SPECIAL SECTION: TEACHING IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN PANDEMIC TIMES

UNIVERSITY TEACHING IN THE PANDEMIC CONTEXT AND HIGHER EDUCATION ENTRANCE[1]

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the characteristics of university teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic that enhanced students' transition to higher education. Eight first-year students of both sexes were interviewed, and the qualitative analysis of data showed that pedagogical adaptations made in remote education, professor-student interactions, commitment to student education, and recognition of university teaching quality enabled the transition to higher education. These findings restate professors' role in the learning process and permanence of first-year students, but stress the urgency of thinking about the political and social implications of remote education emergency, including university teaching in the pandemic, considering the intensification of professors' work and the limited space for their professional development.

Keywords: Professional development for professors. Higher education student. Dropout. Remote education.

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LA DOCENCIA UNIVERSITARIA EN EL CONTEXTO DE LA PANDEMIA Y EL INGRESSO A LA EDUCACIÓN SUPERIOR

RESUMEN

El propósito del estudio es analizar las características de la enseñanza universitaria en la pandemia de Covid-19 que favoreció la transición de los estudiantes a la educación superior. Se entrevistó a ocho estudiantes, de ambos sexos, y de los datos, analizados cualitativamente, se destacan: las adaptaciones pedagógicas realizadas a la educación a distancia, las interacciones profesor-alumno, el compromiso con la educación del alumno y el reconocimiento de la calidad de la enseñanza universitaria como favorecedora de la transición a la educación superior. Estos resultados reafirman el papel de los educadores en el aprendizaje y la permanencia de los estudiantes de primer año, pero indican la urgencia de pensar en las implicaciones políticas y sociales de la enseñanza remota de emergencia, incluyendo a la enseñanza universitaria en la pandemia, donde hay una sobrecarga de trabajo de los profesores y poco espacio para su desarrollo profesional.

Palabras clave: Desarrollo profesional docente. Estudiante universitario. Evasión. Enseñanza remota.

A DOCÊNCIA UNIVERSITÁRIA NO CONTEXTO DE PANDEMIA E O INGRESSO NO ENSINO SUPERIOR

RESUMO

O objetivo deste estudo é analisar as características da docência universitária na pandemia de Covid-19 que favoreceram a transição de estudantes ao ensino superior. Oito ingressantes, de ambos os sexos, foram entrevistados e dos dados, analisados qualitativamente, destacam-se: as adaptações pedagógicas realizadas no ensino remoto, as interações professor-aluno, o compromisso com a formação do aluno e o reconhecimento da qualidade da docência universitária como facilitadora da transição ao ensino superior. Tais resultados reafirmam o papel dos professores na aprendizagem e na permanência dos calouros, mas indicam a urgência em se pensar nas implicações políticas e sociais do ensino remoto emergencial, inclusive sobre a docência universitária na pandemia, com sobrecarga de trabalho do professor e pouco espaço para o seu desenvolvimento profissional.

Palavras-chave: Desenvolvimento profissional docente. Estudante universitário. Evasão. Ensino remoto.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid transformations in the production of knowledge, which conceptualizes the learning process as continuous, incur new demands to educational institutions that pose challenges for university teaching (CUNHA, 2018). Add to that the expanded, diverse, and heterogeneous profile of students accessing these institutions, encouraging them to promote an inclusive education that meets the diversity of new audiences (HERINGER, 2018). The recent suspension of face-to-face activities and consequent migration to remote education as a measure to contain the advance of the Covid-19 pandemic addresses concerns to higher education (HE).

The new coronavirus SARS-CoV-2, responsible for the Covid-19 disease, was first identified in Wuhan, China, in December 2019, and since then has spread to several countries. On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization officially declared the situation a pandemic (WHO, 2020b). Seven months after the first confirmed case in Brazil, over five million people were infected in the country and 150 thousand died.[4] Among these, nearly 5% manifested severe symptoms that required prolonged hospitalizations, thus burdening health systems capacity (WHO, 2020b; ZHU *et al*., 2020). Covid-19 severity is attributable to the lack of drugs to control the disease and a vaccine to immunize the world population.

Among the sanitary measures to prevent the spread of SARS-CoV-2 and avoid health systems overloading, we may stress the social distancing, which aims to reduce contact between people and minimize virus transmission in densely populated places, such as educational institutions (WEEDEN; CORNWELL, 2020; WHO, 2020a). Social distancing requirements lead 90% of students worldwide to experience the suspension of face-to-face activities at some point in 2020, incurring profound academic, social, and psychological implications (UNESCO, 2020). With the closure of educational institutions, universities and schools migrated from face-to-face to remote education – an applicable measure for tertiary education in Brazil (BRASIL, 2020; MURPHY, 2020). Considering that, institutions should be cautious so that continuing educational activities through remote education do not rest on maintaining a productivistic logic that impacts subjectivities and prioritizes capital over human aspects (ZORDAN; ALMEIDA, 2020). Besides that, institutions should also acknowledge the social and political realities associated with professors' work and the implications of the rapid decisions that determined the adoption of this novel teaching format (FERREIRA; BARBOSA, 2020). Far from denying the potential of technological resources in education, these measures implicate, as Reis warns (2020, p.4), paying attention so that the primary goal of university teaching – "forming human subjects in a permanent process of production and reinvention of their own lives" – is not discarded in the exceptionality of remote education.

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[4] Available in: https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/. Accessed: October 28, 2020.

Remote teaching imposes new demands to higher education that raise concerns for possibly potentiating inequalities, given that professors and students present different working conditions, mastery, and access to new technologies, as well as economic, social, physical, and mental health conditions. As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, these issues may influence the learning process and lead to dropouts (HERINGER, 2018; REIS, 2020).

In 2020, the migration to remote education impacted two million students entering higher education (BRASIL, 2019). Higher education challenges students with new study, personal organizational, and interactive dynamics consignments, to which they often lack the necessary skills. Considering that, being admitted to the HE is deemed as a transition that requires students to learn ways to interact and relate to the academic, institutional, and interpersonal contexts, influencing their learning process, development, and permanence (CASANOVA; ARAÚJO; ALMEIDA, 2020; HURTADO *et al.*, 2007).

A study conducted with Brazilian university students enrolled in health courses during the onset of remote teaching due to the Covid-19 pandemic verified moderate anxiety and difficulty in establishing study routines, learning without professors' face-to-face mediation, and accessing study materials (PELOSO *et al.*, 2020). This may be justified by the fact that remote education requires autonomy and self-regulation, whereas several first-year students enter higher education without such skills (CASANOVA; BERNARDO; ALMEIDA, 2019), thus impacting their learning process.

For facing the challenges inherent to the transition to higher education in this new learning format, one must consider the mediation of several agents: family, peers, student support services staff, professors, etc. (TINTO, 1993; SOUSA *et al.*, 2015). Classroom experiences, mediated by professors and their pedagogical decisions, bring students closer to their chosen field, motivate them to remain studying, contribute to their personal and professional development, foster a sense of belonging, and impact first-year students' decision to continue in higher education (FIOR; MERCURI, 2018; LEITE, 2012; TINTO, 1997), testifying professors' seminal role in students' entrance and stay to university. However, social isolation measures influence such transition.

From a personal perspective, the pandemic affect students' reality in financial, occupational, and psychological aspects and in overall living conditions, influencing learning process and increasing the risks of dropouts (FIOCRUZ, 2020; UNESCO, 2020). From an academic perspective, the migration to remote education also constituted obstacles to university teaching and pedagogical mediations, which had to adapt to new demands and develop pedagogical practices that embraced not only the content to be taught, but also first-year students' entrance to HE. A study conducted with university students from the USA found the Covid-19 pandemic to increase delayed graduation and dropout rates and decrease studying hours. Such impacts are more evident among students with lower academic

performance or at the beginning of the course, who are still less likely to attend online classes (AUCEJO *et al.*, 2020).

The pandemic context enforces an exceptionality to university teaching, and pedagogical practices play a key role in this context for students transition to higher education, either by facilitating their admission or by creating barriers that hinder their adaptation. Thus, this study addresses some yet unanswered questions regarding the characteristics of remote university teaching and the adaptations that favored admission to the HE. First, we present reflections on university teaching in the context of transition to tertiary education, followed by the methods that enabled this study. Then, we present the study results, comparing them with the relevant literature on the field.

University Teaching, transition, and permanence in higher education

Referring to university permanence detached from the idea of dropping out is a laborious task, although the motivations for abandoning education differ from those for staying within university (CASANOVA; BERNARDO; ALMEIDA, 2019). This is because these phenomena have similar predictors that exert distinct influence. The first year of graduation concentrates the highest dropout rates, being a stage that requires attention from educational policies, student services, and professors (CASANOVA; BERNARDO; ALMEIDA, 2019).

Deciding to remain in higher education results from a cyclical interaction among several factors, such as students' personal traits, institutions characteristics and functioning, university and networks support, courses didactic and pedagogical organization, and professor-student interaction. Other factors associated with the political, cultural, economic, and social contexts of the transition to higher education are also important predictors of such decision (TINTO, 1997, 2017). Permanence is strongly influenced by student learning (TINTO, 1997), which, in turn, is influenced by previous academic performance, study habits, socioeconomic conditions, mental health, and pedagogical decisions and mediations toward the student's object of knowledge (CASANOVA; BERNARDO; ALMEIDA, 2019; LEITE, 2012). All these variables were affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Despite recognizing how different variables influence the transition to higher education, this phenomenon presupposes an educational approach focused on teaching and *learning* contexts (PINTO; LOPES; MOURAZ, 2019). As Tinto (1997) stated, actions proposed by professors help creating a supportive environment on campus, favoring transition and permanence. Classroom experiences are mainly helpful to first-year students who might work and study at the same time or have limited interaction with the university context (TINTO, 1997). This occurs because interactions with professors improve learning, academic commitments, and well-being (BRAXTON; HIRSCHY; MCCLENDON, 2004) – fundamental variables to decide on whether to stay or not in the course. Studies have shown a positive

correlation between student-professor interactions and Latin American students' intent to remain in HE (LUCIANO-WONG; CROWE, 2019). Exchanges with professors bring students closer to institutional culture, research projects, and community actions; help clarifying academic-related doubt; and positively influence motivation, beliefs, and university commitments (BRAXTON; HIRSCHY; MCCLENDON, 2004). When motivated and with high self-efficacy beliefs, students are more dedicated to academic tasks (including challenging ones) and know how to better regulate study, influencing their academic performance and satisfaction with university experience – factors that contribute to university permanence (CASANOVA *et al.*, 2018; TINTO, 2017).

Schreiner *et al.* (2011) conducted a qualitative study with 62 students of North American universities who had a successful trajectory but were prone to abandon the course. The authors verified that professors' desire and intention to interact with students fostered a favorable environment for learning. Faculty members availability to interact with students outside the classroom, to clarify questions or to give advice, also played a role on course stay. Another qualitative research approaching professors' pedagogical skills and didactic organization found these variables to exert positive, but indirect influence on students' intention to remain in HE (BRAXTON; BRAY; BERGER, 2000).

In the national scope, Leite (2012) investigated affectivity in pedagogical practice to understand traits particular to unforgettable professors. The author highlighted the role of professors' decisions in student-knowledge mediation, such as the clarity in defining learning objectives based on their acquaintance with students and identifying the necessary content for students to follow the new information. Pedagogical organization based on the field epistemological paths, including selecting teaching procedures and evaluation proposals that enable knowledge construction, as well as feedback exercises are also pointed as fundamental (LEITE, 2012). In a later study, Figueiredo and Leite (2019) complement the aforementioned factors, adding that unforgettable professors master and are deeply involved with the content and are described as welcoming professionals who bond with students. Professors' pedagogical choices "transform, modify behaviors and decisions" of their students, helping their transition and permanence to the HE (FIGUEIREDO; LEITE, 2019, p.12; TINTO, 1993, 1997). University teaching is not an isolated practice, but rather part of a collective pedagogical project that was likewise impacted by the pandemic exceptionality.

Despite the empirical evidence on interpersonal relationships and pedagogical decisions contributions to higher education transition, such data should be contextualized in view of the unique and peculiar characteristics of teaching and the teacher (CUNHA, 2006). Much of the literature on this subject is based on face-to-face education – differently than that experienced by first-year students in 2020. Moreover, the current exceptionality resulting from the pandemics differs from traditional long-distance education (SARAIVA; TRAVERSINI; LOCKMANN, 2020).

A study conducted with Brazilian teachers at primary education on the context of the Covid-19 pandemic found learning new tools and constructing different pedagogical dynamics to be perceived as positive aspects of the enforced migration to remote education (RONDINI; PEDRO; DUARTE, 2020). In turn, professors at higher education from an Asian country considered the lack of prior contact with online education and limited internet connection as barriers for remote education implementation (MORALISTA; ODUCADO, 2020). For these authors, resources that enable professor-student interaction in face-to-face environments may not have the same impact on remote environments. They also urge for the need of advancing knowledge on pedagogical practices that promote greater involvement in online education, especially for first-year students. This is justified by the fact that student engagement is a fundamental variable for the transition to higher education and the more first-year students participate and interact with the academic and social reality of the institution, the better their adaptation, academic performance, and commitment to university, consequently influencing their decision to remain in HE (TINTO, 1997).

This study aims to understand, according to first-year students' perception, university teaching contributions for the admission to higher education in the context of Covid-19 pandemic. For this, we approach the migration of pedagogical practices to the remote format and the likelihood of maintaining it until the end of 2021. We also considered the scarce literature on teaching conditions in the pandemic context, as well as the relevance of initial experiences on the decision to remain in higher education.

METHODOLOGY

This research is a part of a broader and longitudinal study focused on analyzing students' transition to higher education (HE) after eight weeks of admission. The data presented in this manuscript were collected during the second phase of the research. To assess students' perception, we approached their experiences, perceived difficulties, and factors favoring the transition – which, in 2020, was impacted by the suspension of face-to-face activities and migration to remote education.

The study met the requirements for research involving human beings and was approved by the Ethics Committee (CAAE: 89401218.7.0000.5404). Our sample comprised eight students of Exact, Human, and Biological Sciences courses of a public university, six men and two women, aged between 17 and 24 years. These students participated in the first moment of data collection, at their enrollment at the institution, and agreed to participate in a second stage, eight weeks later.

All participants agreed to participate by written consent. Those aged under 18 years were required to provide authorization and signature of parental consent form from a responsible. Data were collected using a semi-structured interview, enabling the dialogue

with participants. Respecting social isolation requirements, all interviews were conducted remotely according to the convenience of the participants, recorded, and fully transcribed. Interviews respected a pre-formulated script, which addressed: academic experiences in the transition to HE, difficulties experienced, and factors that helped in the transition. The last topic required students to describe the contributions of university teaching in the transition to HE – this study research object.

Participants' reports were analyzed qualitatively, and meaning was construed through a content analysis of university teaching contributions in the transition to the HE, constituting the analysis axes (BARDIN, 2011; BOGDAN; BIKLEN, 1994). Students' reports on the role of professors in this process underwent thematic content analysis to identify the present themes. Then, differences and particularities were identified and categorized according to dialogues established with the literature. First-year students stated pedagogical adaptations, professor-student interaction, perceived teaching commitment to students' formation, and professors' academic qualification as implications for the role of university teaching in the transition to HE.

RESULTS

This study sought to identify the contributions of university teaching in the context of remote education for the transition to high education (HE). Yet, this does not mean assigning the responsibility for pedagogical practice exclusively to the professor; rather, we understand the teaching exercise as built collectively, relying on several actors and variables that may either favor or hinder the pedagogical action. Our emphasis is on the figure of the professor due to their recognized importance and notorious role in entering HE, including remote teaching.

The content analysis of students' reports identified characteristics of university teaching in remote education that impacted the transition to HE, especially its consequent pedagogical adaptations, professor-student interactions, commitment to students' formation, and the recognition of teaching quality. Below, each category will be described and illustrated with speeches from the participants.

The suspension of face-to-face activities incurred a series of pedagogical adaptations to implement remote activities. Students identified adjustments related to technological resources and learning environments, as well as to the didactic-pedagogical organization of the discipline. Among changes that enabled remote education, students emphasized the choice of the learning platform that held synchronous meetings, for creating conditions to boost students' motivation toward the learning process.

> "the professor used a very interesting learning platform" (M.).

Adaptations to the didactic-pedagogical organization also favored the transition to HE for enabling students to engage with synchronous meetings and dialogue with professors.

> *"these modules are being conducted as if they were an online helpline where the professor explains the subject and then students ask questions (...) and this has greatly improved teaching" (D.).*

Still regarding pedagogical decisions and adjustments performed by professors, university students describe the presence of guests in synchronous meetings and clarifications about participating in non-mandatory activities as encouragement for students' involvement with the course.

> *"I really enjoyed the contact; they brought alumni and older students (...) this is good engagement (...) [they taught how to] undertake a scientific initiation, or how to enter an exchange program" (F.).*

The adjustments to pedagogical resources associated with remote education were also pointed as a factor that provided practical experiences for students, motivating first-year students:

> *"it was in a gym class that we did stretching exercises, and the professor was able to adapt with the things we had at home. That was very cool, functioned as a practice" (J.).*

Yet another category identified in first-year students' report as enabling entry to HE was the interaction between professor and students in the new teaching environment. This category highlights professor-student contact in both in synchronous and asynchronous contexts, as well as the attention provided by them to clarify students' questionings – fundamental for students' permanence once these attitudes help them overcome academic challenges.

> *"he is a very attentive professor. If you tell him ten times that you did not understand, I think he will try to explain in ten different ways for you" (M.).*

> *"professors say: study this (...), then we study, (...) they explain, we make questions, they answer (...) everything is being way more productive" (J.).*

The reports also addressed the availability of different resources to enable professor-student interaction, which is justified by students' limited access to new technologies owing to the lack of necessary equipment or internet connection, so that diversifying the contact forms prevents technology from creating more barriers to teaching approaches. Professors' encouragement for greater student interaction and involvement in classes was also perceived as essential in the transition to HE, given the admission to this education level increase studying demands and professor mediation is seminal for overcoming difficulties and expanding first-year students' beliefs of self-efficacy. Our study participants described

that participation in classes initially occurred through chats and only after professors' encouragement advanced to interactions through microphones.

> *"the professor told me: you have to start talking (...) then I participated in the class activities and (...) a week later, other people began to participate as well" (C.).*

Students stressed professors' availability and openness to interactions through email, which were promptly replied. However, they recognized that interactions are quite different from those established in face-to-face contexts and identified the limits resulting from the pandemic and remote education.

Within the professor-student interactions category, students reported personal traits of the professors that might have favored the dynamics in synchronous meetings, enabled their rapprochement with students, and boosted their commitment to the course. Professors' attitudes, interaction, approach, and dialogue with the class motivated students to learn and, consequently, remain in HE.

> *"He is playful! (...) He interacts with students (...) you create an eager, a desire to learn" (M.).*

Another category built from first-year students' report refers to professor's commitment to students' formation, particularly in rescuing contents, practices, and experiences precluded by the remote context, thus minimizing students' anxiety and motivating their permanence in the course, as expressed in:

> *"but professors said they will not skip this content when we come back [in person]. So it is kind of reassuring" (J.).*

This results from the barriers imposed by the remote teaching to academic experience, which reduce students' interest in HE:

> *"sometimes it's dull to go to class, because you will only open an app and watch a professor giving his or her lecture (...) There is no (...) meeting people, it turns out to be monotonous" (T.).*

The expectation of returning to face-to-face teaching, as well as professors' availability and commitment to rescue contents and experiences uncovered due to remote teaching have helped students' transition to HE, favoring the maintenance of the student's commitment to graduation.

The last category describes first-year students' positive perception regarding the technical and academic qualification of professors. Considering that the perceived mastery on knowledge related to the field of study and pedagogical knowledge of professors increase the perceived relevance of curriculum and training, this is an important evaluation that

impacts students' commitment to the institution and graduation (TINTO, 2017). The following report provides the student assessment of the professor.

"The professors are great "(T.).

DISCUSSION

The results described in this manuscript are a framework of conditions that favor students stay within the academic environment but do not determine it, since such decision is a synthesis of several variables, including personal, institutional, political, and socioeconomic aspects, among other aspects also impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic (TINTO, 1993; UNESCO, 2020). First-year students is a group with greater tendency to drop out of higher education; yet, such tendency increased due to the changes in living conditions resulting from Covid-19 and social isolation measures implemented in 2020. Moreover, remote teaching may convey disappointments related to the university experience and the course, influencing students' decision to drop out.

This study showed that the characteristics of university teaching identified in remote education – whether associated with pedagogical adaptations, interactions with students, commitment to students' formation, or technical and academic qualifications – influenced students' motivation, sustained commitment to the course, and contributed to a positive perception of the curriculum and training experience. The literature describes such elements as essential for students' decision to remain in the course, besides suggesting that teaching contributions during the first year of graduation extrapolate the mere acquisition of specific knowledge in a given field. These elements also increase students' motivation, engagement, and beliefs, as well as reaffirm teaching relevance to overcome the limits imposed during the first year of graduation (TINTO, 1997; TINTO, 2017), especially in remote education.

Educational agents' mediations in formal or informal spaces of the institution are unique for students' learning process, development, and permanence (LEITE, 2012; TINTO, 1997), even in the remote environment. This is because such interactions not only carry content but are also sources of affection that enable students to approach the object of knowledge (LEITE, 2012). The professor mediation plays a key role in students learning process and facing challenges, as well as in clarifying questions, which allows first-year students to overcome academic difficulties besides enhancing their motivation – a predictor of learning (ALZATE-ORTIZ; CASTAÑEDA-PATIÑO, 2020; FIGUEIREDO; LEITE, 2019; TINTO, 2017).

Similarly, the first-year students who participated in our study reported a concern of professors with delivering the content and clarifying academic questions. Zordan and Almeida (2020) warns against the emphasis on an overly content-based practice in the migration to remote education, forgetting that the education essence is human formation. In this sense, some valid reflections question the continuity of formal educational actions at a

time of great fragility, considering ideologies underling this process. According to Saraiva, Traversini, and Lockmann (2020, p. 5), discourses that favor migration to remote education corroborate a social project whereby learning is the maximum order and education an "investment for future returns". This perspective does not account for the subjectivities of students and professors, but rather for the maintenance of educational productivism.

To overcome such ideologies, as essential as to think about conditions that favor the permanence of students in the HE is to reflect on the feasibility of professional development and the work of the professor. In this research, synchronous meetings are valued by students not only by contact with the professor, but by knowledge about the career and training experiences. However, the forms of control present in these moments, with commands of bodies, schedules and intellectual production, mechanisms on which the control of students and professors is based and which the university insists on reproducing, should be considered (SARAIVA; TRAVERSINI; LOCKMANN, 2020). The emphasis on content and the insistence on the presence in synchronous moments do not seem to be experiences that overcome loneliness, to which professors and students are exposed in situations of isolation, but, on the contrary, diminish the dialogues and potentiate the risks of loss of the sense of Education (SARAIVA; TRAVERSINI; LOCKMANN, 2020). The essence of education, in fact, is not in the accumulation of information, but in the transformation of the student from learning (PARO, 2010), which will be compromised in remote teaching, since "a good part of the subjectivities is diluted by the filter of screens and microphones" (FERREIRA; BARBOSA, 2020, p.7).

It should be noted that higher education extrapolates the accumulation of specific information in areas of knowledge, also involving the development of the student in its entirety (PEREIRA *et al.*, 2014). This seems to be consistent with the needs generated in the pandemic, such as the urgency of a broad and generalist training, in addition to the development of cognitive, social and emotional aspects of students (REIMERS; SCHLEICHER, 2020, p.6). However, questions remain whether remote education has enabled such developments.

In teaching, the recognition and appreciation of professor mediation in the transition to HE requires that the real working conditions of the professor in remote education be discussed. The reports show an expansion in occupational activities, with an almost complete availability to the new demands. With this, it becomes imperative to discuss the work in the context of pandemic, the demands requested to professors and the emotional costs for the maintenance of pedagogical practice. As presented, the professors ' concern with the replacement of experiences that could not be realized due to the suspension of face-to-face activities positively impacts the entrants, reaffirms the professor's political commitment to higher education, but indicates the urgency of discussions on how the impacts of remote education can be mitigated, considering the professor's working conditions. The University's

political commitment suggests that actions be discussed and implemented to reduce the inequalities generated by the pandemic that are not only linked to personal decisions of the professor, without institutional support.

It should be considered that university teaching and pedagogical mediations carried out in the context of remote education are different from those that occur in the classroom. For this, rapid and extensive learning of professors was necessary, with the exception that the haste with which the use of these technologies occurred did not reflect a technicist appropriation of resources, due to the absence of a broad curriculum discussion. As warned by Cunha (2018), there are particularities of teaching in HE, and pedagogical training is not an initial condition for entry into the career. In a scenario in which it is considered that the professorship of the professor of the HE is under construction, it is necessary to question the spaces of professional development that were made possible in the context of the pandemic (CUNHA, 2018). It should also be remembered that the training proposals must start from the teaching exercise and be built in the collective, with all educational agents (MORGADO; SOUSA; PACHECO, 2020).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In order to understand the transition to the HE in a pandemic context experienced by the entrants of the year 2020, we investigate characteristics of university teaching that contribute to the continuity of the course. Even with the recognition that remote teaching brings limits to educational practice, the identification of the professor as an important agent in this process is consistent with the understanding of education as a dialogical practice and built on the interactive dynamics between professor and student.

It is noteworthy that the present study brings reports of students who were able to follow the disciplines and participate in the research. It is known, however, that they do not represent the totality of university students. Remote teaching is an alternative for first-year students who have access to the resources necessary to follow the pedagogical practice in non-face-to-face format (RONDINI; PEDRO; DUARTE, 2020). Providing equipment and internet access is essential for participation in remote education, but it is not enough. There are inequalities of physical spaces, of material conditions, including to meet basic needs, of social roles exercised in the family and that can culminate in a decision to abandon the course (FERREIRA; BARBOSA, 2020). On the entrants, the difficulties in coping with academic demands are also linked to the development of new study skills, which requires time. Caution should be exercised so that the autonomy requested in the remote education environment does not meet the neoliberal demands that students conceive as capable of managing their own lives by isolating all mediations that are fundamental to human development (SARAIVA; VEIGA-NETO, 2009).

Among the limits of this work, is the focus on the perspective of students who experience the transition to HE. Complementing with the contributions of the professor is essential to assess the challenges and potential of remote education on admission to the University. New investigations could carry out a longitudinal follow-up of entrants in the year 2020, in order to more accurately discriminate the challenges and work that will need to be developed in the return of activities, in order to mitigate the impacts of the suspension of face-to-face activities and migration to remote education, helping the decisions of the institution and professors. The adversities faced by the professor in recent months – with demands that extrapolate their training and experience – and the impact they can have on the construction of the professor's identity and the professor's self-efficacy indicate the urgency in the follow-up of this professional, his mental health and his professionalism.

This monitoring is necessary to the extent that, even in the face of exceptional situations, the professional development of the professor is unique in the context of the HE and should be the focus of training policies. In addition, even if the measures of social isolation presuppose physical estrangement, it should not be forgotten that the exercise of teaching and its development take place in the collective context and must respect the real living conditions to which professors and students are exposed in the context of pandemic.

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