

University teachers' development: an (im) possible task?

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This paper originated from a post-doctoral research on institutional university teachers' development programs. Its objective is to question formative actions for higher education teaching at public universities, identifying the risks, tensions and challenges faced by these institutionalized programs. During this descriptive – exploratory study, programs coordinators were consulted through a face-to-face interview, while recognized researchers from the university teaching development area were interviewed via email. The analysis used was based on the hermeneutics – dialectics method. A few challenges surfaced: the constant struggle resisting regulatory policies directed against an education that aims at social quality; the sustainability of institutional policies; the valorization of university teaching development programs regulated by ethical and political principles related to human emancipation; and, as a strategy against hegemonic status, the construction of articulation networks among existing programs.

Keywords: Higher education. University teaching. University teachers' development programs.

Introduction

We all know that teaching is not an easy profession. It was once called “impossible occupation” when “[...] the teaching conditions are evoked: [...] social circumstances, dropouts, refusals and the complexity of the beliefs that are tackled”¹ (p. 150). Such arguments lead to Freud who, quoted by Cifali¹, would have said: It seems, however, that analysis might be the third of such ‘impossible’ professions, in which we can be sure, right from the beginning, that we will have insufficient success. The other two (occupations), which have been known for much more time, are educating and governing¹ (p. 152).

This statement leads us to reflect on the contradictions experienced by teacher developers. If teaching seems to be “an impossible occupation”, what can we say about the task of developing teachers? “Impossible” refers to the fact that, in our profession, we do not have a scientific guarantee that determines each one of our acts, because teaching demands revisiting the relationship between theory and its applications, practice and its pitfalls, as we oscillate between being theoretical or practical. We always face uncertainty, chance and complexity, mainly because the result fundamentally depends on the other’s adherence and, due to their singularity, they can frustrate our plans.

This essay derives from the post-doctoral research completed in 2015 about the constitution of institutionalized teacher development programs. Its aim was to study formative actions for higher education teaching carried out at public universities. Two institutions representing the State of Paraná (Southern Brazil) and the State of São Paulo (Southeastern Brazil) were investigated: Universidade Federal do Paraná² – UFPR and Universidade Estadual de Campinas³ – UNICAMP.

The choice of the programs met some previous criteria. First, we decided to investigate public universities, the space where both the researcher and her supervisor work, because it is the type of university that we defend and it is the one that suffers the greatest impact of public education policies triggered by governmental decisions and directives. Second, the programs would have to be institutionalized, recognized

and duly structured. The reason is that there are initiatives and movements headed towards the valorization of teaching and undergraduate programs in many institutions, but they have not reached the status of being recognized or officially institutionalized as development programs yet. Two States and two Programs that represent them were selected: State of Paraná (because it is the researcher's State) and State of São Paulo (because it is the State where the post-doctoral study was developed).

In an exploratory-descriptive study, the two coordinators (referred to as C) of the development programs of the respective institutions were consulted, as well as ten renowned researchers in the area of university pedagogy (referred to as R). The first were consulted through a face-to-face interview and the latter, through an interview sent by e-mail. We believe that consulting renowned researchers in the area of university pedagogy in Brazil would be very important because the expression of their perspectives could complement information and promote a better understanding of the development proposals. The researchers were selected according to the criterion of relevant academic history, bibliographic production and, above all, their struggle in the complex field of university teachers' pedagogic development.

Our intention was neither to compare the two development programs nor to analyze their structure and presuppositions; rather, the idea was to question central issues, highlighting weaknesses, risks, tensions and also possibilities, advances, struggles and challenges that could be generalized in order to promote a reflection on programs of this nature. In fact, the two programs served as reference and motive for a more political discussion about the theme. For data interpretation, we employed the hermeneutic-dialectical method, as "[...] while hermeneutics emphasizes the meaning of what is consensual, of mediation, agreement and unit of meaning, dialectics focuses on difference, contrast, dissension, rupture of meaning and, therefore, criticism" ⁴ (p. 90).

This text is structured around three axes: the higher education scenario and the university's commitment to teacher development; development programs as a "place" of valorization of university teaching; and risks, tensions and challenges faced by development programs, which were the basis of our post-doctoral study.

The higher education scenario and the university's commitment to teacher development

Nowadays, higher education is especially affected by economic and political crises and crises of meanings and values, due to its responsibility for producing and disseminating knowledge that is useful to the development of the global economy, which is imposed by the production system. This interferes in the teachers' work and in the meanings of the development process. However, Dias Sobrinho⁵ explains that, with this, the university loses privileges related to knowledge and education and receives new attributions. Frequently, two elements coexist in the same institution: university tradition and new trends and realities.

According to Santos⁶,

In the last twenty years, the university has suffered an erosion in its hegemony that may be irreparable. This has been caused by the transformations undergone by knowledge production, with the ongoing transition from conventional university knowledge to pluriversity knowledge, which is transdisciplinary, contextualized, and interactive. Furthermore, pluriversity knowledge is produced, distributed and consumed through the new communication and information technologies, which have changed the relationships between knowledge and information, and also between education and citizenship. (p. 63-64).

The university's historical mission is to form people who have knowledge and values and are capable of contributing to the humanity construction process, prioritizing the overcoming of poverty, violence, injustice and social inequality⁵. However, according to the author, the universities are changing according to values that are very distant from those that they had when they were created. They have ceased to be institutions targeted at study and education and have become an

educational company focusing on utilities. Although culture, ethics, esthetics and social values are present in university discourses and documents, they remain in the abstract level. About the education process that has been taking place at universities, Bento⁷ asks: “What concepts and notions of Development [...], Education, Man, Society and University are transmitted to students? What degree of ethical uneasiness concerning the course of this world has been fostered? What attachment to culture and philosophy is cultivated in the majority of the postgraduate programs?” (p. 704).

We believe that the university plays a central role in the construction of the knowledge society and, due to this,

[...] it cannot deny its essentially public nature, that is, concerned about the elevation of the entire human society. In this perspective, only the institution that produces and disseminates knowledge as a social right and public good is worthy of calling itself a university, that is, as something essential and fundamental to the education of subjects who are capable of participating of society creatively and critically.⁵ (p. 657)

Teacher development can play a central role when we reflect on the need of changing the course of the public university. In this perspective, Chauí⁸ highlights some points to change the university based on education: understanding higher education as a citizen’s right; defending the public university, refusing privatization and breaking the model proposed by the World Bank; defining university autonomy as the right to define its education, teaching and research norms and to self-determine the academic policies; revalorizing teaching, which has been losing prestige and has been neglected due to “productivity evaluation”, in which the quantitative aspect predominates.

The focus on academic productivity is a consequence of the mercantilist policies that conceive education as a commodity. This condition affects mainly teachers who work in postgraduate programs, subject to the evaluative control of *Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior* (CAPES – Coordination

for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel) and its evaluative dynamics, which is called *Coleta Capes* (Capes Collection), and also of *Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico* (CNPq – National Council for Scientific and Technological Development) through, for example, the Lattes Curriculum⁹. These forms of control have contributed to reduce the prestige of teachers' work in undergraduate programs, as this work has almost no repercussion on the evaluation of postgraduate programs. Therefore, these regulation policies induce to the neglect of what should be the noble function of an education institution.

In the scenario of changes in paradigms that have been occurring in recent decades, the importance of the pedagogic development of university teachers increases. This development must be technically dense, but it must also have social pertinence. Thus, it is recognized that a solid education in a specific area of knowledge is not sufficient to the exercise of teaching, which adds complexity to development programs.

Development programs as a “place” of valorization of university teaching

We use the term *place* here in the sense attributed by Cunha¹⁰, who explains the conception of place in its interface with the expressions *space* and *territory*. According to this author, “[...] it is possible to realize the relationship among space, place and territory. A space becomes a place when the subjects who use it attribute meanings to it. A place becomes a territory when the values and power devices of those who attribute the meanings are revealed”¹⁰ (185).

In this perspective, “when we occupy places, we are making choices that will fill the spaces and will transform them into territories”¹⁰ (p.185). The institutionalized development programs can become a “place” for the university teachers' development if the spaces destined to them acquire meaning and recognition in the university community.

By the legal prerogatives the university has, it is traditionally identified as a space of development for university teachers, both in relation to postgraduate research

and to continuing education research. The university's space may shelter the possibility of existence of development programs, but this does not guarantee their concretization. Cunha¹⁰ warns us that the fact that the university is an education space does not mean that it is an education place; what transforms a space into a place is the human dimension, when it attributes meanings and recognizes the legitimacy of this space. "When we say 'this is the place of', we extrapolate the condition of space and attribute a cultural and subjective meaning that is typical of the exercise of such location"¹⁰ (p. 184).

Sometimes, the spaces for university teachers' development are not occupied and, thus, do not become places, as "the place represents the occupation of the space by the people who attribute meaning to it and legitimate its condition"¹⁰ (p.184). Nevertheless, according to one of the consulted researchers, "[...] in recent years, there have been research and many studies that aimed to discuss the question of teaching in the university context. I believe this is a significant advance in the search for the institutionalization, in the university, of a "place" for teacher development" (R4).

Teaching involves specific problems: the didactic transposition of specific knowledge, the organization of activities that facilitate understanding and knowledge transfer, the link between theory and practice, and the evaluation of the learning process. All this complex weave of functions requires a specific education that is different from the basic education that gives legitimacy to the university teacher¹¹.

Our data reveal that the valorization of teaching is an emerging concern. This concern is revealed in the constitution of institutional organs/sectors and programs developed for this purpose. Even so, such initiatives are still rare and the situation in Brazil contrasts with the international experience, showing that there is still much to be done regarding the creation of spaces to support the teacher's action in the university. In the international context, this concern has been explicit for much more time and has already been transformed into concrete actions at the best universities in international rankings.

The University of Harvard, for example, internationally recognized for its excellence in the fields of research and higher education teaching, has been concerned

about the continuous improvement in the education of its students and about the quality of its teaching and learning. It performed, in recent years, a large curriculum reform that has promoted a new and broad understanding of what it means to be educated in the 21st century. This large curriculum reform was based on the need to think about what was taught to students, how it was taught, and on the recognition that the curriculum, the program and the pedagogic form can always be improved.¹²

It is important to mention relevant experiences that have already been carried out in our context. At *Universidade de São Paulo* – USP, it was headed by Selma Garrido Pimenta when she was the Pro-Rector for Undergraduate Studies. Significant studies have been developed in the field of university pedagogy and they have become exemplary, disseminating new institutional experiences. At *Universidade de Campinas* – UNICAMP, it is not the first time that the concern about teacher development arises. According to one of the researchers (R9), the *Projeto de Capacitação Docente* (PECD – Teacher Qualification Project), developed in the 1990s and beginning of the 2000s, was very successful, but ended up being extinguished due to changes that occurred in the institution.

In recent years, there has been an ongoing process, although not in a generalized way, that intends to highlight teaching and the teachers' work, heading, therefore, towards a greater valorization of teachers and teaching, even though it goes against the grain. However, Cunha¹³ (p. 22) argues that, even with the growth of the idea that pedagogic development is necessary for a more adequate exercise of university teaching, "it is possible to notice that institutions and public policies neglect the professionalization movement of higher education teaching".

The valorization of teaching is related to institutionalized development processes that foster self-development based on reflections on one's own work. However, according to Donato¹⁰, it is necessary to have time and a place to perform this work about oneself. That is why it is important that the institution is involved in and committed to this development. In this sense, Franco¹⁴ (p.17) states that: "[...] the construction of pedagogic knowledge is necessarily related to the conditions of the institution in which the teacher works. What conditions does their professional "nest"

offer so that they can work collectively and build or participate in the political-institutional project?”.

One of the consulted researchers celebrates the current interest in teacher development at universities. This is his opinion about it:

In fact, [...] the theme of the teacher’s pedagogic development at university used to be ignored and disregarded. There were no studies about the theme nor publications in journals or books discussing the problem. Today, not only do we have countless studies about the matter, countless papers in journals and a rich and diverse bibliography, but we also have initiatives from many higher education institutions to create and develop activities and services that support teacher development and are adequate to the teachers’ context and needs (R8).

The two universities that participated in this research have development programs that, supported by the institution, are currently building a teacher valorization culture, developing projects and actions targeted at this objective.

*Universidade Estadual de Campinas – UNICAMP*³ has the *Espaço de Apoio ao Ensino e Aprendizagem*¹⁵ (EA2 – Space to Support Teaching and Learning), which is structured in the form of projects and aims to

[...] promote actions with the purpose of enhancing undergraduate teaching at UNICAMP’s units, providing technical resources and theoretical tools, and creating forums and opportunities to discuss the teaching/learning process, so as to contribute to its teachers’ professional development and to students’ education³ (p. 1).

At EA2, projects of many types and actions are developed. They encompass diverse work areas and demonstrate that teacher development is not tackled in an isolated or specific way. We highlight, here, the following projects: *Rodas de Conversa* (Conversation Circles), *Programa de Aprimoramento da Docência Universitária*

(University Teaching Improvement Program) and *Programa Acolhimento de Novos Docentes* (Program to Receive New Teachers). Together with the other projects, they provide the university's teachers with opportunities to reflect on their practices supported by theoretical frameworks. We would also like to highlight the democratic way in which the actions are conducted, always taking into account the leading role of the actors involved.

The program *Rodas de Conversa* (Conversation Circles) aims to promote greater interaction and cooperation between EA2 and course coordinations, in light of its fundamental objective: the improvement in undergraduate teaching at UNICAMP. The idea is to foster a close cooperation between EA2 and the course coordinations – seen in an amplified way as coordinations, undergraduate committees and/or structuring teacher nuclei.

Some of the proposed actions are:

- Visit and talk to coordinators to better understand the different programs and prospect possible actions that EA2 could perform.
- Promote, in the sphere of EA2, broader discussions about the quality of undergraduate teaching that is desired at UNICAMP. These discussions can involve themes like organization of the pedagogic work, definition of teaching/learning objectives, organization of teaching contents, teaching methodologies at the university and the issue of the evaluation process of undergraduate teaching.
- Organize initiatives for the exchange of experiences among coordinators.
- Create a space to support the coordinators that enables them to face a broad range of conceptual, instrumental and infrastructure issues, inherent in academic and pedagogic management.¹⁵

The **Programa Aprimoramento da Docência Universitária** (University Teaching Improvement Program) aims to perform actions with the coordinators of undergraduate programs in order to enhance the actions targeted at UNICAMP's

teachers, with the purpose of improving the conditions of undergraduate teaching. The main actions are:

Short-duration courses, workshops, seminars and conferences that help teachers to tackle didactic-pedagogic issues and contribute to improve the teaching strategies that have been adopted. Specific themes can be approached, like the Prezi program, the proposal of Evidence-Based Learning, teaching in specific areas, teaching and affectivity, utilization of the clicker, among others.¹⁵

The **Programa Acolhimento dos Novos Docentes** (Program to Receive New Teachers) aims to: collaborate in the process of new teachers' adaptation to UNICAMP; assist the new teachers in the process of planning teaching activities; and monitor and assist new teachers during the first semester of academic work¹⁵.

To perform this work, the strategy was to form a group with professionals from the area of Education, from specific areas and from the university's Administration to develop work divided into two stages: the first lasts 30 hours and involves the new teachers with the team in charge; in the second stage, there are fortnightly meetings between the new teachers and the team's members, aiming to perform experience exchange, analysis of problems, theoretical study and others¹⁵.

At the Federal University of Paraná – UFPR², the *Coordenação de Políticas de Formação de Professores* (COPEFOR – Coordination of Teacher Development Policies), which belongs to the *Pró-Reitoria de Graduação e Educação Profissional* (PROGRAD – Pro-rectorate for Undergraduate Programs and Professional Development), is responsible for articulating the teacher development actions that are promoted by UFPR. On COPEFOR's initiative, the institution approved a resolution that institutes and regulates the Continuing Development Program for Teachers at UFPR. The program is targeted at the set of teachers of UFPR, especially at teachers on probation and teachers who wish to have pedagogic recycling. Its proposal is to provide continuing development programs for UFPR's faculty.

Ever since it was created, COPEFOR has promoted many qualification courses, targeted exclusively at UFPR's faculty. The courses approached, among other themes, educational paradigms, teaching and the national reality, higher education policies and legislation, the National Curriculum Guidelines, classroom management, and evaluation. Pedagogic workshops have been offered to many sectors, as well as seminars and distance courses.

Some of the activities developed by COPEFOR from 2011 to 2014 were lectures, seminars and workshops focusing on the discussion of pedagogic practice in higher education teaching. Specific demands promoted pedagogic workshops to the sectors of Agrarian Sciences and Health, a course aiming at the development of the nurse-teacher, and technological tools to the teaching of Veterinary Medicine. A distance course on higher education methodology lasting 90 hours and offered regularly in partnership with the *Coordenação de Integração de Políticas de Educação a Distância* (CIPEAD – Coordination of Distance Education Policies Integration) of UFPR aims to improve techniques to exercise university teaching.

The main point of this Program is the concretization of an institutional policy in which three points are given for career development to teachers who attend 100 hours of the Continuing Development Programs promoted by COPEFOR. To teachers on probation, participation is obligatory².

The two programs represent the movement of valorization of university teaching and the recognition of the need for specific development to exercise it. Both programs were created and institutionalized recently: EA2 in 2010 and COPEFOR in 2012, and pursue similar objectives related to the promotion of pedagogic development and enhancement, aiming at the valorization of teaching and the improvement in undergraduate teaching. The development programs represent, “[...] undoubtedly, advances in the valorization of teaching in higher education, as they view such development as a fundamental theme that needs to be tackled and assumed by universities” (R1). However,

Although many initiatives contribute to the construction of “institutionalized teacher development scenarios”, as there are programs that are included in teacher development policies of the Pro-rectorates for Undergraduate Programs, there is still much fragility regarding the effective recognition of such policies and programs in the university context. I believe that this is related to the very “place” that undergraduate teaching occupies today in the universities when compared to the “place” of research. This has been broadly approached in the literature (R1).

It is possible that the development programs are becoming development places because they perform actions that intermediate meanings with the subjects that are undergoing the process, taking into account “[...] the power relations that are established in the development space–place relationship”¹⁴ (p. 185). At university, there is the coexistence of forces that either adhere to or resist the regulatory processes of the educational policies. To be constituted, the programs face risks, tensions and challenges deriving from the field of permanent struggle among contradictory logics inside the institutions themselves.

Risks, tensions and challenges faced by development programs

Teaching and research institutions, especially public universities, suffer the impacts of the neoliberal restructuring, with threats to their autonomy and knowledge policy, not to mention the precarization of working conditions. If, on the one hand, the desire is to resist this state of things, on the other hand there are difficulties in relation to limitations of the time that should be spent with development activities that would subsidize more consistent postures, heading towards a more consequent teaching, in tune with the challenges of education in the 21st century.

A relevant aspect refers to institutional policies for the hiring of teachers, as teaching grants access to the university; it is not just an activity like the others. This is objectively fulfilled through public exams for the hiring of future teachers, but this

activity is not considered relevant when the candidate is analyzed; the priority is the research interface. In consonance with the position assumed by program coordinators, another issue raised by one of the researchers is that the development programs need to be strongly supported by the institution in order to break an institutional culture that does not valorize this development. And he adds: “[...] if the institution as a whole does not embrace the programs [...], the tendency is that the program does not last more than one or two semesters, provides certificates for a few teachers that participated in it to enhance their careers and disappears (R3)”.

The risk of developing actions that are not related to the teachers’ context and reality is highlighted by this researcher when he states that “the higher education institutions must invest in development processes that have practice and the teachers’ context as reference. Specific actions that are external to the teachers’ authorship condition are of little use” (R7). Another difficulty pointed by the coordinators is that adherence to courses and activities cannot be obligatory because it is contradictory to bet on accountability and autonomy and, at the same time, summon teachers through authoritarian measures. Voluntary adherence is essential to their personal involvement and commitment to their own development.

The universities “[...] experience the contradictions that result from the battle between the poles of regulation and emancipation”¹⁶ (p. 57). Inside them, there are ambiguities, contradictions, uncertainties, adherences and resistance to regulatory policies, as diverse conceptions of society, university and teaching struggle for power inside educational institutions. In light of these considerations, it is necessary to pay attention to the fact that the university suffers the impact of the educational policies that are in force, that it is hostage to other logics, and that working in favor of teaching and teacher development in a neoliberal regulatory system may mean, among other actions, a counter-regulation movement, as

The neoliberal policies use and abuse regulation. [...] Counter-regulation is a propositional resistance that creates commitments based on the school community (internal and external), so that the public service is articulated with its users to, whenever necessary,

resist regulation (counter-regulation) and, whenever possible, advance both in its organization and in the provision of services that have the highest possible quality (precisely to the individuals who have more needs), guided by the summons of all persons to the social transformation process¹⁷ (p. 912).

We believe that it is possible to view the institutionalized programs that support teaching as a counter-regulation alternative. This involves not only the defense of the creation of development spaces/places, but a struggle so that their aims overcome the pitfalls of neo-technicism.

Regarding this risk, we highlight the warning of this researcher, who states:

It is necessary to develop, in teachers, the importance of clearly understanding the educational intentions, which are branched in objectives of several dimensions. Means and ends must be experienced always. The use of new techniques is exciting at first, but if this is not supported by a broader proposal, after the initial enthusiasm ends, everything goes back to the previous situation. Technique is very important, but by itself, it is worth nothing (R6).

The regulatory control of higher education includes the evaluation of teachers by means of the quantification of their publications. Concerning this, a researcher argues:

Another important aspect in the university context is the dilemma of seeing academic production be used wrongly to measure the quality of the university teacher, as quantity has been prioritized to the detriment of quality. This has been one of the challenges: producing research studies with quality without being carried away by the forces of productivism [...] (R4).

Another great challenge that emerges from the considerations both of the coordinators and of the researchers consulted in this study is obtaining the academic community's recognition of the relevance and legitimacy of the programs. This concern is justified because

Although many initiatives contribute to the construction of institutionalized development scenarios, as there are programs that are included in teacher development policies of the Pro-rectorates for Undergraduate Programs, there is still much fragility regarding the effective recognition of such policies and programs in the university context [...] (R1).

This fragility is certainly caused by complex issues that include the low prestige of teaching, which derives from the crystallized institutional culture, as we have mentioned above, and also from the difficulty in articulating teaching, research and extension. To Pimenta and Almeida¹⁸, a great challenge to the university and, consequently, to teacher development programs, is reaching the mass of teachers who do not feel the need for professional qualification targeted at the action of teaching.

One of the researchers recognizes that curriculum change is a great challenge to today's university (R8). In this context, the valorization of undergraduate teaching is implicit, as this coordinator proposes (C2): "I think that the great challenge is this: to show to this teacher that the university does not exist without undergraduate teaching". This is not about having an idealistic view according to which an institutional program will solve all problems; rather, it is a line of thought that perceives the situation by means of a macro movement that discusses the precarization of teachers' work in undergraduate programs.

Another concern that was manifested by both the coordinators and consulted researchers regards the continuity of a work that cannot depend exclusively on specific people who are embracing the cause at the moment. Therefore, the challenges to the programs are many, of many types. In the macro level, in issues related to educational policies, what predominates is the concretization of a logic that satisfies interests that

are not compatible with the idea of an emancipatory teacher and student education. This scenario, however, does not prevent the struggle and resistance of many individuals who believe that education must focus on social quality and be aligned with the formation of critical subjects committed to the construction of a fairer society.

The social quality to which we refer is based on the view of education as social practice and political act. It is different from the view that predominates in the productive sectors because it encompasses “historical–culture promotion and update, in terms of a solid, critical, ethical and supportive education, articulated with public policies of social inclusion and rescue”¹⁹ (p. 211). This assumption implies evaluating the multiple determinations that affect teaching conditions in institutions, rather than using only quantitative data based on the productive perspective.

In the institutional level, searching for the recognition and consolidation of development programs is a challenge, as are the proposition and implementation of institutional policies that bring changes and adjustments in order to valorize teacher development. Pimenta and Almeida¹⁸ (p. 30) argue “[...] in favor of a real valorization of the effort to make institutional teacher development policies that are stable and permanent, aiming at the improvement in the teaching activity [...].”

With regard to the level of teaching and of subjects’ daily practices, it is challenging to promote actions that stimulate the development of a new academic mentality in which teaching recovers its value and is able to translate these new postures. Another aspect that is related to this is the reconstruction of curricula according to perspectives that allow the construction and consolidation of a university pedagogy based on ethical and political principles of human emancipation.

It is clear that, so that teacher development programs are consolidated and achieve the real possibility of changing crystallized institutional cultures, they must be transformed into institutional policies, even if, to achieve this, they have to face successive struggles in diverse fields. Perhaps, in the institutional level, this is the most urgent challenge to be faced, although the levels of challenges raised in this study are imbricated in a large and complex reality network in which part and whole do not separate from each other.

Furthermore, we would like to highlight a challenge that has been proposed whose process needs to be triggered: the **construction of articulation networks** among the pedagogic support programs that already exist. Expanding the collective dimension of teacher development, the creation of networks that interconnect/articulate existing development programs was suggested by one of the researchers (R5) and was well received by the coordinators. This would be an important step that would enable knowledge production, support and experience exchange among participants. In the field of university pedagogy, we can cite RIES – *Rede Sul Brasileira de Investigadores da Educação Superior* (Southern Brazilian Network of Higher Education Investigators), which is formed by institutions located at the State of Rio Grande do Sul (PUCRS, UFRGS, UFSM and UNISINOS) and involves many higher education institutions outside Brazil, in South America.

In favor of the creation of networks among institutions, Luz and Balzan²⁰ argue:

It is known that past and ongoing experiences have not been sufficiently approached and investigated. Therefore, it is necessary that a set of higher education institutions focuses on their own experiences as the object of analysis, not only to identify positive aspects and weaknesses in the teaching field, but so that everybody could know and grow with the socialization of the results. Thus, a possible regional, state and national identity concerning teacher development would be identified and fostered (p.35).

In view of the complexity of the problems in higher education, therefore, it is high time that the programs associated with one another in networks, enabling a joint weaving that would help to multiply effects, discover alliances and make development policies.

Final remarks

In our perspective, the universities that have decided to institute development programs, like UNICAMP and UFPR, have undoubtedly taken an objective and concrete step towards the valorization of teaching and of the university teacher's pedagogic development. This happens despite the fact that they are walking an adverse terrain, as in the university there are forces that adhere to or resist the regulatory processes of the educational policies that are in force. However, we would like to highlight that, after this step has been taken, it is necessary to participate in the struggle for a type of development that takes into account the field of struggles among contradictory forces, promoting emancipatory education and social quality as the contours of the institutionalized programs.

When we assume this historical project, we emphasize what we consider to be the main challenges to be faced by development programs: the constant struggle to resist the regulatory policies that go in the opposite direction of an education that aims at social quality; the concretization of institutional policies that ensure the consolidation and continuity of such programs, independently of the actors that currently defend and structure them; and the valorization of a pedagogic development for university teachers based on ethical and political principles of human emancipation. One strategy that we must prioritize to face the challenges mentioned here is the construction of articulation networks among existing programs, in order to promote, in addition to exchanges of experiences, collaborative learning and shared development that is characterized by the strengthening of groups and constitution of institutional policies.

We consider that development programs are formative spaces that are becoming development places and, as we search for the legal and institutional contribution to sustain their proposals and actions, we will be creating alternatives that can transform them into territories. We believe that the task of developing university teachers cannot be postponed; otherwise, we will be responsible for the inclusion, in the labor world, of professionals who are not capable of making critical readings and of assuming their portion of responsibility for the construction of a fair and equitable society.

All those who are bravely willing to embrace this complex and hard task of thinking and working in favor of the university teacher's development within the adverse context of the contemporary university come across many challenges, but facing them is what allows us to create alternatives against hegemonic trends. We agree with Cifali¹ (p.150) when she states that facing challenges is an opportunity to go beyond, to situate ourselves between "nothing is impossible", which would mean our omnipotence, and "nothing is possible", which underlines our impotence. In spite of risks, tensions, advances and setbacks, we believe that the task of developing university teachers is **possible** and, in the midst of the dialectic processes of reality, it is already being carried out by those who believe in high-quality teaching.

Collaborators

The authors worked together in all the stages of the production of the manuscript.

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