



## SECTION: ARTICLES

# Being a professor in higher education: the beginning of the teaching career at a Brazilian public university<sup>1</sup>

## Ser professor no ensino superior: o início da docência em uma universidade pública brasileira

## Ser un profesor en educación superior: el inicio de la educación en una universidad pública brasileña

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### ABSTRACT

This paper aims to present the results of a research study focusing on early-career educators. The overall objective was to understand and analyze the statements of higher education professors regarding the beginning of their careers in a public institution. To achieve the general objective, we defined specific goals, including highlighting the factors that influenced the research subjects in their decision to become university professors, identifying the expectations, difficulties, and challenges faced by early-career university educators, and examining and analyzing the research subjects' perspectives on their formative needs and the development of their teaching careers. The theoretical framework was based on studies related to university teaching, pedagogical knowledge, and reflective practice. The methodological approach was rooted in qualitative methods, utilizing semi-structured interviews. The research subjects included eleven educators from different fields, each with

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up to three years of experience in higher education. Data analysis was conducted based on content analysis principles and followed the categorization technique's guidelines. The results revealed that, for the majority of the participating educators, a strong interest in research significantly influenced their career choice. Their primary difficulties were related to didactic and pedagogical issues and challenges in the teacher-student relationship. They recognized the need for pedagogical training to enhance classroom practices and engage students. This research contributes to the field of university teaching studies and underscores the importance of institutional initiatives to support professional integration.

**Keywords:** university tuition; daily tuition; beginner teacher; higher education.

## RESUMO

Este artigo visa a apresentar resultados de uma pesquisa com foco no docente em início de carreira. O objetivo geral foi conhecer e analisar os dizeres dos professores do ensino superior sobre seu início de carreira em uma instituição pública. Para atingir o objetivo geral definimos como objetivos específicos: destacar elementos que influenciaram os sujeitos da pesquisa na decisão de se tornarem professores universitários; identificar as expectativas, dificuldades e desafios do docente universitário em início de carreira; verificar e analisar as perspectivas dos sujeitos da pesquisa quanto às suas necessidades formativas e evolução da sua trajetória docente. O referencial teórico foi alicerçado em estudos sobre docência universitária, saberes docentes e prática reflexiva. O percurso metodológico está fundamentado na abordagem qualitativa, através de entrevistas semiestruturadas. Os sujeitos da pesquisa são onze docentes de diferentes áreas, com até três anos de experiência no magistério superior. As análises dos dados foram baseadas nos princípios da análise de conteúdo e seguindo as orientações da técnica da categorização. Os resultados permitiram identificar que, para a maioria dos professores participantes do estudo, o interesse pela pesquisa teve grande influência na escolha pela profissão; suas principais dificuldades estão ligadas às questões didático-pedagógicas e aos impasses na relação professor-aluno; e reconhecem a necessidade de uma formação pedagógica que contribua para a melhora das práticas em sala de aula e para despertar o interesse dos alunos. A pesquisa contribui para os estudos sobre docência universitária e nos leva a considerar a necessidade de iniciativas institucionais de apoio à inserção profissional.

**Palavras-chave:** docência universitária; cotidiano docente; professor iniciante; ensino superior.

## RESUMEN

Este artículo tiene como objetivo presentar resultados de una investigación centrada en los docentes principiantes. El objetivo general fue comprender y analizar declaraciones de los

profesores de educación superior sobre el comienzo de sus carreras en una institución pública. Para lograr el objetivo general, hemos definido objetivos específicos, que incluyen destacar elementos que influyeron en la decisión de convertirse en profesores universitarios, identificar expectativas, dificultades y desafíos que enfrentan docentes universitarios al comienzo de sus carreras, y examinar y analizar perspectivas de los sujetos de la investigación con respecto a sus necesidades de formación y la evolución de su trayectoria docente. El marco teórico se basó en estudios relacionados con la enseñanza universitaria, el conocimiento pedagógico y la práctica reflexiva. El enfoque metodológico se fundamentó en un enfoque cualitativo, utilizando entrevistas semiestructuradas. Los sujetos de la investigación incluyeron once docentes de diferentes áreas, con hasta tres años de experiencia en la enseñanza superior. El análisis de datos se realizó siguiendo los principios del análisis de contenido y la técnica de categorización. Los resultados revelaron que, para la mayoría de los profesores participantes, un fuerte interés en la investigación influyó significativamente en su elección de carrera. Sus principales dificultades estuvieron relacionadas con cuestiones didácticas y pedagógicas, así como desafíos en la relación profesor-alumno. Reconocieron necesidad de formación pedagógica para mejorar las prácticas y despertar el interés de los estudiantes. Esta investigación contribuye a los estudios sobre enseñanza universitaria y resalta la importancia de iniciativas institucionales en la inserción profesional.

**Palabras clave:** docencia universitaria; vida cotidiana del docente; profesor principiante; educación superior.

## INTRODUCTION

Every professional initiation period has peculiar characteristics. In higher education, this period is full of challenges that become even more complex when the professor starts with no teacher training or experience. Debating this topic becomes essential, as the learning that takes place at the start of the profession may determine how a professor's career develops.

Papi and Martins (2009) refer to this period as a privileged time/space where teaching is established. According to the authors, the first years in the profession are critical in shaping professional actions and retention in the profession. In fact, depending on the support given by other professors, managers and the institution, as well as relationships established and working conditions found, this period may be easier or more difficult.

There is a great deal of discussion about teacher education and action in basic education, but it is not often that the teacher professional development higher education professors is questioned. Authors Pimenta and Anastasiou (2014) state that higher education professor training is not very well defined in the legislation, contrary to other education levels.

In Brazilian legislation, university professor training is only mentioned in Art. 66 of the Education Guidelines and Framework Law (LDB), stating that “preparation for higher education teaching is done at the postgraduate level, namely in MA and PhD programmes” (BRASIL, 1996).

In addition to not mentioning pedagogical training of higher education professors, the LDB reinforces its neglect, as Art. 65 specifies that the preparation of the university professor does not need to include “teaching practice”, as established for all other levels. The preparation guideline, instead of university teaching training also reveals the conception that higher education teaching is an easy task, which does not necessitate bigger requirements.

According to Morosini (2000, p. 12), “the main characteristic of this legislation on who the university professor is, in the scope of his/her teacher training, is the silence [...] it is assumed that his/her competence comes from knowing the area they work in”. Confirming this guidance, Ribeiro, Oliveira and Faria (2020) claim that joining a higher education institution and career progression are based on titles and scientific production, emphasising the specific area of knowledge and the role of being a researcher.

With the exception of professors who took teacher training courses and thus, went through pedagogical education, the remaining faculty members in higher education institutions, who work in other areas, generally speaking did not go through specific training to face daily classroom problems. Zabalza (2004, p. 141) adds that “[...] the exercise of the profession and its mastery do not occur by a direct transfer of divine wisdom. It cannot be assumed that a young professor starting his university career (even if a PhD holder and competent researcher) is ready to face teaching”.

Junges and Behrens (2015), have emphasised the need to think about the training necessities of these teachers in an institutionalised way, which prioritises pedagogical and practical knowledge. This is because there is no policy aimed directly at the development of pedagogical practices employed by university professors.

In face of such deadlock, Neuenfeldt and Isaia (2008) points out that most university professors are mere repeaters of theory, as their professional career develops having only the teachers who taught them as reference. Their experience is built while they are students, which makes the development of their pupils quite deficient.

Considering the relevance of knowing the daily challenges faced by higher education professors, our study investigated the day-to-day of junior novice professors. We seek to know and bring to light what beginning professors in higher education at a public university think, highlighting experiences that influenced these subjects in the decision to become a university

professor, identifying what were the expectations, difficulties, challenges, and their training needs.

### **THEORETICAL INPUTS FROM UNIVERSITY TEACHING**

Modern societies increasingly demand more performance, excellence, productivity and quality, especially when it comes to the labour market. Therefore, higher education teaching is very important for society, as it is responsible for preparing the great range of professionals it needs.

The university professor has the social role of bringing together teaching, research and extension in a systematised way, with a view to taking improvements to society. Thus, these professors' performance has a great influence on social benefits offered by the university and on the quality of the new experts being sent out to society.

Higher education in Brazil has gone through many changes that have repercussions on challenges as expansion, diversification, change in incoming student profile, among others (SENKEVICS, 2021). Professors are increasingly facing new dilemmas and demands for learning and training. In this sense, Bitencourt (2014, p. 104) points out that the university audience is ever more “diversified and living, working in an ever-changing society”. The author draws attention to the need for “institutional actions aimed at promoting qualified teaching, appropriate to new audiences, as groups in the university segment are increasingly different and diverse in relation to previous years”.

These changes bring about the need for reconfiguring institutions, as well as training processes for university professors. Historically, teaching in higher education institutions is based on the idea that having specific knowledge and excelling in research are enough to engage in the activity with quality. This valuing of research and specific content show how planning processes and the teaching activity are seen in an unappreciative manner at this level of education (POWACZUK, 2012).

Despite acknowledging the importance of research in the teaching professional development of university professors, we have verified that such education goes beyond and requires aspects like understanding the curriculum, engaging in planning, choosing a teaching method and resources to reach goals, knowing how to relate to students, establishing assessment criteria, among others.

According to Imbernón (2011), specific university teaching professional development can promote: development and dissemination of knowledge in the community, questioning of its social legitimacy and originality; development of critical and transformative training and

readiness for change; self-training; involvement in social, cultural and political issues; coordination between theory and teaching practice.

For Junges and Behrens (2015), it is necessary for the university professor to be considered a researcher of their own practice, reality, and students, mediating actions that trigger doubt, formulating questions and searching for the answers in partnership with the pupils in a creative and reflective manner, becoming a bridge between them and knowledge.

## **NOVICE PROFESSOR IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

The teaching profession is one of a few in which the professional is “released” into the labour market, without a systematic follow-up by supervisors. These professionals are often faced with an unwelcoming environment, inhabited by colleagues unwilling to guide them or at least, share their doubts and listen to their problems, further complicating the early career process (HUBERMAN, 2013; DOYRAN; HACIFAZLIOĞLU, 2021).

Several authors point out that the first years of teaching practice are very important for acquiring skills and initiating work routines, which will remain in place for the rest of the career (MARCELO GARCIA, 1999; NÓVOA, 2013; TARDIF, 2010;). For Fernandes (1995), the process of “becoming a teacher” demands from subjects new knowledge, new roles, greater autonomy and responsibility, which in concrete terms means an extensive range of knowledge, dexterities, procedures and routines necessary to act in the classroom, in collegiate meetings and in the school's several spaces. We add to these skills, interaction with different subjects in the teaching process.

The beginning of their careers, professors are faced with several questions such as: what is expected from me? With whom am I going to relate this work? Who do I answer to as a professor? Who are my colleagues? What will my relationship with them be like? How is this environment organised? How do students learn? (GAETA; MASETTO, 2013, p.16).

In order to overcome these difficulties, a very common aspect, particularly at the start of the teaching career, is to reproduce exercises, in other words, repeat methods using pedagogical resources and characteristics used by another professional. When there is a lack of pedagogical preparation, teachers interpret teaching through the view they had of the occupation as students.

Thus, Cunha and Zanchet (2010) bring relevant contributions by reporting that starting university professors, had contact with teachers during their time as students, learning something about “teaching”. They also saw some pedagogical resources that were presented to them and this is something that cannot be ignored, as through them they built

representations of what is teaching and learning. These guidelines have often guided the teaching process they establish.

It is important to emphasise that although this reproduction has positive aspects and contributes to teaching professional development, it also brings negative aspects. This is often because the teacher does not know how to do it differently or how to create their own style. Thus, in addition to good practices, they reproduce very ineffective or inefficient teaching practices.

Establishing the focus of teachers' pedagogical practice is one of the main challenges to be overcome in higher education. Quality pedagogical training enables the university professor to look at their pedagogical practice, analysing and reinventing it, also making it a source of learning in a perspective of change and renewal. Therefore, we reinforce that higher education institutions must create spaces that enable the generation of permanent training, allowing faculty members to “follow chance, review and renew their own knowledge, skills and perspectives on teaching and learning” throughout their career (BEHRENS, 2015, p. 452).

#### **METHODOLOGICAL OUTLINE**

The Federal University of Triângulo Mineiro had 518 professors at the time. Initially, it was identified who the novice faculty members were at the university. After analyzing the Lattes Curriculum, on the Lattes Platform (<http://lattes.cnpq.br/>) – which records the past and current trajectories of Brazilian students and researchers and is adopted by the majority of national institutions for funding, education, and research – out of all 518 faculty members, we found only twenty faculty members met the outlined profile (up to three years' experience). Despite the initial search identifying a universe with twenty novice professors, only eleven collaborated with the study.

Data was collected through interviews with a semi-structured and individual script. This script was drafted looking for aspects before they started teaching, daily issues present in teachers' lives and future career prospects.

The option for this procedure was given to consider that this strategy allows a type of interaction that makes it possible to focus the issues relevant to the research problem from the perspective of each of the participants, while ensuring a direction of the exhibition process for the necessary information. For the preparation and realization of the characteristics, the place and time were scheduled in advance, meeting the needs and possibilities of each participant. The research sought to comply with ethical principles and was approved by the Ethics and Research Committee (CEP).



After the interviews were conducted, they were transcribed in full. In the transcription, in some moments the lines had to be edited so that some typical expressions of orality could be removed.

The data was analyzed by categories and inspired by Bardin's (2011) content analysis, as this constitutes a research methodology used to interpret the statements and messages of the interviewees and is a widely used methodology in qualitative research.

Category analysis is chronologically the first method of content analysis, being the most widespread and employed. According to Bardin (2011), the technique involves classifying different elements of the text into various categories, according to criteria that allow for the emergence of "a certain order in the general confusion". Categories are classes that bring together a group of elements with common characteristics. Criteria for grouping categories can be syntactic, semantic, lexical, or expressive. The method involves "taking into consideration the entirety of a text, subjecting it to the classification and enumeration, based on the frequency of the presence (or absence) of meaningful items" (p. 43).

Out of the professors that were subjects of our research, three went through teacher training and eight hold bachelor's degrees. In relation to postgraduate titles, ten held PhDs and one was doing his doctorate. It was also noticed that most did their postgraduate studies in specific areas, with only two professors choosing fields aimed at education.

The categories were built based on the questions that presented themselves *vis-à-vis* the research's goals, such as:

- What motivated the subjects to choose teaching as a profession?
- Who were the main influencers of these teachers' pedagogical practice?
- Did their experience as students influence these professionals teaching practice?
- What feelings did they experience at the start of their higher education teaching career?
- What were the main difficulties faced in day-to-day teaching?
- What are the gaps in these subjects training?
- What are these subjects training needs?
- How do these professors see their evolution in teaching?

The categories were built based on the questions that presented themselves *vis-à-vis* the research's goals. After the analysis, the results were separated into three categories: motivations and experiences in the process of becoming a teacher; early career discoveries: a shock with reality?; and pedagogical training as a possibility of success in higher education teaching.



## MOTIVATIONS AND EXPERIENCES IN THE PROCESS OF BECOMING A TEACHER

The first category motivations and experiences in the process of becoming a teacher focused on the reasons that led to the choice for the teaching career and the main influences that stood out in the process of becoming a teacher.

Answers show that the choice for a career in teaching is linked to many reasons and several factors may be involved in the decision. For example, there is the family context, influence from old teachers, opportunities of choice within a certain socio-economic reality, and affinity with the profession's core objects.

Four faculty members pointed out the path through a master's degree, a doctorate, and a taste for research as determinant for choosing teaching as a career. Therefore, we can say that there was no initial motivation, the choice took place as a work opportunity, a consequence of their training path, as can be seen in the following statement:

*I was actually motivated to become a chemist. First, I did a chemistry degree, then a master's and doctorate, always focusing on research. Being a professor is a consequence of all this, I developed a taste for it, because I only really started teaching this year. I had never taught before, so this was a consequence of the degree I chose to do. I didn't think, I'll be a professor. I thought I'll be a chemist, before choosing to be a teacher (P2).*

*Actually, I wanted to work with research, always have, since the start. I did a master's and doctorate to do research, but when you finish both, the only option is to go through a selection process to become a professor. So, being a teacher was actually a consequence of what I wanted to do (P3).*

Two of the professors reported their wish of being a teacher and how pleased they were with the choice of profession:

*I always enjoyed teaching. Teaching was one of the few professions I saw myself in, and everything ended up working out in this career. I tried other occupations, but everything worked out. Since I started teaching, I've always liked it and stayed in the profession (P6).*

*I did not do a master's and doctorate to supplement my training, I did it because I wanted to teach. I like being a teacher and I chose teaching because it is a profession where you are learning all the time. It is learning-teaching, you don't just teach, you learn together and you're always confronting and renewing what you think. It's not a monotonous job... (P10).*

For Tardif (2010), family influence is a factor that may determine the choice for teaching, like having a teacher for a mother for instance, which may serve as an incentive to choose the profession. This was noticed in the discourse of one of the faculty members, who recalled with

pride that his/her mother had been a teacher, identifying themselves with teaching since childhood:

*I am very proud to have a mother who is a teacher, who has always been my source of inspiration. The wish of being a teacher surfaced in me as a child. I loved playing school! Two of my friends and I used to set up a 'classroom' in my garage, with tables and chairs to propose activities, basically drawing and colouring in cartoons, with the younger friends from the street (P7).*

The autonomy, flexibility of teaching work and labour market were also reasons revealed by the teachers for choosing the profession, as seen in the examples below:

*[...] the university professor can do an extension project, for example, teaching and doing research... I worked in a company and cleared my doubts, as I really did not want to work for a company. I like the flexibility the university gives me, of being able to research an area of my interest. I like this environment... (P9).*

*It's a job where we have a variety of paths to travel on. Every job has a hierarchy, an institution that determines how the worker must act. But professors have a certain autonomy, the four walls of the classroom are a space of more autonomy (P10).*

The choice for the teaching profession is made based on several reasons. However, by analysing what the participants said in this study, research is the predominant reason. Enjoying research is mentioned by eight professors as strong motivation for choosing the profession.

Reports are marked by affective memories, moments experienced in childhood and adolescence that remain strong models in how to act in the profession, as can be noted in the statement:

*My first grade teacher really stood out in my life. I remember that teacher. She used to wear this little red shoe to school, and I would say to my mother to buy me a little red shoe. I wanted to be like Rosane (P8).*

*A teacher I really remember was my first grade teacher. She was a very important person, she was a reference, she wanted us to dedicate ourselves not only to studying. She was someone who related to teaching beyond the classroom, who teaches based on her behaviour, posture (P10).*

## EARLY CAREER DISCOVERIES: A SHOCK WITH REALITY

In the second category, professors raised issues related to teaching-pedagogy, the teacher-student relation and the profession's day-to-day. These themes revealed that teaching constitutes a profession permeated by contradictions, expectations, and challenges, but also

of hopes and possibilities. For these professors, the start of their professional life in higher education showed to be a period of adjustments.

As seen below, in the testimonies, professors exposed their insecurity *vis-à-vis* the commitment of facing the classroom, added to the feeling of not being prepared and lack of experience in the role:

*I had never taught before. Actually, the first time I taught was during the entrance exam. I had never prepared a lesson, so it was a little weird being in the opposite position, as I had been a student all my life (P2).*

*I had never been a teacher and as much as I was interested and looked for subjects in my master's that provided me with some theoretical foundation in teaching, I studied only one such subject in six years of postgraduate studies (P8).*

*Despite work experience during my master's and doctorate, and a semester following a professor, this does not train you in teaching terms (P9).*

This insecurity is attributed to the lack of theoretical and practical knowledge that leads novice professors to look for models that help them perform their job, as explained by one of the participants:

*Every time I am going to use some type of activity, I spend a lot of time researching whether such activity provides any meaningful learning, if it has the potential of offering meaningful learning (P8).*

*I look for education videos, but there is this gap in training, which generates challenge. Language is a problem (P9).*

Difficulties in organising teaching work was a recurring theme in subjects' replies. Professors express a certain degree of difficulty in issues related to activities planning, gauging available pedagogical time, and reaching learning targets:

*I find preparing lessons difficult: how to prepare, how to transfer it to the students, the time you spend preparing, and going over each topic. I think that all this preparation is quite difficult at first (P2).*

*I find lesson planning really difficult to deal with, sometimes I spend a lot of time on it (P5).*

*I was afraid of not being able to organise the lessons, of addressing such different content in such detail, of the daily relation with students (P11).*

It may be seen from the faculty members discourse that they are trying to adjust the lesson time to the content to be taught and despite being insecure, they are concerned with their pedagogical practice and with the students' learning.

In the following excerpt we can see the professor reflecting on the importance of affective bonds to improve the teaching-learning process:

*I think it is important for the teacher to get close to students, take the time to be with them [...]. I started listening to all sorts of problems, all kind of problems, a student separating, girls mentioning that they had a lump, who were beaten up by their husbands at home. I heard several stories and gave them advise, comforting them, which made things better. I realised that this helps students get motivated, stay in school and want to keep trying (P6).*

Below, we may notice difficulties faced by the participants in the professor/educator relation:

*[...] my role is much more of educator than teacher in itself. I had to deal with grownups who have no responsibility, no guidance in life. After a while I realised that this will always be part of my role, there is no other way. Until they reach a certain level of maturity, they must be inspired and we need to keep an eye on them (P6).*

*[...] getting to know the students, getting to know their difficulties, I think that is the biggest difficulty now. I teach two classes the same subject and it is like this: it is never the same lesson, it is always being changed, the students are different, their interests are different. So, each class is a class, each lesson is a lesson. It is the same subject, but the lesson is different (P2).*

The following excerpts from two faculty members illustrate how they face a structural deficit at university and lack of personal, material, and financial resources that hinder and get in the way of their professional development in the institutions:

*There are many basic things missing. For example, I have just gotten a computer now. I did not have a computer. Seven months I went with no computer. I got the computer, they installed it, but it does not have the Office package (P8).*

*I confess that the lack of physical structure and (consumption and permanent) materials has greatly limited the intellectual work of most professors, particularly in research (P7).*

One of the professors shows to be dissatisfied with the little time spent on research and how some colleagues devalue it and emphasises how important it is for research and teaching to walk hand-in-hand:

*There are some who do not value research, who have no interest, who do not think they should foster this interest in students, who are actually more concerned with the lessons and subjects, than with research. And I do not think that it has to be one thing or the other, as both may work together (P5).*

Public service bureaucracy is seen as a barrier to teaching work. Difficulties and slowness of administrative processes have brought discomfort:

*The public system is very different from the private (I worked in a private university for a year before joining a public one), there is a lot of bureaucracy and this sometimes slows down the progress and solving of small problems, which would otherwise be easy and fast to resolve (P7).*

*I have a lot of administrative doubts, what I can do, what I should do, what the student can or should do. Theirs is clearer, duties and such, but if you come up against something you have never seen before, then you do not know what you can and cannot do (P9).*

*Bureaucratisation bothers me a bit, but how can we change that? It is difficult, it is too broad to think of a strategy. I think collective discussions have to start (P10).*

### PEDAGOGICAL TRAINING AS A POSSIBILITY OF SUCCESS IN TEACHING

The third and final category addresses pedagogical training as a possibility of success in higher education teaching and involved issues related to learning experiences and teacher professional development opportunities.

The teaching career consists of a whole, which is made by advancing and retreating. From this perspective, we decided not to focus on the difficulties, but also on learning points in the first years of teaching. For some there was great evolution, for others not so much. When asked if there was any evolution in their teaching trajectory, it was possible to see that the passing of time and the experiences lived in the classroom's day-to-day made teachers more secure:

*I find it much easier to deal with these issues today. I do feel an evolution with teaching. [...] we feel more and more secure [...] (P1).*

*I think that in this short amount of time, I see that I am a much more secure person, I can assess students better, how they are behaving themselves. I think I was able to improve my posture as a teacher. Well, in relation to security, I feel more secure (P3).*

*Yes, in every teaching-learning process, in the developing of technical and scientific projects, work relations and even in administration and management, despite many limitations [...] (P4).*

*I feel it a lot. Because at the beginning and even because of the quality I had when I was a student, and I wanted to demand the same thing from the students [...] (P6).*

Day-to-day experience helped teachers build their professional identity and knowledge:

*[...] I can already see the differences between the two classes, how to work with each of them [...]. We get more and more secure; the student goes from something that frighten us to someone we can understand better (P2).*

*[...] I know how to assess students better, how they are behaving, I think I managed to improve my posture as a teacher [...]* (P3).

The subjects' awareness of lifelong learning and their perception that evolution also involves the personal aspect are pointed out by these participants:

*[...] I am aware that I can, and I will still evolve much more. Over time I have the impression that it is an evolution, it does not stop, it may stop even, but it cannot stop. It cannot cease over the life of a teacher [...]* (P1).

*[...] despite many limitations. Life is daily learning* (P4).

*Each different situation that I experience in the classroom or with a particular student allows me to evolve as a professional, and also as a person* (P7).

*I have lived through various scenarios as a teacher. I feel more secure going into the classroom, to learn. You learn more and more and are ever more secure and calm to get the job done. I think I feel an evolution, but there is still a lot to improve* (P10).

When asked about gaps and needs in professional higher education teaching training, novice professors pointed out multiple dimensions that involve teaching practice knowledge. Thus, the following testimonies deal specifically with the absence of teaching-pedagogical knowledge for working in the classroom:

*I think what was lacking for me and what I need to learn more is teaching practice, this was part of the teaching course I did not have. Knowing chemistry is one thing, knowing how to teach it, knowing the teaching practice, knowing all this teaching related part, which is behind it, I think that is what is missing for me* (P2).

*I would add some pedagogy, this part of teaching itself* (P3).

*I did a master's and doctorate totally geared towards research; I did not have teacher training. I do not feel ready for all the things that I am facing today. I am responsible for three subjects, preparing lessons is very complex. I find it very difficult to think of other formats other than slide, power point* (P5).

*To learn other forms of teaching and learning, basic points about pedagogical practices, about psychology, to be able to improve as an educator. It would be interesting, when we join the Institution, or even during our early years, that preparatory courses be offered to teachers* (P7).

*Education subjects, this is what I miss. Today, teaching, I feel this* (P8).

These statements emphasise that higher education professors need pedagogical and teaching training. Faculty member P5 narrative portrays the reality, pointed out before, of many teachers starting their university career: training centred on specific knowledge and for

academic research, but lacking in epistemological and methodological knowledge that supports educational practice.

According to the professors, they did not have any contact with pedagogy, with ways of teaching and learning, and did not have any experience with teaching practice. Based on the testimonies provided by the professors, it is possible to infer that gaps related to teaching and pedagogical knowledge are the result of their initial teacher education or professional development training. This could be due to the course itself (such as bachelor's degrees), or because of knowledge that should be offered but is not, or other training activities that may have been conducted at the workplace. This reality is also pointed out by the narrative above:

*So, this is what I miss, a little more theoretical background. Because my background is in health, I can arrive in a classroom and talk for an hour about a woman's life cycle process or the puerperal pregnancy cycle, but if you ask me to talk about learning, I have not trained in this. It is the old story: the person was an obstetrician when she/he went to bed and woke up a teacher (P5).*

The need for teaching professional development, for permanent training that supplies for the new educational reality is reinforced in the statement below:

*I think all teachers should think of a different lesson, more thought of and aimed at the student. I think this is a point where we will have to change at some moment and move in that direction. How to do this, how to assess the student, how to prepare my lessons in relation to this (P9).*

*I would like to learn more about teaching in higher education, about how to adapt to technological advances to 'draw' the attention of students amidst a world of games, Facebook, WhatsApp on mobile phones (P7).*

*I did not learn much about explanatory theories, pedagogical methods. Every time I am going to use some type of activity, I spend a lot of time researching whether such activity provides any meaningful learning, if it has the potential of offering meaningful learning (P8).*

Some teachers report the lack of knowledge of internal regulations and administrative systems, also emphasising the need for training aimed at capacity-building of professors to deal with these aspects, as seen in the narratives below:

*I have a lot of administrative doubts. When we start here, it is assumed that we know how to use the system. No one ever teaches you, there is no handbook anywhere. It is a simple thing, but if you had five to ten minutes of training with a colleague who was... (P9).*

*I have not seen a macro or micro institutional project at the course level that is offered to the professor. I miss that a lot. For example, there are things here at the university that I have not got the faintest idea about, I do not know the*



*rules. There are things that the new recently arrived doctor needs to know how to work. Let me tell you something: getting some type of training for university related issues, understanding the university, understanding how teaching, research, and extension systems work. I think that must be established (P10).*

Based on what these participants said, some gaps in their training and their wish to overcome them may be noticed. This leads us to think of the necessity and importance of the university creating teaching initiation programmes, with a view to contributing to reduce the shock felt by novice professors with the reality of their day-to-day work. The training actions suggested by the faculty members participating in this investigation, are in consonance with the challenges met in their own practice.

### FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The study allowed us to face the diverse factors that make up the process to become a teacher, teaching demands and the profession's complexity. By focusing on novice professors, it was possible to learn how university professors perceive and experience their professional activities in the first years of their career, problems faced and type of training they need. Understanding the process of becoming a teacher involves understanding that their teaching professional development is being permanently built, re-signified, throughout their practice and interaction with the other.

Many of the difficulties reported by the novice higher education professors, seen in this study, may be softened by institutional initiatives to support insertion in teaching. Requiring a PhD degree in order to start a career in higher education teaching is not enough. Permanent training must be offered at the place of service, understanding times and spaces for problematising and sharing pedagogical knowledge related to the profession.

The study revealed that the faculty members participants are not receiving enough actions from the institutions, in terms of involving novice professors. In addition, faculty's work conditions prevent them from getting involved with the few training activities on offer. We found professors overwhelmed with activities, performing different tasks within the university.

When reflecting on the faculty members training, the need for capacity-building is noticed, as well as institutional accountability for creating a teaching insertion programme, with a view to supporting and following up novice teachers. This follow-up involves work for caring and welcoming them, so that they may get to grips with the institution's pedagogical and administrative dynamics, facilitating the understating of professors work at the university.

In addition to the need of being welcomed and followed up in higher education institutions, a national training policy must be established urgently, aimed at higher education professors, so that there is no more room for improvisation in university teaching and so that current conditions are overcome.

The results of the study contribute to problematising and recognising novice professors' emerging problems in Brazilian higher education institutions. Therefore, the discussion on teacher training and novice professors in higher education, is propitious ground for more studies to be conducted and reflections to be drawn that may aid in the overcoming of the difficulties and challenges faced.

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