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UNIVERSITY PEDAGOGY: FOR AN INSTITUTIONAL TEACHING DEVELOPMENT POLICY IN HIGHER EDUCATION¹

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Abstract

This study aims to highlight the need for developing institutional projects on University Pedagogy which contribute to the professional development of higher education teachers at work. We questioned them the possible contributions of training activities focused on teaching development and professional identity. This quantitative, qualitative research was conducted in a federal university located in the region of Triângulo Mineiro, in Brazil, from 2013 to 2016. We collected data by means of questionnaires and interviews with university professors. We concluded that fragmented, sporadic training processes contribute little to professional development. Thus, in view of the complex work in higher education, institutional efforts are needed to consolidate a University Pedagogy as a permanent field for teacher training and development.

PEDAGOGY • HIGHER EDUCATION • TEACHER TRAINING • PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

PEDAGOGIA UNIVERSITÁRIA: POR UMA POLÍTICA INSTITUCIONAL DE DESENVOLVIMENTO DOCENTE

Resumo

O objetivo deste artigo é evidenciar a necessidade de se construírem projetos institucionais de Pedagogia Universitária que contribuam para o desenvolvimento profissional de professores universitários em contexto de trabalho. Questionamos quais as possíveis contribuições de ações formativas para o desenvolvimento docente e a identidade profissional. A pesquisa, de cunho quanti-qualitativo, foi realizada em uma universidade federal, localizada no Triângulo Mineiro, no período de 2013 a 2016. Os dados foram obtidos por meio de questionários e entrevistas com professores universitários. Concluímos que processos formativos fragmentados e esparsos pouco colaboram para o desenvolvimento profissional e que, diante da complexidade do trabalho docente, será fundamental envidar esforços institucionais para consolidar uma Pedagogia Universitária, como campo permanente de formação e desenvolvimento docente.

PEDAGOGIA • ENSINO SUPERIOR • FORMAÇÃO DE PROFESSORES •

IDENTIDADE PROFISSIONAL

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PÉDAGOGIE UNIVERSITAIRE: UNE POLITIQUE INSTITUTIONNELLE DE DÉVELOPPEMENT DES ENSEIGNANTS

Résumé

L'objectif de cet article est de mettre en évidence la nécessité de construire des projets institutionnels de Pédagogie Universitaire contribuant au développement professionnel des professeurs universitaires dans le cadre de leur travail. Nous nous interrogeons sur les types d'actions de formation qui peuvent contribuer au développement des enseignants et à l'identité professionnelle. La recherche quantitative/qualitative a été réalisée dans une université fédérale, située dans le Triângulo Mineiro, entre 2013 et 2016. Les données ont été obtenues au moyen de questionnaires et d'entretiens avec des professeurs universitaires. Nous concluons que les processus de formation fragmentés et sporadiques ne collaborent guère au développement professionnel et que, face à la complexité du travail d'enseignement, il est fondamental de mettre en oeuvre des efforts institutionnels pour consolider une Pédagogie Universitaire, en tant que domaine de formation permanente et de développement des enseignants.

PÉDAGOGIE • ENSEIGNEMENT SUPÉRIEUR • FORMATION DES ENSEIGNANTS • IDENTITÉ PROFESSIONNELLE

PEDAGOGÍA UNIVERSITARIA: PARA UNA POLÍTICA INSTITUCIONAL DE DESARROLLO DOCENTE

Resumen

El objetivo de este artículo es resaltar la necesidad de construir proyectos institucionales de Pedagogía Universitaria que contribuyan al desarrollo profesional de los profesores universitarios en contexto de trabajo. Nos preguntamos sobre cuáles son las posibles contribuciones de las acciones formativas al desarrollo del profesorado y la identidad profesional. La investigación, de naturaleza cuantitativa y cualitativa, se realizó en una universidad federal, ubicada en el Triángulo Mineiro, de 2013 a 2016. Los datos se obtuvieron a través de cuestionarios y entrevistas con profesores universitarios. Llegamos a la conclusión de que los procesos formativos, fragmentados y escasos, poco colaboran al desarrollo profesional y que, dada la complejidad del trabajo docente, será esencial hacer esfuerzos institucionales para consolidar una Pedagogía Universitaria, como un campo permanente de formación y desarrollo docente.

PEDAGOGÍA • ENSEÑANZA SUPERIOR • FORMACIÓN DE PROFESORES • IDENTIDAD PROFESIONAL

D**URING THE PAST DECADES, TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, IDENTITY, AND**

training have been important investigation objects in educational research. The effort to understand teacher training and its relations to a Pedagogy for higher education points out the importance of studying the constitution of a knowledge field called by some researchers as University Pedagogy, particularly in Brazil. As example, we can highlight studies by Almeida (2012), Campos (2010, 2017), Campos and Almeida (2019), Cunha (2007, 2008, 2009, 2010), Isaia (2003), Melo (2009, 2018), Melo and Campos (2019), Morosini (2010), Pimenta and Anastasiou (2005), Veiga (2006), among others. In the international sphere, teacher training at different levels has also been a polysemic field of studies that have significantly contributed to broadening discussions on training, knowledges and identity: Leite and Ramos (2012), Nóvoa (1992; 2000), Roldão (2007), and Sá-Chaves (2001) in Portugal; Marcelo Garcia (1999, 2009), Fernández Cruz (2006), Murillo (2005), and Zabalza (2004) in Spain; Feiman-Nemser (2007), Cochran-Smith and Fries (2005), and Hughes (2008) in the United Kingdom.

The set of studies conducted in both international and national spheres supports our statement regarding the little attention given to the need for systematizing professional knowledges on teacher training and teaching in higher education; further, it points out the theoretical and practical weaknesses in teacher training for elementary and higher education mainly regarding teachers' successful results in the face of demands from social changes, which

have been faster and more impacting every day. In general, according to the aforementioned authors, being a teacher requires a broad, solid training that includes pedagogical, curricular, institutional, ethical and political dimensions and the necessary domain of the specific knowledge to be taught.

Concerning the teacher training of university professors, there is a recurrent, widely known finding that academic graduate courses provide professors with an incipient preparation for teaching specifically, which is inserted in an old problem which is researcher versus teacher training (ALMEIDA, 2012; CAMPOS, 2010, 2017; CUNHA, 2009; MELO; NUNES; NASCIMENTO, 2011). Besides, the university career does not comprise formal resources for a previous pedagogical teacher preparation. Few initiatives have supported the professional development of professors, which results in what Isaia (2003) presented as “pedagogical loneliness.” It is the helplessness of professors in view of the abyss between their education and the requirements of the pedagogical practice.

Based on these initial considerations, we propose in this paper a reflection upon the repercussion of training activities in the professional development of professors in a federal higher education institution (IFES) in southwestern Brazil from 2013 to 2016. The main question that guided our analysis was: what are the contributions of training activities to teacher professional development and identity in higher education?

The answers to this question arose from the qualitative analysis of part of the data extracted from the questionnaires and interviews applied to 213 professors – from several knowledge fields, such as Chemistry, Physiotherapy, Dentistry, Environmental Engineering, Administration, Journalism, Economics, International Relations, Philosophy, Medicine, Veterinary Medicine, Accounting, Physical Education, Biology, Nursing, Business Management, Computer Science, Chemical Engineering, and Physics – who attended the I, II, III, and IV University Teaching courses during the study period.

We identified that teaching is a complex activity that demands careful training, committed with unique teaching conditions. From this perspective, we assumed the necessity of creating and strengthening a University Pedagogy as an institutional policy with principles such as continuous activities planned and conducted according to teachers’ training needs.

According to Pimenta and Anastasiou (2005, p. 186, own translation), “teacher training should take place in the social field of teaching and educational practice as an object of analysis, comprehension, criticism and proposition”.² Cunha (2010, p. 83, own translation) stated it is necessary to distinguish the teaching profession from the others, since

[...] being a teacher is not for beginners, because the multiple knowledges at stake in their education require the

² In the original: “uma formação que tome o campo social da prática educativa e de ensinar como objeto de análise e compreensão, de crítica, de proposição”.

dimension of the total, which goes in the opposite direction of the specialty logic, so dear to many people.³

THE (NON) PLACE OF TEACHER TRAINING OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN BRAZIL

According to data from the National Institute for Educational Studies and Research Anísio Teixeira (INEP), in 2017, there were 2448 Higher Education Institutions (IES) in Brazil, of which 256 are public and 2,152 private, representing 87.9% of the network. Among public IESs, 41.9% were state institutions, 36.8% were federal institutions, and 21.3% were municipal institutions. The number of people holding a master's and a doctorate degree in Brazil has doubled in the past ten years, but, despite this number, the Brazilian educational policy has not demonstrated concrete concerns about the initial and continuous professional education when they become professors.

Graduate courses, especially academic ones – although explicitly indicating teacher preparation among their goals, as defined in article 66 of LDB (Brazilian Law on Education Guidelines and Basis) 9394/96 (BRASIL, 1996) –, notably privilege researcher training for specific areas. Teacher training for higher education is restricted to article 66 of LDB 9394/96, which establishes that preparation for teaching in higher education is done in the graduate level, primarily in master's and doctorate degrees (BRASIL, 1996). This is so that, in the set of activities offered by graduate courses and in their requirements, studies on the teaching practice and performance has a tiny place. In general, teacher “preparation” is assigned to the teaching internship or to a subject (when offered) called Higher Education Methodology or Higher Education Didactics, with an average hour load of 64 hours/class.

The teaching internship or the “pedagogical” subjects, even with an insignificant hour load, can contribute to evoke the importance of professional education for teaching. However, as Almeida (2012), Pimenta (2012), Pimenta and Almeida (2011), Pimenta and Anastasiou (2005), we believe such education is not limited to didactics training, neither it is automatic and resulting from investigation skills that a graduate student acquires in a master's or doctorate degree. And why not?

The possible answer arises from comprehending the complexity of teaching, which demands specific teaching knowledges regardless of the area to which professors are linked and work, either Pedagogy, Nursing, History, Engineering, etc. For that reason, being a professor demands the continuous construction of knowledges and practices, because this activity is permeated by social, cultural, political, institutional, professional and personal conditioning

³ In the original: “ser professor não é tarefa para neófitos, pois a multiplicidade de saberes e conhecimentos, que estão em jogo na sua formação, exigem uma dimensão de totalidade, que se distancia da lógica das especialidades, tão cara a muitas outras”.

factors. The teacher profession is marked by several aspects and dimensions, that is why it requires a specific education. Consequently, learning this profession should occur, as suggested by Campos (2017, p. 43, own translation), “in the plural form, ‘trainings’, because initial training is also continuous training, considering they are connected to guide the teacher training course in the professional career”.⁴

From this perspective, the training of university teachers in Brazil has weaknesses concerning the systematization of professional teaching knowledges, and universities, colleges, and university centers need to systematize institutional policies on professional training and development of their professors. These policies can contribute to the perspective of University Pedagogy, here understood as

[...] a polysemic field of pedagogical knowledge production and application in higher education. It recognizes different scientific fields, which become epistemological and cultural references to define its basis and features. University Pedagogy makes room for connecting knowledges, subjectivities, and cultures, which requires highly specialized scientific, technological or artistic content leading to a profession training.⁵ (CUNHA, 2004, p. 321, own translation)

According to Cunha (2004), University Pedagogy is characterized for articulating teaching and research dimensions in educational places, which can minimize the rigid dichotomy between researching and teaching in higher education. Thus, this it considers the pedagogical dimension of the multiple activities carried out in the academic environment.

However, we must also consider some factors constituting teachers’ work context, such as work space and conditions, public policies, professional and personal beliefs and values, initial and continued training, teacher identity and socialization, experiences, knowledges, practices, among others. Marcelo Garcia (1999) stated that training is a work teachers do to themselves, it means, it is a special self-training process that involves experiences lived by teachers, their life story, interests, beliefs, and values. Therefore, training could be merely technical or instrumental at risk of becoming a totally sterile, innocuous process, which will consequently affect the constitution of a teacher identity.

Professional development also involves experiences, either spontaneous or planned by teachers, who carry them out on behalf of students’ learning to contribute to their class quality. We understand professional development as a self-training and inter-training process, it means, a simultaneous individual and

⁴ In the original: “em sentido plural, formações, porque a formação inicial é também a formação contínua, considerando que estas se interligam, orientando o percurso formativo ao longo da carreira profissional”.

⁵ In the original: “Um campo polissêmico de produção e aplicação dos conhecimentos pedagógicos na educação superior. Reconhece distintos campos científicos dos quais toma referentes epistemológicos e culturais para definir suas bases e características. A pedagogia universitária é também, um espaço de conexão de conhecimentos, subjetividades e culturas, que exige um conteúdo científico, tecnológico ou artístico altamente especializado e orientado para a formação de uma profissão.”

collective process that occurs due to real needs contextualized in the time-space of teachers' work. Only from this perspective, knowledge and practice elaboration allows teachers develop themselves for a better work performance. Consequently, this process will impact the teacher identity constitution, characterized by idiosyncrasies that involve a person (or a community) and form him/her before the society and himself/herself through the awareness of whom he/she is and how he/she is different from other people.

Identity is related to the characteristics and traits of an individual as a professional, which is built based on his/her life experiences. According to Aguiar (2006, p. 159, own translation), identity is "a construct and, throughout life, it accumulates several identity masks, sometimes contradictory between them, but they keep some organization, coherence, and stability".⁶ Thus, the teacher identity development does not only start with knowledge elaboration in the classroom, since teachers' stories need to be considered. Every person carries some traces of his/her family, social, cultural, religious and economic experiences, and of his/her own insertion in the teaching career in the first working years, with his/her expectation, conflicts, and difficulties faced in class, which contribute to the permanent development of identity as a complex, dynamic process.

Identity and teaching professional development are intertwined dimensions, then identity is not an acquired data, a property or product; it is a place of struggles and conflicts, a space for building ways of being and staying in this profession.

The reflections presented here, based on the theoretical contributions investigated, confirm, although briefly, our comprehension that university teachers are in constant training, amalgamated with several historical, political, social, cultural and economic factors that highly interfere with professional identity.

DISCUSSING THE RESEARCH CORPUS: TRAINING ACTIVITIES AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO THE TEACHING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The debate about the constitution of university teacher training policies in the work environment, the IES, is not so simple, because it involves a discussion on the social role of institutions, the methodological-theoretical assumptions about knowledge production, and the impacts of guidelines defined by managing bodies determining productivity assessment processes of those living in the university and building it in a daily basis.

Teaching requires the understanding of particularities in the dynamic relationship between historical reality and its concrete totality where teachers

⁶ In the original: "um construto e, ao longo da vida, reveste-se cumulativamente de várias facetas identitárias e até contraditórias entre si, mas que mantém uma certa organização, coerência e estabilidade".

work. Higher education teaching, as presented by Almeida (2012, p. 8-9, own translation), can be understood in three dimensions:

[...] the *professional dimension*, which comprises the teaching defining elements, such as the constant professional identity building, the training basis (initial and continuous training), and the professional requirements to be met; the *personal dimension*, which demands the development of engagement and commitment relationships with teaching and the comprehension of work circumstances and phenomena that affect individuals involved with the profession and the mechanisms to deal with them during the career; and the *organizational dimension*, which establishes the work feasibility conditions and the standards to be reached in the professional performance.⁷

The challenge of educational institutions is organizing continuous and emancipating training courses where professors are considered participants in the educational process. Another challenge is recognizing that simple measures can solve complex issues, it means, it is necessary to set educational processes based on principles that actually allow a solid theoretical-practical education, which provide professors with different professional knowledges to exercise teaching. For that purpose, educational institutions should provide effective conditions, such as available schedule, infrastructure, and incentives so that professors can and wish to attend training activities.

In this line we highlight a work developed by the Undergraduate Dean's Office of an IFES in the state of Minas Gerais, Brazil. It has four *campi* in the headquarters city and three other *campi* in other cities, within approximately 200 km. This IFES currently has 1,900 professors.

From 2013 to 2016, the IFES carried out multi and interdisciplinary training activities – conversation circles, university teaching courses, international forums on university teaching, workshops, and short-term courses – for working professors, which approached:

- the connection of training with professional practice, aiming to organize a permanent continuous training process, so that the university reality could be a starting point to deeper reflections upon teaching challenges;
- training practices that permanently promote the value of teaching knowledges beyond lectures based on a conservative perspective of

⁷ In the original: "a dimensão *profissional*, onde se aninham os elementos definidores da atuação, como a incessante construção da identidade profissional, as bases da formação (inicial ou contínua), as exigências profissionais a serem cumpridas; a *dimensão pessoal*, onde há que se desenvolver as relações de envolvimento e os compromissos com a docência, bem como a compreensão das circunstâncias de realização do trabalho e dos fenômenos que afetam os envolvidos com a profissão e os mecanismos para se lidar com eles ao longo da carreira; a *dimensão organizacional*, onde são estabelecidas as condições de viabilização do trabalho e os padrões a serem atingidos na atuação profissional."

education, so that professors could experience different practices that enabled a higher comprehension of the educational phenomenon and its complexity;

- pedagogical knowledge of the content to be taught based on methods that favor the comprehension of teaching objects and the transformations of such objects of knowledge into objects to be taught in class;
- investigative practices for theory-practice interaction.

These training activities were offered to new coming professors and to veteran professors of the IFES with the aim to encourage professors to expand their comprehension about teaching conflicts, challenges and possibilities in higher education. We considered a significant number the voluntary attendance of 607 professors in the training activities. The training activities with the highest number of professors were the conversation circles (218 professors) and the university teaching courses (213 professors).

The conversation circles aimed to provide space for interlocution and continuous training. Throughout eleven meetings, professors exposed their difficulties and anguishes and indicated the need for increasing the opportunities of discussing about their practices, exchanging experiences, and encouraging collective reflections in order to explore deeper essential theoretical-methodological issues – which professors themselves pointed out – to reflect upon the pedagogical practice, although more focused on the technical dimension of teaching.

After identifying the main demands of professors, the division responsible for these training activities developed University Teaching courses, offered every term. Classes took place every fortnight, from 2013 to 2016, organized in eight 4-hour modules, available as distance and classroom learning.

In this paper we analyzed the concepts of professors who attended the University Teaching courses to identify its possible contributions to professional development and if the activities carried out promoted discussions, analysis, and reflections that could reverberate in the pedagogical practice. We also chose this course because it gathered a large number of professors from different fields of knowledge.

The University Teaching courses promoted activities to involve the participants by intercalating lecture moments with debates, workshops, assessments, and experience reports. Professors specialized in higher education contributed to the themes approached in the course.

The diversity of professional education and experience of professors who attended the courses enriched the debates and expanded the comprehension about university teaching. Based on the discussions and reflections upon the teacher professional identity and the necessity of building knowledges that could improve the pedagogical practice, the participating professors had the opportunity

of questioning their own pedagogical practice and its conditioning factors. Table 1 displays general information about the University Teaching courses: number of courses offered, terms, and number of participants per field of knowledge.

TABLE 1
GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY TEACHING COURSES

CLASS/TERM		TOTAL OF PROFESSORS/CLASS	FIELD OF KNOWLEDGE/ NUMBER OF PROFESSORS
I University Teaching Course	1st Class October to December/2013	33	Hard Sciences = 11 Soft Sciences = 7 Health Sciences = 12 Agrarian Sciences = 1 Other areas = 2
	2nd Class May to July/2014	38	Hard Sciences = 11 Soft Sciences = 7 Health Sciences = 12 Agrarian Sciences = 1 Other areas = 6
	3rd Class October/2014 to February/2015	28	Hard Sciences = 9 Soft Sciences = 4 Health Sciences = 3 Agrarian Sciences = 12
	4th Class August to December/2015	16	Hard Sciences = 9 Soft Sciences = 2 Health Sciences = 5
II University Teaching Course	Single Class October/2014 to February/2015	61	Hard Sciences = 15 Soft Sciences = 16 Health Sciences = 20 University Board = 1 Other areas = 9
III University Teaching Course	Single Class April to July/2016	37	Hard Sciences = 7 Soft Sciences = 13 Health Sciences = 14 Agrarian Sciences = 1 Other areas = 2

Source: Files from the I, II, and III University Teaching courses. IFES in Southwestern Brazil. Research period from 2013 to 2016.

Out of the total sample, most professors were from the health sciences (30.9%), followed by the hard sciences (24.8%), and the soft sciences (20.3%). The other areas added up to a lower proportion of professors (16.4%), although not less expressive and engaged in the courses. Next, Table 2 displays professors' statements concerning teacher training in graduate courses:

TABLE 2
TEACHER TRAINING IN GRADUATE COURSES

CLASS	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	EDUCATION - MASTER'S DEGREE/ DOCTORATE DEGREE (%)
1st Class I University Teaching Course	33	66.7
2nd Class I University Teaching Course	38	75
3rd Class I University Teaching Course	28	91
4th Class I University Teaching Course	16	93.7
II University Teaching Course	61	93
III University Teaching Course	37	94.6

Source: Files from the I, II, and III University Teaching courses. IFES in Southwestern Brazil. Research period between 2013 and 2016.

By analyzing the data in Table 2, we identified an expressive number of professors with academic graduate degrees, with master's degree and doctorate degree. In any field of knowledge, professional knowledge represents a set of knowledges that enables individuals to practice their profession and develop all their functions. This knowledge is built in the initial and continuous training, and it is enhanced in the occupation daily practice; however, the university teacher training has been concentrated in the growing specialization in a determined field of knowledge.

Professors who participated in the University Teaching courses stated their access to pedagogical knowledges, particularly regarding the teaching performance in higher education, was insignificant or inexistent. They learned with their experience in class by following the examples of graduate and undergraduate professors. These professors, in face of the educational weaknesses concerning professional knowledges on university teaching in their professional insertion process, have been living a period full of anguish, uncertainty, and insecurity.

Campos (2010, 2017) revealed that, although teacher training to higher education is provided for in LDB 9394/96, primarily in graduate courses, pedagogical education is neglected, and it is a gap in the education and professionalization of professors at this education level, hence revealing weaknesses in the identity construction.

On this matter, Pimenta e Anastasiou (2005) observed the training currently offered to graduate students separates them from any discussion on the pedagogical dimension, disregarding even that the key elements in the research process (subjects involved, time, knowledge, results, and methods) are not the same necessary to teaching. The authors also compare the characteristics of the constitutive elements of each activity.

The professors who attended the training activities stated they entered the IES "straight" from the classrooms of graduate courses, changing from students to professors "from day to night" without any experience with teaching. In face of the dichotomy between professors' thoughts and experiences concerning student profile, pedagogical practice, and institutional culture, the "reality shock" these professors underwent leads to fears and doubts, and need for help and companionship (RUIZ, 2008), as Table 3 indicates.

TABLE 3
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS IN THE TRAINING ACTIVITIES PROMOTED BY THE IFES

CLASS	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	PROFESSORS WITHOUT TEACHING EXPERIENCE PRIOR TO ENTERING THE IFES (%)
1st Class I University Teaching Course	33	No data
2nd Class I University Teaching Course	38	21.2
3rd Class I University Teaching Course	28	No data
4th Class I University Teaching Course	16	37.5
II University Teaching Course	61	21.3
III University Teaching Course	37	31.6

Source: Files from the I, II, and III University Teaching courses. IFES in Southwestern Brazil. Research period from 2013 to 2016.

Table 3 shows that, out of the total 213 professors who attended the University Teaching courses, 82% affirmed they had experience in elementary and/or higher education. However, many of them stated they considered “experience” the period of teaching internship in the undergraduate or graduate course. Other 17.8% stated they did not have previous teaching experience either in elementary or higher education. Most of these professors were in the age range between 26 and 35 years old, it means, they have just joined the institution. Therefore, they are learning how to teach: a period of insecurity, uncertainty, and anguish, especially because the university environment is paradoxically characterized by individualized actions and few collaborative practices among professors. This context highlights the importance of universities making room for discussion and reflection upon university teaching training and challenges faced in the teaching occupation every day. The aim is to promote an understanding about the institution’s training purpose and the commitment of professors with the enhancement of teaching quality and personal and professional education of students.⁸

According to Pimenta and Anastasiou (2005), professors in most IESs in Brazil – despite their significant experience and years of study in their specific areas – are unprepared and even do not have scientific knowledge about the teaching-learning process, for which they become responsible as soon as the join an IES. The authors verified that researchers in several fields of knowledge (historians, chemists, philosophers, biologists, political scientists, physicians, mathematicians, artists, etc.) and professionals in several areas (physicians, dentists, engineers, lawyers, economists, etc.) have started teaching in higher education as a natural result of their activities and for varied reasons and interests. They carry knowledge about their research and professional areas, but in general they do not question about what it means to be a teacher. Likewise, the institutions that receive them already suppose they are teachers, therefore disclaiming their responsibility of contributing to train them.

We understand that becoming a teacher means necessarily professionally and continuously training oneself in order to know the epistemological specialty for the full exercise of higher education teaching. Thus, IESs are also responsible for professors’ work, particularly those in the initial stage of their careers and demanding special attention, because the short and long distance between personal identity and professional identity cannot be approached individually. This delicate initial stage demands a collective construction of training activities and, above all, institutional welcome.

The discussions emerging in the University Teaching courses by professors in the beginning of their careers and more experienced professors led to important reflections upon the “becoming teacher” process and significant

⁸ We consider it is necessary to clarify our comprehension on “qualifying teaching.” We corroborate propositions by Rios (2002), who define qualifying teaching as the competent teaching practice with a quality expected to be better every day, since it is always an ongoing process. However, one must know that the concept of “good” is culturally and historically determined, and it is important to clarify its criteria and grounds. Questioning the criteria consistency demands a constant critical attitude, which contributes to guide the competent teaching practice and to indicate its dimensions: technical, political aesthetics, ethic, and human.

expectations concerning the course purpose – especially involving issues related to knowledge on pedagogical practice and new teaching methods more adequate to students' profile, according to participants' statements. Next, Table 4 summarizes professors' expectations concerning the contributions of the University Teaching courses.

TABLE 4
SUMMARY OF THE EXPECTATIONS DECLARED BY THE PARTICIPANTS OF THE UNIVERSITY TEACHING COURSE

PROFESSORS' EXPECTATIONS ABOUT THE COURSE	
PROFESSORS' ANSWERS	FIELD OF KNOWLEDGE
Better ability to transmit knowledge efficiently and attractively.	Hard Sciences
To acquire pedagogical strategies to improve work.	Biological Sciences
New methods; to improve the quality of classes; to improve communication with students; to improve assessments (institutional assessment); to understand students; interdisciplinarity.	Hard Sciences
To share methodological experiences; to improve didactic skills.	Hard Sciences
Concern about teaching and student learning; updates on teaching in the didactic and scientific area.	Soft sciences
To find techniques to attract students; graduate courses do not prepare students to be teachers.	Biological Sciences
To supply pedagogical gaps.	Health Sciences
To exchange and share information.	Economic Sciences

Source: Data collected in questionnaires and interviews with professors who participated in the I, II and III University Teaching courses. IFES in Southwestern Brazil. Research period from 2013 to 2016.

Training in pedagogy is not something fast achieved, because it demands effort and permanent personal and institutional investment, since it involves epistemological knowledge about education and teaching and sensitivity to comprehend students and their increasingly complex educational demands. In addition, it requires good interpersonal relationships and teaching practices focused on the teaching-learning process. Thus, we consider the participation of professors in isolated activities contributes little to promote changes in their pedagogical practices.

We reaffirm that isolated, fragmented and sporadic activities cannot contribute to help professors overcome their conservative beliefs and concepts historically built in their educational and professional journeys in teaching. On the contrary, this process must occur throughout their professional lives, hence constituting permanent possibilities of (re)designing their knowledges and identities and setting their professional teaching development.

Marcelo Garcia (1999) adopted the concept of professional development of professors as a notion starting at understanding professors as professional teachers. This definition has a connotation of evolution and continuity beyond the mere juxtaposition between initial training and teacher improvement. It assumes the existence of a teacher training approach that values context and organizational aspects and provides a manner of implication and school problem

resolution from a perspective that overcomes the traditionally individual nature of improvement activities for teachers predominant until today.

Thus, we considered that the educational actions conducted in the University Teaching courses started from the professors' interests expressed in the conversation circles. Training apart from the work context, with an individualist character based on transmissive models, has little to contribute to the professional teaching development. Such option necessarily implies that one assumes himself/herself as a teacher. And when do we become teachers? What does being a teacher mean?

Professors' answers to these questions are in Table 5.

TABLE 5
BEING A TEACHER IS...

BEING A TEACHER IS...	
PROFESSORS' ANSWERS	FIELD OF KNOWLEDGE
Stimulating students to search knowledge.	Biological Sciences
Enjoying teaching and what you do.	Hard Sciences
Cooperating with your students' growth.	Hard Sciences
Facilitating the teaching-learning process.	Health Sciences
Compromising yourself with a continuous learning process.	Hard Sciences
Intermediating knowledge to promote one's transformation.	Language Sciences
Motivating/inspiring students.	Health Sciences
Being a partner of students in their knowledge building process.	Health Sciences
Having pleasure in transmitting what you learned and always studying to improve knowledge.	Soft sciences
Learning while teaching.	Health Sciences
Motivating students, educating.	Hard Sciences

Source: Data collected in questionnaires and interviews with professors who participated in the I, II and III University Teaching courses. IFES in Southwestern Brazil. Research period from 2013 to 2016.

By summarizing the statements presented in Table 5, we verified that concepts of the teacher performance refer to teaching and students, where professors play, on one hand, the role of “stimulating, motivating, encouraging, facilitating to, transmitting to” students and, on the other hand, they “cooperate, are partners, learn while teaching, mediate knowledge, compromise with the teaching-learning process.”

These answers not only highlight the teacher identity marked by the historical, social, and cultural construct of what it is to be a teacher, who has the responsibility of reproducing and transmitting knowledge, but also reveal the possibility of change of and in the teaching learning process, when professors considered themselves as learners and intermediators in the teacher-student relationship. The continuous teacher training affects the professional education of students, because teaching quality also concerns the personal development and update of teachers, considering that they are simultaneously subject and object in the student education (VASCONCELOS, 2000).

In the conclusion of the University Teaching courses, we proposed two questions to professors: what were the main changes in your pedagogical practices after your attendance at the training activities? and What were the contributions of training activities to the development of identity and professional knowledges? Table 6 summarizes professors' answers.

TABLE 6
SUMMARY OF THE ANSWERS GIVEN BY PARTICIPANTS IN THE CONCLUSION OF THE UNIVERSITY TEACHING COURSES

TODAY I WORK BETTER AS A TEACHER MAINLY BECAUSE...	
PROFESSORS' ANSWERS	FIELD OF KNOWLEDGE
I learned with my experience to better organize my ideas; now I understand better students' difficulties and I have a friendly relationship with them.	Hard Sciences
We grow every day as a result of experiences; life is dynamic, and teaching is also affected by it.	Hard Sciences
My experience in class and the diversity of students make me think of ways to meet all their needs. This diversity makes me reflect upon my lectures.	Hard Sciences
Over time we acquire professional, academic and even personal experiences that makes us grow and have discernment to improve students' learning.	Physical Education
With experience in class over the years, you understand students' difficulties and try to motivate them to search new information, apply it and discuss it in order to employ it in their professional activity.	Biological Sciences
I believe that much of what I think and do today as a professor is a result of learnings and reflections built up over courses and subjects taken in my graduate course since I have always been interested in university teaching, but I confess that my own experiences as a student also influenced a lot on how I am as a teacher today.	Health Sciences
I try to learn with experience. I observe and talk to professors in my field, mainly those who have a long teaching career.	Soft sciences

Source: Data collected in questionnaires and interviews with professors who participated in the I, II and III University Teaching courses. IFES in Southwestern Brazil. Research period from 2013 to 2016.

The analysis of answers in Table 6 indicates that professors attribute significant importance to knowledge acquired from experience as a predominant factor in their better performance as teachers. This expectation requires the comprehension that training in the pedagogical field is a complex process, it means, it cannot be achieved fast, because it demands effort and permanent personal and institutional investment.

Thus, although attending one single course, workshop, lecture or other training activities is not enough to promote significant changes in teaching practices, it can promote reflections that reverberate in the identity constitution of this profession and even changes in teachers' concepts of pedagogical practice.

Professional training requires that teachers have a critical reflection about their personal representations, their concepts and beliefs about education, the education institution, the social issues that come up in the school, the teaching-learning ways. A critical and emancipating education of students requires commitment from professors and systematization of the knowledges that contribute to apprehend and analyze reality, then, the students can comprehend what is within unexpected situations in the professional daily basis.

Thus, building a teacher identity cannot and must not be considered only based on the knowledge acquired over long years in class as a student, but also during teachers' life story. Based on these reflections, teacher training processes must consider

[...] the importance of scientific knowledge (no one can teach what one does not know), of pedagogical knowledge (because teaching is an educational practice with different and diverse directions in human education), of didactic knowledge (which articulate the education theory and the teaching theory to teach in contextualized situations), of knowledges from teachers' experiences (which indicate the way we become teachers in our daily lives). These knowledges apply to the teaching situations and dialog with them, reviewing them, redirecting them, expanding them, creating them.⁹ (PIMENTA; ANASTASIOU, 2005, p. 71, own translation)

In the teacher training process, scientific knowledge and concept appropriation in the development of teaching is essential for teachers advance their comprehension on the teaching subjectivity, it means, understanding the meaning of their action and necessarily contributing to the constitution of autonomy and (trans)formation of teaching concepts about what they think and what they do based on this comprehension.

From this perspective, the training activities we analyzed were possible strategies of (re)elaborating the teaching knowledge from the point of view of the professors who attended the University Teaching courses, because they constituted training spaces capable of encouraging reflections upon the university teaching practice and indicating pathways to face challenges inherent to university teaching.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Based on the reflections presented throughout this paper, which emerged in the dialog with the professors who attended the University Teaching courses, we concluded that only by permanently re-elaborating education as part of the teacher profession and, consequently, of assuming their professional identity, teachers can define action strategies to promote significant changes in their pedagogical concepts and practices.

⁹ In the original: "a importância dos saberes das áreas de conhecimento (ninguém ensina o que não sabe), dos saberes pedagógicos (pois o ensinar é uma prática educativa que tem diferentes e diversas direções de sentido na formação do humano), dos saberes didáticos (que tratam da articulação da teoria da educação e da teoria de ensino para ensinar nas situações contextualizadas), dos saberes da experiência do sujeito professor (que dizem do modo como nos apropriamos do ser professor em nossa vida). Esses saberes se dirigem às situações de ensinar e com elas dialogam, revendo-se, redirecionando-se, ampliando-se e criando."

This investigation helps us comprehend the existence of several factors that contribute to teacher professional development process and identity, among which we mention teachers' personal and professional experiences, life stories, and knowledges they developed during their work. The teaching training process begins a long time before the start of the teaching career in higher education, since professors considered their experiences prior to teaching – at school, family, other occupations, and society – in their daily practices in the university.

From this perspective, considering teaching particularities and complexities, we can infer that the training activities developed in the University Teaching courses at the IFES investigated have significantly contributed to expand the comprehension of teaching as “a personal investment, a free, creative work about the one's own pathways and projects, with the aim to find an identity, which is also a professional identity”¹⁰ (NÓVOA, 1992, p. 25, own translation).

The dialog with professors allowed us understand that the concepts of training, identity, and teaching professional development are not uniform, predetermined, or static; they are multiple and derive from historical, social, cultural and economic factors, therefore constituting the concept of teaching as a complex profession that demands permanent training.

Based on the interaction with professors, we identified that the training activities conducted in the University Teaching courses helped them (i) recognize their limits about acquiring pedagogical knowledge during their graduate studies to perform teaching; (ii) learn strategies to resize their practices and overcome their limitations; (iii) exchange experiences and knowledges to build new, updated learnings; and (iv) reflect about the importance of a broader training, with a significant theoretical-scientific basis necessary to the particularities of the pedagogical practice contextualized in the development of a critical thinking within reality.

These aspects allow us to affirm that continuous training activities developed with teachers' collaboration contribute to professional development processes, and they can directly improve teachers' pedagogical practices. However, the pedagogical-didactic training still has gaps, discontinuities, and fragments, mainly because it is not approached by an institutional policy, but by isolated management policies. According to Melo (2018), only an institutional policy with financial resources, infrastructure conditions, and specialized professionals can strengthen a university pedagogy committed to training processes and teacher professionalization.

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¹⁰ In the original: “um investimento pessoal, um trabalho livre e criativo sobre os percursos e os projetos próprios, com vistas a uma identidade, que é também uma identidade profissional”.

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