

SECTION: ARTICLES

Opportunities for faculty development: perceptions and challenges at a federal university¹

Oportunidades de desarrollo docente: percepciones y desafíos en una universidad federal

Oportunidades de desenvolvimento docente: percepções e desafios em uma universidade federal

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the perceptions of 85 professors and one university staff member working at a mid-sized public university regarding the development of teaching and pedagogical skills. Methodologically, the research followed a qualitative-quantitative design (Souza; Kerbauy, 2017) with an exploratory approach. Data were collected through an online questionnaire answered by faculty and staff, and 10 individual interviews (one of them being carried out with one administrative staff member, who was responsible at the time for organizing the training initiatives). Data interpretation was guided by thematic analysis (Braun; Clarke, 2012), supported by the ATLAS.ti® software, and structured around three analytical categories. The research revealed that most participants had undergone some form of pedagogical training during their careers. However, the availability of such opportunities was perceived as insufficient. Conversely, the pandemic period significantly boosted training offerings, peaking in 2020. Regarding the institution under study, no clear policy aimed at the

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pedagogical development of faculty could be identified. This study aims to contribute to ongoing reflections on continuing education as a central axis for improving higher education.

Keywords: continuing education; faculty development; higher education; teachers training; university teaching.

RESUMEN

Este estudio investigó las percepciones de 85 docentes y un técnico universitario que trabajan en una universidad pública de tamaño medio, en relación con el desarrollo de competencias didáctico-pedagógicas. Metodológicamente, la investigación adoptó un diseño cuali-cuantitativo (Souza; Kerbauy, 2017) de carácter exploratorio. Para la recolección de datos se utilizó un formulario en línea, respondido por docentes y personal técnico, y se realizaron 10 entrevistas individuales (uno de ellos se lleva a cabo con un técnico administrativo, quien en ese momento era responsable de la organización de las propuestas formativas). La interpretación de los datos se basó en el análisis temático (Braun; Clarke, 2012), con apoyo del software ATLAS.ti®, a partir de tres categorías analíticas. La investigación reveló que la mayoría de los participantes ya había participado en algún tipo de formación didáctico-pedagógica a lo largo de su carrera. No obstante, la oferta de oportunidades de este tipo era percibida como insuficiente. En cambio, el período pandémico impulsó significativamente la oferta formativa, alcanzando su punto máximo en 2020. En lo que respecta a la institución investigada, no se identificó una política clara orientada al desarrollo didáctico-pedagógico del profesorado. El estudio busca contribuir a las reflexiones sobre la formación continua como eje central para la mejora de la educación superior.

Palabras clave: docencia universitaria; desarrollo docente; educación superior; formación continua; formación de profesores.

RESUMO

Este estudo investigou as percepções de 85 professores e um técnico universitários, atuantes em uma universidade pública de médio porte, a respeito do desenvolvimento de habilidades didático-pedagógicas. Metodologicamente, a pesquisa seguiu um desenho quali-quantitativo (Souza; Kerbauy, 2017) de cunho exploratório. Para a coleta de dados, foram utilizados um formulário online, respondido apenas por docentes, e 10 entrevistas individuais (sendo uma delas realizada com um técnico-administrativo, na época responsável pela organização das propostas formativas da universidade). A interpretação dos dados foi feita sob a perspectiva da análise temática (Braun; Clarke, 2012), com o auxílio do software Atlas.ti®, o que suscitou três categorias de análise. A pesquisa revelou que a maior parte dos sujeitos já havia realizado algum tipo de formação didático-pedagógica ao longo da carreira. A oferta de oportunidades formativas desse tipo, entretanto, foi percebida como insuficiente. O período pandêmico, por outro lado, impulsionou significativamente a oferta formativa, com auge em 2020. No que se

refere à instituição investigada, não foi possível identificar uma política clara que vise o desenvolvimento didático-pedagógico dos docentes. A pesquisa procura contribuir para as reflexões que tratam da formação continuada como eixo central na melhoria da educação superior.

Palavras-chave: docência universitária; desenvolvimento docente; ensino superior; formação continuada; formação docente.

INTRODUÇÃO

The present study began with the following question: “How do university professors perceive and develop with respect to instructional and pedagogical aspects?” This question is relevant in the contemporary context as it emphasizes the role and place of teaching in higher education. In fact, Article 207 of the Brazilian Constitution (Brazil, 2024 [1988]) highlights teaching as one of the three essential pillars of universities, alongside research and community outreach.

In contrast to this legislative ideal, it is often observed that, within higher education institutions, greater emphasis is placed on academic and scientific production (research development, writing, and publication of academic texts, etc.). As a result, there may be limited institutional investment in effective teaching practices, or, in some cases, a complete lack of such investment.

Amid this scenario, Nóvoa *et al.* (2023) emphasize:

It seems unnecessary to say, but it is worth remembering that university professors are, first and foremost, teachers. This is their professional identity. They cannot ignore or overlook it. Teaching is the heart of the university (Nóvoa *et al.*, 2023, p. 6).

Similarly, Gatti (2003) points out that, in general, higher education faculty tend to show great interest in research, but little in pedagogy. However, according to the author, this imbalance could be addressed by fostering research on teaching practice, carried out by the professors themselves, in an attitude of reflection and critical inquiry about their own practice. It is, therefore, a matter of paying attention to the pedagogical dimension without disregarding the other pillars that constitute academic work.

In addition to these factors, it is important to note that the landscape of Brazilian higher education has been marked by profound transformations stemming from social, political, and especially technological changes. The intensification of digital resource use in university teaching—accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic—has brought new challenges and opportunities for faculty work, requiring constant adaptation of pedagogical practices and the development of increasingly complex educational competencies (Cavalcanti; Guerra, 2022;

Silva, 2024). In this context, thinking about the pedagogical preparation of university professors requires considering the complexity of the current educational environment, shaped by inequalities in access, challenges of digital inclusion, and the urgency of integrating technology with democratic and meaningful educational approaches (Selbach; Luce, 2022; Souza *et al.*, 2017).

Based on these considerations, it is possible to understand the urgency of discussing the ways in which the promotion and debate of general skills, and particularly instructional and pedagogical ones, have been taking place among university professors. After all, this is one of the factors that can significantly contribute to the quality of higher education (Ristoff; Sevegnani, 2006).

That said, in this study we considered, above all, the instructional and pedagogical knowledge related to university teaching, developed throughout the continuum of the profession. As indicated by Gatti (2003), Melo and Campos (2019), Cunha (2019), and Selbach and Luce (2022), initial training marked by undergraduate, master's, and/or doctoral studies, although relevant, is insufficient for the proper exercise of teaching activities. Significant weight is carried instead by the learning that takes place throughout one's career, which constitutes a form of continuing education and leads to professional development (Pryjma; Winkeler, 2014).

The research reported here was carried out at a medium-sized public university, part of the federal system, located in Minas Gerais. Through an empirical investigation, we gathered the perceptions of professors and one administrative staff member regarding the quality, quantity, and objectives of the instructional and pedagogical training opportunities they had experienced in recent years (2019-2023) — a period spanning the pre-, during, and post-COVID-19 pandemic contexts. The investigation, in this sense, began with the hypothesis that the pandemic period had significantly affected the dynamics of training processes in the academic context, a hypothesis that was later confirmed.

This article is organized as follows: after this introduction, the theoretical perspectives are presented, followed by the methodology adopted. Next, we present the profile of the participants, as well as the analysis of the data collected. Finally, we draw the concluding considerations.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Contemporary society has undergone profound transformations in recent years. This can be observed, for example, in the growing presence of digital media in the daily life of a wide range of professions, as well as in new educational debates that highlight the need to rethink the organization of academic life (Nóvoa; Amante, 2015). From this perspective, it is important to understand that social changes have a direct impact on teaching and learning dynamics.

Gatti et al. (2019), in discussing the historical changes in teacher education in Brazil, argue that pedagogical practice today can no longer rely solely on intuition, as it requires scientific and humanistic foundations that can benefit new generations shaped by an innovative context. This reflection also applies to university teaching. In a similar vein, Melo and Campos (2019) emphasize that the relevance of continuing education for teachers lies in its intersection with social, cultural, political, and institutional contexts, among others, within the experiences of educators and learners.

In order to advance these discussions, it is important to differentiate here three essential concepts: initial training, continuing education, and professional development. According to Pryjma and Winkeler (2014, p. 32):

This process [teacher education] is complex, as it depends on the structuring of professional skills and competencies (initial training). It requires that professional practice develop within the work context and that such practice be analyzed, understood, and reflected upon (continuing education), thereby enabling the transformation and improvement of teaching practice (professional development).

Thus, despite the difficulties in delineating the stages of teacher education, in this study initial training is associated with undergraduate, master's, and/or doctoral programs. Continuing education refers to formal or informal learning opportunities available to participants once they are already working as university professors (for example: courses, short courses, study groups, practice groups, Faculty Learning Communities, lectures, etc.). Finally, professional development is related to the integration of knowledge and experiences accumulated throughout one's career, which lead to instructional and pedagogical improvement (Gatti, 2003; Selbach; Luce, 2022).

In this regard, it is important to understand that "this is not about diminishing other university dimensions, starting with research, but rather about emphasizing the importance of recognizing the centrality of teaching" (Nóvoa *et al.*, 2023, p. 6). Moreover, the production of knowledge aimed at teaching cannot occur solely through daily work experience; rather, it requires participation in training opportunities explicitly directed toward identity formation and the development of pedagogical competencies (Rech; Boff, 2021).

It is also recognized that responsibility for professional development, with an emphasis on the pedagogical dimension, rests simultaneously on the individual's trajectory and interests as well as on institutional support. On this point, Melo and Campos (2019) emphasize that it is a process "at once individual and collective, which arises from real needs contextualized in the space-time of professional practice" (p. 49).

Thus, it can be said that both elements are of great relevance, highlighting the complexity of the dynamics that lead to faculty development, since they involve both individual and

institutional issues. In other words, there is no single path to be followed by all professors at a university in order to improve their pedagogical skills. However, collective dialogue can make it possible to expand understandings that are favorable to the common good.

In light of this scenario, it becomes pertinent to investigate how university professors experience and interpret their own educational trajectories, particularly with regard to the development of competencies related to teaching. In what follows, we describe the methodological procedures adopted in this study, which sought to understand these experiences through a mixed-methods approach.

METHODS

The present study consisted of an empirical investigation, using a mixed-methods approach (Souza; Kerbauy, 2017) and an exploratory objective. The stages of the study are described below.

First, the project was submitted to and approved by the university's Research Ethics Committee (CAAE: 75240223.7.0000.5151). Following approval, the data collection phase began, comprising: a survey; an institutional listing of training activities carried out between 2019 and 2023; and individual interviews. Each of these elements is detailed below.

With respect to the survey, it was designed by the researchers, structured, and administered via Google Forms®. It included questions on participant demographics, as well as multiple-choice and open-ended items. The survey aimed to capture participants' perceptions of the quality and quantity of continuing education opportunities available at the institution and in their professional experiences. The section "Data Analysis" reports the questions posed to professors. The inclusion criterion was being an active professor or staff member in any academic unit of the university, regardless of field of pedagogical expertise or professional sector. The exclusion criteria were: being a professor from another university, or a staff member with no experience related to faculty training.

The survey link was shared with professors via the university's institutional newsletter, distributed by the Communication Office in February 2024. In addition, targeted invitations were sent via email to departments and program coordinators. The survey remained open until August of the same year. Of the 877 professionals comprising the entire faculty, 85 responded, constituting a non-probabilistic, convenience sample (Rondini et al., 2016).

Also in February 2024, the researchers contacted the institution's Personnel Development and Support Division (SESED) to request a list of training activities offered between 2019 and 2023. From this list, those with instructional and pedagogical themes were analyzed. The time frame was chosen to encompass the pre-, during, and post-COVID-19 pandemic periods, allowing

the study to investigate the extent to which the pandemic influenced the availability of pedagogical training opportunities.

Between April and June 2024, some survey respondents were invited by email to participate in semi-structured interviews conducted via Google Meet®, in accordance with Brazil's General Data Protection Law (Law No. 13.709/2018). The inclusion criteria for interviewees were: demonstrating interest in continuing education in their survey responses, indicating availability for the interview, and representing different campuses of the institution in order to ensure sample diversity.

Of the 13 individuals invited, 10 agreed to participate, including 9 professors and 1 administrative staff member affiliated with SESED. The participation of this staff member was justified by the contribution offered to understanding the role played by the division in the university, as it is responsible for organizing training courses and programs.

The interviews were semi-structured and did not repeat items from the initial survey. Guided by an interview protocol, they included evaluative and subjective questions (e.g., *How do you assess training X in which you participated?*), hypothetical questions (*What do you believe the university could do to improve continuing education?*), as well as follow-ups that deepened aspects mentioned in the survey or in the list of training activities.

Data analysis was conducted using Thematic Analysis (TA), as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2012), anchored in the interpretive and phenomenological paradigm (Mahfoud, 2016). From this perspective, knowledge is understood as a construction shaped by interactions between the individual and the context, aiming to understand the meanings that people attribute to their experiences. This approach makes it possible to identify, categorize, and interpret patterns of meaning in the data.

For this purpose, a codebook was developed (Souza, 2019, p. 53), combining predefined codes with openness to emergent meanings. The initial codebook contained categories such as: "previous participation in training," "example of training," "assessment of training experience," and "practical effects of training." Data organization and coding were supported by Atlas.ti® software, which allowed researchers to mark sections of the documents and group them according to the codes.

Based on code frequency, three major thematic categories were established, which structure the analysis in this article: (1) general perceptions of the institution; (2) perceptions of one's own teaching training and professional development; and (3) perceptions of the institution's role in faculty development.

It is important to emphasize that participant identities were preserved through anonymization, using numerical identifiers (e.g., Participant 1, Participant 2, etc.). In addition, all participants signed an informed consent form, as required by ethical protocols.

Subsequently, the analysis is discussed in light of the theoretical perspective adopted.

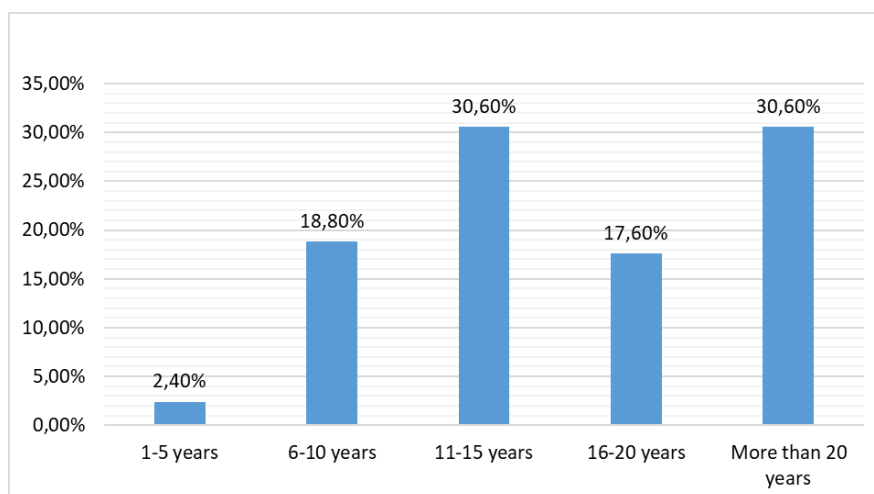
DATA COLLECTION

Participants' Overview

The research sample, obtained through the questionnaire, consisted of 85 faculty members from the investigated university and one administrative staff member. Among the participants, 41.3% identified as female, 56.3% as male, and 2.3% preferred not to disclose.

Regarding teaching experience, 2.4% reported between 2 and 5 years in the profession; 18.8% between 6 and 10 years; 30.6% between 11 and 15 years; 17.6% between 16 and 20 years; and 30.6% reported more than 20 years of teaching experience. Thus, the group can be described as heterogeneous yet experienced, since only a small portion of respondents had been in the profession for five years or less. The figure below illustrates these data:

Figure 1 – Time (Years) of been a Faculty member



Source: research data.

Similarly, most participants reported working at the investigated institution for more than six years: 14.1% had been employed between 1 and 5 years; 29.4% between 6 and 10 years; 43.5% between 11 and 15 years; 7.1% between 16 and 20 years; and the remaining 5.9% for more than 20 years.

The sample also proved to be heterogeneous with regard to academic affiliation: the 85 faculty members were distributed across 28 different departments. The most frequently represented were the Department of Psychology (11.5%), the Department of Natural Sciences (10.3%), and the Department of Electrical Engineering (6.9%).

Mapping Faculty Development Opportunities (2019–2023)

Initially, participants were asked to list pedagogical training opportunities in which they had taken part over the past four years—excluding undergraduate, master’s, doctoral, and postdoctoral programs. Out of the 85 respondents, 33 reported never having participated in professional development activities focused on pedagogical issues. The remaining 52 participants (61.1%) indicated having attended some form of training, including opportunities offered at other higher education institutions (HEIs).

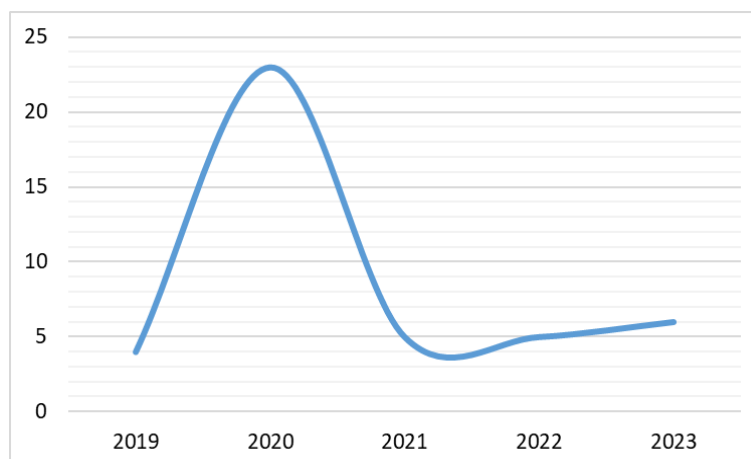
Within the Engineering departments, the highest number of discipline-specific activities was identified, including: the short course *“Implementation of Active Methodologies in Engineering”* (2021); the short course *“Designing Competency-Based Curricula in Engineering”* (2021); the *First Seminar on Teaching Transformation in Engineering* (2023); and the workshop *“Application of the Team-Based Learning (TBL) Active Methodology in Engineering Courses”* (2023).

Additionally, one interdisciplinary Faculty Learning Community (FLC) was identified, involving faculty from Engineering, Psychology, and Geography, dedicated to the discussion of active learning methodologies. It is noteworthy that this was the only ongoing group within the institution explicitly focused on teaching in higher education.

Other initiatives also stood out, particularly those promoted by SESED, which were open to all staff and covered a wide range of topics. Between 2019 and 2023, the sector offered 161 training opportunities, 37 of which were directly related to the pedagogical dimension—23 of these held during the period of Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT). In addition, participants mentioned other isolated activities, such as the short course *“Faculty Training for Teaching in Health Professions”* (2022), organized by the Department of Medicine, as well as participation in lectures and conferences on teaching more broadly.

Most participants emphasized the influence of ERT—during the COVID-19 pandemic—on the number of pedagogical training opportunities organized by SESED. Figure 2 illustrates this phenomenon.

Figure 2 – Pedagogical training activities offered by SESED between 2019 and 2023.



Source: research data.

In this sense, the figure demonstrates a considerable increase in pedagogical training activities during the pandemic period, in response to the challenges posed by Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT). This finding aligns with the argument presented by Mseleku (2020):

While COVID-19 has created a series of problems for higher education, it is also recognized that this pandemic has, on the positive side, created opportunities. Such opportunities involve new approaches and tools for remote teaching, as well as development capacities (Mseleku, 2020, p. 592).

In other words, once a new teaching context marked by remote classes was established, the development of new ways of learning and teaching became urgent.

This perspective is further confirmed by Interviewee 10, an administrative staff member working at SESED. According to them, once engaged in ERT, faculty “became more open to the possibility of putting themselves in the position of students” (Interviewee 10, 2024). As a result, there was increased interest in participating in the training opportunities offered by the division.

Therefore, while this period was marked by significant challenges, including in the educational domain (e.g., the management of previously unfamiliar digital resources, mental health crises, and the distancing in interpersonal relationships between faculty and students), there was also an expansion in the availability of training opportunities, aimed at mitigating the challenges in place (Cavalcanti; Guerra, 2021).

Participants’ Involvement in Formal Pedagogical Learning Opportunities

As noted earlier, it was observed that the majority of participants (61.1%) had access to pedagogical training opportunities throughout their careers. Thus, within a broad sense of provision—including short courses, conferences, lectures on educational topics, practice

groups, and similar activities—participants demonstrated engagement and interest in actions that supported this aspect of their work, particularly since participation in such activities was not mandatory.

On the other hand, the proportion of faculty members who have never participated in educational training opportunities throughout their careers (38.8%) is noteworthy. Within this group, some faculty expressed a desire to participate but had either not been aware of such opportunities or were unable to participate due to practical constraints (e.g., limited time) or because they prioritized research activities.

These findings indicate that engagement in renewed teaching practices constitutes a complex and multifaceted process. As Melo and Campos (2019, p. 49) point out, it depends on aspects such as “work space and conditions; public policies; personal and professional beliefs and values; initial and continuing education; faculty identity and socialization [...]”, among others. Considering this, it is evident that fostering training opportunities — initiatives that can even originate within the HEIs themselves — is highly valuable. Such efforts require attention to a variety of factors, including “the lived trajectory of faculty members and the way they integrate the personal, professional, and institutional dimensions, and consequently, how they (trans)form over time” (Isaia, 2006, p. 63).

Faculty as Active Agents in Continuing Professional Development

Another question posed to participants concerned whether they had ever offered training to their colleagues at the same institution. Of the 85 individuals analyzed, 53 reported never having acted as leaders or even collaborators in pedagogical training activities; seven contributed indirectly. Another 25 reported more general contributions, such as delivering lectures, organizing seminars and/or short courses, promoting teaching-related studies, as well as participating in training sessions offered by SESED during the COVID-19 pandemic. This significant number of contributing participants (approximately 29.4% of the total sample) can be attributed to the fact that, as noted in the Methodology, our sample was not fully random, which attracted respondents who were already interested and involved in the topic due to the study’s theme or title.

It was also observed that, during ERT, SESED invited university staff to offer training opportunities that could assist faculty during that period. Accordingly, some faculty volunteered to conduct short courses and/or lectures for their colleagues. This is illustrated in the account of Interviewee 3, affiliated with the Department of Computer Science:

"In the period preceding the pandemic, I was researching issues related to distance education. With the shift to remote teaching, I wanted to contribute to the University using the knowledge I had been developing. During that time, I offered some short courses on managing digital resources in online classes" (Interviewee 3, 2024).

We also identified seven participants who contributed indirectly to continuing professional development at the university. Although they did not lead activities specifically targeting faculty, they reached their colleagues through broader initiatives. Examples include Participants 10 and 43:

"I contributed within the course/department, sharing concepts and learnings, since I was often involved as a member of the Collegiate, the Structuring Teaching Core, the Coordination, etc." (Participant 10, 2024).

In this case, the participant considered that involvement in administrative activities provided greater contact and dialogue with faculty colleagues, including discussions on pedagogical issues. Thus, even though this was not a purely training context, the experience facilitated the exchange of knowledge among those involved.

Participant 43, for instance, is a researcher in Chemistry education. In this role, the professor organized events focused on teaching, aimed at the general academic community, including undergraduate and graduate Chemistry students as well as faculty from the Department of Chemistry.

According to Interviewee 10, working at SESED, this is a common trend among faculty in teacher education programs. Events promoted by courses related to teacher training often attract not only undergraduates but also faculty members interested in the teaching-related topic within their own field.

This applies to faculty whose research focuses on teaching and who, as mentors—whether in academic research projects or initiatives such as the Teaching Initiation Scholarship Program (PIBID) and the Pedagogical Residency—engage continuously with teaching-related topics, which can, in turn, impact their own teaching practice.

In other words, activities that foster professional development may occur beyond formal occasions such as short courses or lectures. In fact, if continuing professional development consists of sustained engagement with learning opportunities (Pryjma; Winkeler, 2014), these opportunities may also arise in the daily practice of faculty, in “places of discussion, sharing, training, analysis, and collaborative work” (Nóvoa; Amante, 2015, p. 28).

Regarding this interweaving of contexts and activities, Gatti (2003, p. 77) argues that, within HEIs, it may be appropriate to implement a triangulated form of training in which “teaching, specialized research, and faculty practice” mutually reinforce one another. The author notes that mentoring master’s theses and participating in departmental projects, for example, can contribute to the continuous learning process of faculty members (Gatti, 2003, p. 77).

The Effects of a Faculty Development Programs on Pedagogical Practice in Higher Education

The study participants were also asked about the impact, if any, of the didactic-pedagogical training provided by the University on their work. Out of 85 professors, 7 expressed uncertainty about how to evaluate the issue in their personal experience. Conversely, 34 stated that, based on knowledge built through the training they experienced, their pedagogical practice underwent changes, whether to a small or large extent. In this sense, it is worth citing the reports from some of the subjects:

“By applying some of the techniques I learned, I notice greater student engagement in course activities. I have received positive feedback from these students and have also observed progress in the development of some important skills” (Participant 12, 2024).

“Yes. Based on the lectures and workshops conducted, and especially the meetings of the study group, I have been gradually trying to give students a more central role during classes. [...] I have already managed to incorporate some active learning strategies into my classes, in addition to being much more concerned with using feedback as a teaching tool” (Participant 59, 2024).

Reports like these demonstrate the relevance of initiatives aimed at impacting teachers' teaching practices. After all, as Selbach and Luce (2018, p. 2) argue, “teachers working at the higher education level must also acknowledge the incompleteness of their pedagogical training, their training for teaching.”

It is also from this perspective that Melo and Campos emphasize the importance of valuing the continuum of learning that culminates in professional faculty development: “[...] being a teacher requires the uninterrupted construction of knowledge and practices, because their activity is permeated by social, cultural, political, institutional, professional, and personal factors” (Melo; Campos, 2019, p. 48).

In contrast, the other 44 research participants are noteworthy, as they believe their practice was not affected by the University's training programs. In this regard, it should be noted that among them, 33 did not participate in any training focused on educational issues. The remaining 11 responded negatively, citing as impediments to impact the lack of themes that were interesting and relevant to their specific fields, the exhaustion caused by excessive workload, and a lack of motivation.

The responses from these subjects align with the discussion by Nóvoa and Amante (2015) on the excessive bureaucracy within Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), which hinders adequate professional development. The authors point out that in the contemporary context, there is a “[...] impressive set of rules and regulations that are suffocating universities through a ‘hyper-bureaucratization’” (Nóvoa; Amante, 2015, p. 27), and they add:

[...] evaluative metrics, built around bibliometric logic and, in some cases, impact indicators, divert teachers from dedicating more time to teaching. On the other hand, increasingly heavy bureaucratic norms tend to create a straitjacket for pedagogical action, conforming it according to detailed rules and instructions (Nóvoa; Amante, 2015, p. 27).

It is possible to conclude, therefore, that the teachers' work context, marked by a high number of daily demands, can hinder pedagogical professional development. Thus, a potential alternative would be to foster broader spaces for pedagogical discussion, which do not necessarily adhere to rigid structures but are instead integrated naturally into the daily life of the profession.

Faculty Perceptions of University-Provided Training Programs

Furthermore, participants were asked to express their opinions on the professional development opportunities provided by the University between 2019 and 2023. Out of 85 professors, 33 chose not to offer an opinion, justifying that they lacked sufficient experience to do so. Conversely, 5 participants evaluated the training positively, stating that the topics addressed were relevant and that they believed the number of offerings was adequate, as well as their quality.

Similarly, 9 professors expressed a neutral or mixed opinion. That is, they identified both positive and negative aspects regarding the training that occurred. Their perception, therefore, contrasts with those cited previously, as they assessed that the number of offerings is still low. Furthermore, they noted that while the training sessions were of good quality, they were isolated events, as they were not integrated into a broader continuing education policy.

The remaining 38 faculty members, based on their experiences, reported a negative opinion. This was primarily because they considered the offering of didactic-pedagogical training to be insufficient for their demands, and also perceived the available training as falling behind current technological innovations:

"I believe the University offers few opportunities related to this theme, far fewer than would be necessary. [...] I am not aware of a continuing education program for university teacher training here. Initiatives, in general, come from individual professors and not from the Institution. I think it would be very important for us to have support to adapt to changes in society and in teaching" (Participant 25, 2024).

"Opportunities are scarce and do not reflect the integration of teaching-learning practice with modern technological tools" (Participant 41, 2024).

In view of this, the spectrum of these groups — ranging from positive to neutral to negative perceptions — highlights the subjectivity of personal experiences within the same institution.

In other words, even within the same environment, faculty may differ in their training and work circumstances, as highlighted by Melo and Campos (2019) and Xavier et al. (2023).

The significant number of participants who did not feel comfortable opining on the matter further indicates how the issue of didactic-pedagogical training remains distant from the reflections and experiences of these individuals. In this regard, Selbach and Luce (2022) explain that this type of discussion, unfortunately, is not part of the daily routine of all higher education teachers:

[...] for many professors working in universities, the appropriation of didactic-pedagogical knowledge was not valued in their graduate studies nor was it a requirement for entering the career. Therefore, it is as if they are exempt from worrying about these contents throughout their professional trajectory. Consequently, the fact that they did not have a strong initial training in the pedagogical area legitimizes their continuing professional development focusing solely on their specific knowledge, research, and, eventually, the professional practice in which they work (Selbach; Luce, 2022, p. 535).

Thus, we understand the importance of greater promotion of training directed at university pedagogy, especially throughout the professional continuum, given the incompleteness of initial training. As argued by the aforementioned authors, faculty development cannot occur solely within the scope of each individual's research line, but must also address what all these professionals have in common: their identity as teachers.

We also verified that the university in question lacks a clear policy regarding the didactic-pedagogical training and support for professors. In the form, some of them emphasized this problem, expressing their dissatisfaction:

"The lack of formal/official spaces for exchange and training regarding the teaching-learning process leads to an excessive burden on the professor for selecting content, teaching methods, and assessment. This ends up individualizing a process that should be collective. [...] It also generates a feeling of solitude in the classroom" (Participant 47, 2024).

This participant's perception is related to the impasse of "pedagogical solitude," discussed by authors such as Morosini and Morosini (2006), who define it as *"the feeling of helplessness among teachers in the face of a lack of dialogue and shared pedagogical knowledge for addressing the educational act"* (p. 57).

However, during the research, upon analyzing the institution's official norms and guidelines, we were able to verify the past existence of a Pedagogical Support Center (*Núcleo de Apoio Pedagógico* - NAPE) at the investigated university, established in 2012. This Center was intended for monitoring and promoting the pedagogical development of professors. However,

it was found to be inactive by the conclusion of this study, and no specific spaces constituting a policy for supporting professors in didactic matters were located.

Despite this, it is worth highlighting the report from one of the interviewees, who was responsible for some of the training that occurred within the engineering departments, which was cited earlier. According to him, despite the institution's weaknesses, the University always supported the initiatives that he and his colleagues proposed, without creating obstacles for their realization (Interviewee 4, 2024). The same was observed regarding the institutional stance during the Emergency Remote Teaching (ERE) period, where proposals developed by professors who wished to offer courses to their peers were welcomed.

In light of this data, it was necessary to consider that, in the investigated context, there are aspects favorable to pedagogical development, such as the receptiveness to training proposals originating from the professors themselves. On the other hand, the lack of a clear institutional policy and dedicated spaces for pedagogical debate makes it difficult for individuals to feel supported.

It is, therefore, a complex context for which there are no ready-made solutions. It could be productive, nevertheless, to look at successful experiences in similar environments to gather inspiration and adapt them to the context under investigation. Examples of this are provided by studies like that of Xavier *et al.* (2023), which reports the work of an active Department of Pedagogical Support at a Brazilian federal university, which, despite some challenges faced, constitutes an important space for faculty and actively contributes to Continuing Education.

It is also pertinent to cite the relevance of Faculty Learning Communities (FLCs) (Cox, 2004), evidenced in the reports of research subjects who are part of such a group at the university. The positive perceptions of several identified members in this research may indicate that it would be beneficial for the institution's scenario to foster the creation of more groups following FLC proposals or similar practices.

Finally, it is also worth reiterating the proposals of Gatti (2003) and Cunha (2019), which lead us to consider, in harmony with reports gathered by this research, that institutional support for pedagogical research can even favor the professional development of the researchers themselves.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

At the conclusion of this investigation, it was possible to conclude that the majority of participants had undertaken some form of training focused on didactic-pedagogical issues throughout their careers. Furthermore, most of these individuals recognize the relevance of pedagogical preparation for teaching activities. However, it became evident that the offering

of such training at the researched university remains low, despite a different trend occurring during the pandemic period.

Another perceived factor concerns the complex nature of the training process, which involves both individual interest and institutional incentive. Thus, it was highlighted, as also identified by Xavier *et al.* (2023) in a Brazilian and a Uruguayan public university, the need to foster learning opportunities that are integrated into the daily lives of faculty, that can be considered in the professional progression process, and the importance of respecting the personal trajectories of the individuals.

Regarding the role of providing training, only a small portion of the participants had acted as responsible for or even collaborated in didactic-pedagogical training initiatives. In this regard, it is worth emphasizing that the majority did so during the pandemic period. This phenomenon is largely explained by the fact that, at the time, the faculty found themselves unprepared to deal with the challenges posed by Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT).

Concerning the institutional stance, it was not possible to identify a clear policy aimed at the didactic-pedagogical development of faculty, since the Center responsible for this has been inactive for over a decade. As a consequence of this context, some of the subjects consider themselves dissatisfied and unsupported by the university in relation to their educational practice.

That stated, it is necessary to consider the limitations of the research – particularly concerning the obtained sample. Despite efforts to disseminate the form, only 85 professors from the institution participated in the study, which represents approximately 9.6% of the total faculty body, without representation from all teaching departments encompassed by the institution. Therefore, it is possible to affirm that a larger number of respondents could favor a broader understanding of the investigated context.

Nevertheless, despite these difficulties, it is important to note that the present research provides elements that can serve for comparison between similar institutional practices and conditions, by raising the discussion about the role of continuing education in improving Brazilian higher education.

It is hoped that new studies will expand this debate, deepening the understanding of the conditions and challenges faced by faculty in the Brazilian academic context.

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