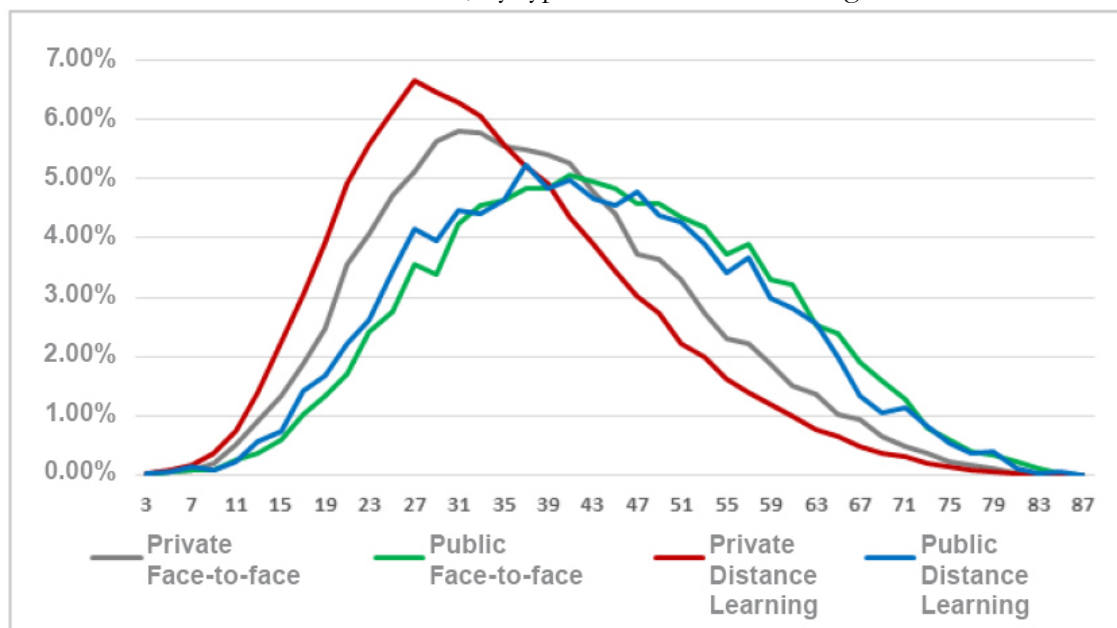
**Source:** Authors’ elaboration based on data from the Higher Education Censuses by INEP.

The difference in performance of students on distance learning courses between public and private HEIs is striking. While in public institutions the majority of students are on courses with *ENADE* 4 score, in the case of private HEIs, the majority are on courses with an *ENADE* 2 score. Even so, there are some Pedagogy courses in public HEIs that obtained the 2021 *ENADE* score 2, and two courses with score

1. The latter contain few students, one of them with four and the other with 77 graduates, and they have not had new entrants since 2018.

To better understand the meaning of this result, we analyze below the distribution of students' scores in the *ENADE* 2021 Pedagogy exam. Each student's final score is presented in the format of a numerical variable from 0 to 100 points, called *Nt Ger* in *ENADE* microdata, weighing 25% of general education and 75% of specific education. These scores are presented with two decimal places. For the purpose of analyzing the results, the students' scores were organized into only 50 values, from 1 to 99, in intervals of 2, that is, 1, 3, 5, 7, 11... 99. Those students who had grades between 0.00 and 2.00 are now listed as score 1, between 2.01 and 4.00 as score 3, between 4.01 and 6.00 as score 5 and so on. Then, for each variable, we take the percentage of students with each aggregate score, from 1 to 99. Figure 8 shows this distribution of scores for face-to-face and distance learning students in public (state and federal) and private institutions.

**Figure 8** - Distribution of scores obtained in the specific knowledge exam by graduates of Pedagogy courses in the *ENADE* 2021, by types of HEIs and teaching modalities



Source: Authors' elaboration based on microdata from *ENADE*-INEP.

The low performance of those completing courses at private HEIs is clear, when compared to the performance of face-to-face and distance learning students at public HEIs. A similar performance is observed among students on face-to-face and distance learning courses at public HEIs.

The overall low performance of distance learning students at private HEIs is a reflection of the concentration of distance learning enrollments in a few private groups whose main objective is profit. Among the distance learning graduates from private HEIs with the distribution of grades in red in Figure 8, 71.1 thousand are from HEIs of just five private groups, and 27.5 thousand from other private HEIs, representing almost half of the 146 thousand students who took the Pedagogy *ENADE* exam in 2021. This situation is likely to get worse, considering that, in 2020, four out of every five Pedagogy students entered the distance learning course at private HEIs, and this is not a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, as growth has been constant since 2018.



The *ENADE* results do not represent, in themselves, an indicator of the quality of the education of pedagogues at these institutions. A discussion such as that of initial teacher education is quite complex with regard to the characteristics of this education. However, a large-scale indicator such as *ENADE* allows us to understand that there are differences between the education offered by distance learning Pedagogy courses in large private groups and that offered in distance learning in public institutions or in face-to-face courses. From the knowledge mobilized in a large-scale evaluation, it is noted how pedagogues educated in distance learning from large private groups had access to fewer opportunities for study, reflection and learning. This is such precarious education that most students are unable to mobilize knowledge to get more than 40% of the exam questions correct. When it is observed that the vast majority of Brazilian pedagogues attended courses similar to these, the dimension of gravity for Early Childhood Education and initial grades of Elementary School in this and the coming decades is clear.

This scenario refers to those who managed to complete the course. The situation of large-scale deformation is even worse when considering the dropout rates from Pedagogy courses at private HEIs. Table 3 shows the dropout rate measured in 2020 for those entering in 2016.

**Table 3** - Dropout rates in 2020 for entrants in Pedagogy courses in 2016, by administrative category and teaching modality.

	Face-to-face modality	Distance learning modality	Total
HEIs of the ten private groups	60.36%	57.96%	58.33%
Other private HEIs	44.69%	47.10%	45.61%
Public (State and Federal)	34.45%	29.07%	33.67%

**Source:** Authors' elaboration based on data from the Flow Indicators (INEP).

The rates show that Pedagogy students at HEIs in large groups drop out 27% higher in five years than those at other private HEIs and 75% higher than those at public HEIs. This fact is very impactful, considering that 69.1% of all those entering the Pedagogy course in 2020 enrolled in HEIs belonging to large private groups. In this way, a huge and growing number of people are condemned to dealing with large debts (either with the institutions themselves or with the Higher Education Student Financing Fund – *FIES*), due to their abandonment and a process of frustration of life projects in Higher Education.

This dropout movement should present even more worrying results for students who entered in more recent years. In fact, if we count the number of active students in 2019 having entered the distance learning courses of large private groups in 2018, it is observed that more than half of those incoming students in 2018 are no longer active nor graduated at the end of 2019. This result was obtained based on INEP student microdata from the 2018 and 2019 Censuses, not being possible to update this entry rate in 2019, as INEP did not publish the 2020 students' microdata.

How can the enrollment of over two-thirds of Pedagogy course entrants be justified when less than half of them graduate? This process is here called large-scale deformation, guided by the exclusion of a large contingent of undergraduates combined with those who obtain diplomas in very low-quality courses at *ENADE*. A process that, instead of mitigating, strengthens social inequality among young university students and also reflects on Basic Education students, who will at some point suffer the consequences of this deformation.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

There is no consensus on what the Pedagogy course and the profile of undergraduate pedagogues in Brazil should be. In the historical disputes about how the training of Early Childhood Education and initial grades of Elementary School teachers should be carried out, the position that it should take place in Pedagogy courses offered in university institutions has been strongly influenced by National Education Council and Ministry of Education regulations, especially after the approval of the *LDB* of 1996 – Brazilian National Education Guidelines and Framework Law. Experiences such as the Normal College course, with different training practices at secondary level, are becoming increasingly scarce, consolidating the place of the Pedagogy course in the education of Early Childhood Education and initial grades of Elementary School teachers.

Especially due to the approval of the Brazilian Common Core State Standards (*BNCC*) and the Brazilian Common Core for Initial Teacher Training of Basic Education (*BNC-Formação*), the debate on teacher education in Brazil, as a whole, and on Pedagogy courses, in particular, could be the place in which concepts would be discussed about which models are better, especially in the context of the criticisms already raised in the literature about the *BNCC* and *BNC-Formação*.

However, we are faced with a situation in which a model, primarily a university model, of a highly precarious Pedagogy course has been consolidated, as a result of the financial interest of some private groups that concentrate their enrollments in universities which, despite formally receiving this name, are institutions almost exclusively focused on teaching, especially distance learning, offering low quality courses. It was evident in this work that, in this context, the Pedagogy course in distance learning has become a relevant space for large private educational groups to operate, with high dropout rates and low performance of their students at *ENADE*.

Having been one of the courses with the highest number of enrollments for years, growing in the context of a legal induction to consolidate the education of future teachers at Higher Education (to the detriment of the historical education at Secondary level), Pedagogy has become a great source for for-profit HEIs that have profit as their main focus. As a result, we witnessed the entry of foreign capital and the presence on the stock market of some of these HEIs, which quickly grew to become large private groups, concentrating a significant part of enrollments in Brazilian Higher Education, especially in distance learning courses.

A financialization movement similar to this occurred in the last decade in the United States of America (USA), with the accelerated growth of enrollments in for-profit HEIs between 2006 and 2011, reaching 10.6% of total enrollments, which motivated different actions, including a US Senate commission that investigated this process and concluded in 2012 with a report on the practices of private for-profit HEIs. Its conclusions were alarming, pointing to the high dropout rates (reaching 75%), the low investment in student retention, the high expenses on advertising and marketing, pointing to the ineffectiveness of these institutions that were growing with tuition fees from students who did not complete their courses, interest on student debt and public financing for low-income students (Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions of United States Senate, 2012). With a strong reaction from society and government actions, the share of private for-profit HEIs quickly declined to 6.3% in 2015 and to 5.0% in 2020 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021).

A significant number of those interested in a teaching career, such as future pedagogues, are doomed to not graduate, considering the high dropout rates. Among those who manage to reach the end of the course, they will receive a poor-quality education that offers little in terms of learning opportunities.

The paroxysm is evident: the debate about what should or should not be the education of pedagogues in Brazil has been reduced to the urgency of defending the existence, at least, of a decent

education process, which allows Pedagogy students to complete (!) their degree and that the education experienced there allows them to develop minimum knowledge (!) for the development of the teaching work.

It is urgent to resume a rigorous process of regulating distance learning in Brazil, as well as tightening the standards so that an institution can be considered a university or university center, so that the growing process of large-scale deformation of pedagogues ceases. Once this tragic situation has been overcome, it will be possible to resume the debate, under minimal conditions, about the identity of the Pedagogy course and the appropriate processes for teacher education in the country.

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Author 2 – Active participation in data collection, data analysis, original writing and review of the final writing.

Author 3 – Collaboration in data collection, data analysis, original writing and review of the final writing.

## **DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest with this paper.

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