

Teaching Professional Development in Higher Education: constitution and contributions of formative spaces to university teaching ¹

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ABSTRACT

In this article, we present data from investigations carried out between 2016 and 2020 on the constitution of spaces for pedagogical training and teacher professional development. The guiding questions of this study were: in which spaces are the pedagogical training actions of university professors developed? What are the contributions of these spaces in pedagogical training and professional teacher development? The research is exploratory with a qualitative approach. Data were obtained through document analysis and interviews. We found that, to compensate for the absence of public policies aimed at the pedagogical training of university professors, the UFU has instituted spaces for training and professional development. However, they are not part of an institutional policy of the UFU and develop specific and fragmented actions. We consider UFU's initiatives valid, but only the implementation of public policies for the training of university professors will affect the quality of teaching actions and professional development.

KEYWORDS: University Pedagogy. Training Spaces. Teacher Professional Development.

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*Desenvolvimento Profissional Docente na Educação Superior:
constituição e contribuições de espaços formativos à docência
universitária*

RESUMO

Neste artigo, apresentamos dados de investigações realizadas entre 2016 a 2020 sobre a constituição de espaços de formação pedagógica e desenvolvimento profissional docente. As questões orientadoras deste estudo foram: em que espaços são desenvolvidas as ações de formação pedagógica de professores(as) universitários(as)? Quais as contribuições desses espaços na formação pedagógica e no desenvolvimento profissional docente? A pesquisa é exploratória de abordagem qualitativa. Os dados foram obtidos por análise documental e realização de entrevistas. Constatamos que, para compensar a ausência de políticas públicas voltadas à formação pedagógica de docentes universitários(as), a UFU tem instituído espaços de formação e desenvolvimento profissional. Contudo, não fazem parte de uma política institucional da UFU e desenvolvem ações pontuais e fragmentadas. Consideramos válidas as iniciativas da UFU, mas somente a implementação de políticas públicas de formação de docentes universitários(as) incidirá na qualidade das ações docentes e no desenvolvimento profissional.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Pedagogia Universitária. Espaços Formativos. Desenvolvimento Profissional Docente.

*Desarrollo Profesional Docente en la Educación Superior:
constitución y aportes de espacios de formación a la docencia
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RESUMEN

En este artículo presentamos datos de investigaciones realizadas entre 2016 y 2020 sobre la creación de espacios de formación pedagógica y desarrollo profesional docente. Las preguntas orientadoras de este estudio fueron: ¿en qué espacios se desarrollan acciones de formación pedagógica para docentes universitarios? ¿Cuáles son los aportes de estos espacios a la formación pedagógica y al desarrollo profesional docente? La investigación es exploratoria con un enfoque cualitativo. Los datos se obtuvieron a través de análisis de documentos y entrevistas. Encontramos

que, para compensar la ausencia de políticas públicas orientadas a la formación pedagógica de docentes universitarios, la UFU ha establecido espacios de formación y desarrollo profesional. Sin embargo, no forman parte de la política institucional de la UFU y desarrollan acciones específicas y fragmentadas. Consideramos válidas las iniciativas de la UFU, pero sólo la implementación de políticas públicas para la formación de docentes universitarios afectará la calidad de las acciones docentes y el desarrollo profesional.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Pedagogía Universitaria. Espacios de Formación. Desarrollo profesional docente.

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Introduction

The teaching profession, practiced in either basic education or higher education, has been demanded to remain modernized and qualified in the face of social reality. For this purpose, funding for the continuation of studies directed to professional development is imperative and inevitable, although historically university teacher training processes are constituted in occasional, fragmented and distant from formative need, with scarce contributions to teaching professional development.

Studies from Almeida (2012), Cunha, (2008, 2009, 2010), Marcelo García (2008), Morosini (2001), Nóvoa (2019), Pimenta e Anastasiou (2010), Pimenta e Almeida (2011), Bolzan e Isaia (2010), Zabalsa (2014) and others determine that post-graduation *strictu sensu* is, preferentially, the legal space instituted by the Law of Directives and Bases of National Education – 9394/96 for the “preparation” of professors and the enhancement of technical and scientific to the practice of teaching in higher education. This conclusion leads us to question whether the rising specialization offered by *the strictu sensu* post-graduation courses actually contributes to the teaching qualification of higher education professors.

Concerning didactic-pedagogical university professors formation, specific for teacher, the aforementioned studies emphasize the identitary fragilities deriving from the minimal attention given to this formative dimension, especially by tending to the rapid and impacting social demands. For that matter, politics for teacher training in higher education should constitute formative spaces that contribute to the permanent formation of university professors, based on their formative needs.

Almeida (2012, p. 18), proposes this initiative should be “[...] aligned in a professional development perspective, which has in inicial formation, the beginning of a continuous process [...]”. The author’s statement reveals the complexity of teaching in higher education and foreshadows the necessity of creating spaces for professional development of teachers, intending to cater for the inherent fragilities to the *strictu sensu* post-graduation formation.

We recognize the Higher Education Institutions (HEI), particularly the Federal Institutions of Higher Education (IFES), have the potential to institute permanent formation programs to their professors, however this does not grant the establishing of such initiative. Researches done by Campos (2017), Cunha (2010), Melo (2018), and Torres (2014) disclose strategic actions to teacher training in various Brazilian universities, associated to the HEI pro-rectories, but those activities are interrupted in the end of each university management.

Based on the initial arguments aforementioned, we suggest two questions to construct our dialogue: in which spaces the teacher training of professors occurs? Which are the possible contributions of such spaces and the professional development of those professors?

For the purpose of answering and broaden our critical reflexion, we envisage to analyse the constitution of teacher training spaces for professors currently working at HEI, through the interpretation of data obtained in

researches conducted at Universidade Federal de Uberlândia (UFU), situated in Minas Gerais, south-eastern region of Brazil, from 2016 to 2020⁴.

The qualitative analysis of the broad built by bibliographic sources, official documents, and oral sources subsided the construction of data and the definition of analysis categories that contributed to expand the reflection about the formative spaces of higher education teaching in service. Information deriving from said researches where obtained through the analysis of documents from UFU and interviews done with the responsible for the implementation and development of formative actions at UFU, during the investigated period.

Through the interlocution with the subjects, we presume higher education teaching is a profession which complexity requires specific epistemological knowledge, incorporated in the process of the teaching work. Which becomes clear when we comprehend the spaces where pedagogical practices are constituted.

University teachers' formation spaces

HEIs are places to promote changes in the scientific field and build pedagogical projects that enable a consistent theoretical-practical training of professors, in order to contemplate the different dimensions required by the teaching profession – scientific, cultural, human, political, technical and ethical.

Numerous changes in the political and economic scenarios challenge and make more difficult the teaching work in HEIs. Discourses about the need and urgency for changes in higher education are reiterated and, with regard

⁴ The research was supported by the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES) and the Minas Gerais Research Support Foundation (FAPEMIG). They were developed at the Universidade Federal of Uberlândia (UFU) by professors and postgraduate students linked to the Research Line “Knowledge and Educational Practices” of the Postgraduate Program in Education, in partnership with the Study and Research Group on Teaching in Basic Education and Higher Education at UFU, in Minas Gerais.

to the work of university professors, emphasize the demand for quality teaching, research and extension, albeit:

[...] the system is not concerned with the professionalization of teachers and does not establish principles and guidelines for the professionalization of higher education teachers, it carries out a series of external checks on teaching [...]. Thus, the evaluating State [...] establishes the parameters, and it is up to the institutions to provide ways to professionalize their teachers, which will occur according to the vision of what professionalization is (PIMENTA; ANASTASIOU, 2010, p. 149).

However, we consider that simplistic measures performed by HEI are not capable of solving complex issues. Therefore, it is necessary to institute training processes based on principles that truly enable theoretical-practical training capable of supporting teachers with different professional knowledge for teaching.

Concerning university teaching, in addition to knowledge about the specific area of training, teachers are required to master the didactic-pedagogical foundations of the teaching and learning process, combined with knowledge from experience and of scientific production. With this stance, the teacher builds his/her professorship, which implies not only mastering “knowledge and practices” in a given field of knowledge, but also sensitivity related to behaviours and values that contemplate knowledge from experience. However, the professional development of university teachers, in addition to idiosyncratic characteristics, rely upon on factors that constitute the context of action.

In this perspective, the construction of learning to become a teacher must be continuous and collaborative, constituted by the practise of daily labour in the HEIs. This premise is characterized by the proposition of actions that challenge professors in the search for knowledge, creativity, and the desire to know and share unique knowledge perceived, in general, as

irrelevant, but which may trigger critical reflections on the work conducted by them and, consequently, as a possibility for teaching professional development.

Professional development of university teachers is intertwined to the concept of permanent formation and must be understood as constant questioning attitude, formulation of questions, and search for solutions concerning the challenges which permeate their daily personal and professional lives. In the interpretation of Marcelo García (1999), continuous education is the teacher's work on himself, because it is, eminently, self and inter-formation that involves the experiences lived by him/her, with stories of life, interests, beliefs, values and experiences arising from interactions with those who are part of your life trajectory. At the same time, this individual and collective process occurs based on real needs, contextualized in the space-time of professional activity.

Formative proposals, as ratified by Marin (2005), should come from the premise of human educability in a continuum formative path, which reveals our incompleteness, our unfinished-ness. It should (trans)form us in such manner that our teaching actions reverberate in the interactions from (and in) school space, independently of education level, while possibility of change, (re)construction of knowledge and emancipation.

The university, in this sense, will express its commitment to the quality of teaching and education when it assumes a role in the training of teachers – especially those who are in the initial phase of their careers and deserve special attention –, by committing to the proposition and implementation of institutional training policies. Therefore, teacher training needs to be guaranteed and implemented according to the needs of the target audience and understood “[...] as a mediator of professional teacher development, must consider, beyond the specificities of the profession, its complexity [...]” (CAMPOS; ALMEIDA, 2019, p. 40).

Thus, it is important to establish spaces where teachers are respected in their singularities and considered active subjects, capable of critically

reflecting on practices. They need to recognize challenges and limit situations, as well as identify viable innovations based on dialogue and the exchange of experiences between peers (FREIRE, 2011).

The implementation of spaces for pedagogical training and professional development of university teachers demands time and permanent institutional efforts. It is a process, not a step; therefore, it requires involvement, specific university teaching knowledge, commitment and epistemological knowledge about education and teaching, to promote significant transformations in the work of teachers.

Formative spaces and professional development at UFU

The debate on the implementation of university teacher training policies in the work context – HEI – is not simple. It involves the discussion of the social role of the institution, the theoretical-methodological assumptions of knowledge production and the impacts related to the guidelines issued by other management bodies that define the processes of evaluating the productivity of those who experience the university and do so in their daily lives.

Accordingly, we emphasize the work carried out at UFU on the pedagogical training of its teachers. Although IFES does not yet have an institutionalized training project for this audience, it has made efforts to establish permanent spaces, in which university professors are understood as participants in the formative process⁵.

It is important to reinforce that UFU as two divisions in its organization chart that were created to promote training actions for professors throughout the academic year: the Teacher Training Division (DIFDO), which is part of the Teaching Directorate (DIREN), linked to the

⁵ According to the Management Report (UFU, 2018), UFU is organized into four campuses – Uberlândia, Patos de Minas, Monte Carmelo and Ituiutaba –, with 2,068 teachers, 21,361 undergraduates and 4,035 postgraduates.

Dean of Undergraduate Studies (PROGRAD); and the Personnel Training Division (DICAP), linked to the Dean of People Management (PROGEP). They stand out as essential spaces for UFU teachers, as they provide them with access to reflection and reconstruction of knowledge essential to teaching and professional development.

Progep provides the servers, on UFU's institutional online page, the Yearly Training Plan Dicap/Progep, with the training courses to be developed throughout the academic year. The aim to contribute, “essentially, with the progress by training and acquisition of new knowledge related to the work environment of the servers” (UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE UBERLÂNDIA (2019, n.p.)⁶.

In the 2019 agenda, Dicap presented a proposal of 45 courses and 10 lectures, in which the public were the university teachers in all the lectures and 44 of the 45 courses – of which only two were exclusively focused on UFU professors: “(Re)Inventing the Pedagogical Practice” and Training about Progression and Teacher Promotion on the Electronic Information System (SEI)”. The other 43 courses were planned to meet specificities of the labour done by administrative technicians and university teachers concomitantly.

Difdo was created in 2010, due to the restructuring of Prograd's organizational chart. Resolution no. 2, of March 26, 2010, approved the internal regulations of the Rectory that created the aforementioned division in Diren. Given the omissions in the legislation regarding the didactic-pedagogical training of university teachers, “DIFDO was designed with the proposal of establishing itself as a place for interlocution and exchange of

⁶ DICAP is the division responsible for managing the training of UFU employees, the Training Leave, organization of events that aim to promote the integration of employees recently admitted to the university, licences for administrative technical employees to do postgraduate studies in Brazil or abroad, recording special hours of the student employee and preparing reports regarding the training of the entire university. In order to participate in the courses promoted by DICAP, the server must request an authorization from their immediate supervisor and check the publication of the list containing the names of the participants. If the employee withdraws from participating in the course, he/she must justify his/her absence; otherwise, he/she may not participate in the courses promoted in the division for twelve months. Furthermore, the server who participates in the course must have a minimum attendance of 75% in meetings to obtain their certification (UFU, 2019, [n.p.]).

knowledge and knowledge about university teaching practice in UFU” (Manzan, 2017, p. 102).

Before 2007 and 2009, before the creation of Difdo, there were formative action proposals at Diren, offered by UFU through Prograd from the creation of the Pedagogical Support Center (NAPP). As Napp was not part of an institutional policy, it was interrupted at the end of the administration, in 2009, but, even so, the training actions continued through the Faculty of Medicine (FAMED) which, having had the opportunity to participate in the actions conducted by Napp, reflected on the relevance of continuing the work that had been carried out. In addition to Famed, the Study and Research Group on Didactics in Professional Development of Teachers (GEPEDI) continued the actions implemented by the now extinct Napp (Campos, 2017).

Between 2018 and 2019, Difdo organized activities aimed exclusively at UFU university professors through lectures, courses, workshops, conversation circles and round table discussions. With these actions, these professionals had the opportunity to think about their own teaching actions (CAMPOS, 2017; MELO, 2018; MELO; CAMPOS, 2019; 2019a; MORAIS, 2020; VILELA, 2016).

In the period from 2013 to 2016, Difdo developed projects, multi, and interdisciplinary actions, such as conversation circles, university teaching courses, the international forums, workshops, and mini courses. At the time, there were 1.738 full professors at UFU, 607 (34,8%) participated voluntarily of training actions – 218 in the conversation circles and 213 in the courses, The proposed actions, newly entrants or those who had been working at UFU for longer, aimed to:

[...] linking training with professional practice, in order to organize a permanent process of continuous training [...]; training practices that would enable the permanent appreciation of teaching knowledge, in addition to expository classes, based on a conservative perspective of education, allowing teachers to

experience different practices that would enable a greater understanding of the educational phenomenon and its complexity; didactic-pedagogical knowledge of the contents to be taught, based on methodologies that favor the understanding of teaching objects and the work of transforming these objects of knowledge into objects to be taught in classes; carrying out investigative practices that enabled theory-practice interaction (MELO; CAMPOS, 2019, p. 51).

According to the authors, “the diversity of professional experience of the teachers who participated in the courses enriched the debates and amplified the comprehension of university teaching” and evaluated they were essential to reflect upon the complexity of teacher training; and were unanimous in recognizing the need of an institutional policy to grant continuous formation to capacitate teacher work.

Evidently, participation in a single course, workshop, lecture or any other formative action is not sufficient to promote significant changes on the teaching practices; however, it might cause inquietude and reflections to resound on the identitary construction of the profession, as well as promote the (trans)formation on the conceptions of teacher about their pedagogical practice, which actually strengthens professional development.

With the analysis of documents from Dicap, Difdo and dialogue with those responsible for creating and implementing training spaces at UFU, we recognize the weaknesses and possible contributions of both sectors to the creation of pedagogical training spaces for students(as) university professors at the aforementioned institution.

In the testimony of Professor Margarida, director of Education from 2009 to 2012, we identified that, at the time of the creation of Difdo, teacher training was a great demand of the university, as the “knowledge and knowledge necessary for an educational practice are continuous and go changing. New teachers enter and teachers who are already at the university want to revisit their practices; therefore, this would be a space to encourage

this” (PERSONAL COMMUNICATION, NOVEMBER 13TH, 2019). She understands that university teachers need to constantly re-elaborate their pedagogical knowledge to break with the transmissive and conservative teaching practice.

Among the challenges that constitute teaching labour there is the difficulty to promote the theory-practice unity. The pedagogical knowledge, according to Franco (2015, p. 607), “allow the teacher the reading and the comprehension of practice”, an action that allows the professor establish a relation of dialogicity in their own pedagogical practice. The professor need to establish a relation between specific knowledge in different areas and pedagogical knowledge, in order to have the ability to (re)construct and (re)signify them when necessary.

Meanwhile, the coordinator of Difdo, pedagogue the Orquídea (2018 to 2020), considers that the lack of specific knowledge for teaching in higher education can generate harmful consequences in the investment of new actions for this level of education, because, according to her, “the greater the success you have with students, the more funds, the more subsidies and the more interest the funding agencies have to work with you” (PERSONAL COMMUNICATION, OCTOBER 29TH, 2019).

Training of university professors cannot be reduced to scattered offerings of disciplines, courses, training and qualifications that are incapable of generating significant transformations in the daily activities of these professionals. In this context, universities should invest in the creation of collective spaces for training; and collaborative, with a view to sharing experiences and exchanging knowledge.

Given the need for specific knowledge in the educational field that needs to be systematized for teaching in higher education, we observed a latent concern with the restricted training of university teachers, such as L., coordinator of Dicap, for whom “the majority of these courses are, often, for teachers who have not completed a licentiate degree, who have a bachelor's

degree, and it is a moment, a space for reflection to rethink pedagogical practice” (PERSONAL COMMUNICATION, NOVEMBER 12TH, 2019) .

Professor Margarida expressed concern about the omission of laws that address the training of university teachers, stating that, “if we were to move into other areas there are many people who had no training whatsoever in their master's degree courses. and doctorate” (PERSONAL COMMUNICATION, NOVEMBER 13TH, 2019).

In this light, Professor Violeta, Director of Education from 2012 to 2016, highlights that:

University professors mostly do not have access to this training, because they are bachelors who do master's and doctorate degrees and there is also an omission of legislation [...] and this professor has a profile and an identity constitution that is much more focused on research , [...] and teaching comes to be secondary, in the idea that whoever knows, knows how to teach [...] (PERSONAL COMMUNICATION, DECEMBER 10TH, 2019).

Article 66 from the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (LDB), Law n°. 9.394, 1996, provides that the “preparation” for teaching in higher education will be done primarily in masters and doctoral programs. Preparation, in general, is implemented in masters and doctoral courses in higher education methodology or didactics disciplines, with an average duration of 64 class hours, insufficient to meet the complexity of the teaching action. Furthermore, “the usage of the word ‘prepare’, used to designate the way in which such a professional will be trained, carries a certain superficiality and lack of commitment” (CAMPOS, 2017, p. 46).

Although presenting some explanation about the specificities of the teaching labour, *strictu sensu* post-graduation courses are focused, generally, on the formation of researchers, in which “the future professor develops theoretical and instrumental knowledge of researching activity and

consolidates the appropriations relating them to its scientific field of activity” (ALMEIDA, 2012, p. 66).

In addition to omissions in the legislation regarding the training needs of university teachers, the pedagogue Orquídea, coordinator of Difdo from 2018 to 2020, is concerned when approaching the entry of university teachers at the beginning of their careers, usually young and without professional experience, to work in higher education:

Today, here in university, especially in exact sciences, we have a “bundle” of very young PhD professors [...] who have never been in a classroom, except as students [...]. A difficulty we notice is the didactic issue [...]. This difficulty is related to the fact they have not experienced a pedagogical practice, have not gotten courses focused on didactics in their formation, in their path, and in the belief that they have been carrying as students (COMUNICAÇÃO PESSOAL, 29 DE OUTUBRO DE 2019).

The implementation of spaces focused on teacher training is essential, given that the absence of experiences related to the pedagogical field “provides greater possibility of incorporating models of teaching practice experienced through the infinite observations and perceptions made in the space-time-place of the student” (MELO, 2018, p. 32).

Due to the lack of specific legislation to guide the training work of teachers in higher education, when asked about the role of Dicap in the training of these professionals at UFU, L., coordinator of Dicap, states that the sector's role is extremely important, but recognizes that “we could further increase and enhance actions aimed at teachers” (PERSONAL COMMUNICATION, NOVEMBER 12TH, 2019).

To expand the comprehension of the relevance of teacher training, professor Margarida states that:

[...] for me, it is a condition of my existence as a teacher to have a space for my continued training. [...] we in teaching need this space to share, to exchange with each other, to discuss how one does it, how the other does it, to share the ways in which we understand that teaching takes place, it takes place learning (PERSONAL COMMUNICATION, NOVEMBER 13TH, 2019).

Meanwhile, Professor Violeta asserts that Difdo makes a difference in the daily lives of university teachers, by establishing itself as:

[...] space for exchanging experience, a space for diagnosing difficulties, the training needs of teachers, a welcoming space, a space that outlines policies, for example, for entry into teaching [...]. The Teacher Training Division needs to assume this role, this function of becoming a reference [...]. To achieve this, it needs to be administered by someone who is a specialist in the area, it cannot be left to beginners [...], it is a task for specialists (PERSONAL COMMUNICATION, DECEMBER 10TH, 2019).

The professor also considers that the adhesion of teachers to the training actions offered by the university must come from the will of the professional themselves, aware that training is permanent: “Teacher training is by adhesion, it is not by a decree, there is no point in the dean issuing a decree in which all teachers need to participate; they won’t” (PERSONAL COMMUNICATION, DECEMBER 10TH, 2019).

To corroborate this assertion, pedagogue Orquídea says that “we do not believe that people should be forced to participate and, even if they were obliged, this does not guarantee that they are really taking advantage of the opportunities they are having” (PERSONAL COMMUNICATION, OCTOBER 29TH, 2019).

Obviously, the professor ought to become aware of the relevance of restructuring the control of their own working process, including

professional training. In this case, they must be the protagonists of training in their working context, combining decisions between the prescribed and the real, and increasing their self-concept, their consideration and their labor and social status” (IMBERNÓN, 2009, p. 37).

To put in practice the permanent formation actions which contribute to transform teaching, it is essential to promote the autonomy of university professors, by making them responsible for their own training and professional development. For this to happen, they need to have a training space available, in which they present themselves as participatory subjects, with autonomy and decision-making power.

Being questioned about the sufficiency of the actions promoted by the analysed universities, regarding enabling training and professional development of university teachers from UFU, all of the interviewed agreed this does not occurs. Furthermore, professor Violeta advises that “fragmented [actions] do not help, training is only sufficient when it considers the training needs of the professors. If it is something imposed or if it is already pre-formatted, it will not correspond [...], it will not produce transformations in pedagogical practices” (PERSONAL COMMUNICATION, DECEMBER 10TH, 2019).

According to Imbernón (2011), teacher training must go beyond training proposals, as there is a need to create spaces for reflection, participation, decision-making and review of practices to generate changes, ruptures and innovations. He states that, when we think about the perspective of ongoing training, we create a “critical stimulus by noting the enormous contradictions of the profession and by trying to bring elements to overcome the perpetuating situations that have been going on for a long time” (IMBERNÓN, 2011, p. 15).

Regarding the difficulties faced by high education teachers practicing their profession, our interlocutors emphasized that:

[...] their biggest complaint is how can I get my student's attention, the students are very disinterested and unmotivated [...]. Another complaint about their difficulties was the issue of competing with social networks (PERSONAL COMMUNICATION FROM PROFESSOR VIOLETA, DECEMBER 10TH, 2019).

[...] how to evaluate students, how to relate to these students, but, mainly, how to keep this student's attention during the class [...]. Another very common complaint is that students are arriving at university [as] functionally illiterate or structurally illiterate (PERSONAL COMMUNICATION FROM PEDAGOGUE ORQUÍDEA, OCTOBER 29TH, 2019).

The first thing I would say is the lack of a training process in teaching [...]. The second group are teachers who already see their practice as a need for action and daily reflection [...]. And there is another group that I would include, which is university professors who are looking for something more practical [...] And I would also include a fourth group [...], I would call this fourth group curious professors (PERSONAL COMMUNICATION FROM PROFESSOR MARGARIDA, NOVEMBER 13TH, 2019).

Teaching is a complex activity that surpasses the technical dimension of knowledge. Therefore, even experienced teachers present difficulties with didactical-pedagogical actions and need a space to exchange knowledge and experiences which promote transformations and listening. In fact, a space established merely with bureaucratic intentions, only with the purpose of certifying its existence, does not induce changes, however, when it acquires meaning and becomes significant to the target audience, there is an important movement, as indicated by the professors when asked about the relationships that emerge in training spaces:

What emerged from this space was this search for dialogue [...]. I think that the most important thing about these relationships that emerged was, in fact, the provocation of the need for a space for reflection for teachers within the university (PERSONAL COMMUNICATION FROM PROFESSOR MARGARIDA, NOVEMBER 13TH, 2019).

People get closer to us, they get closer to the division [...], they also get closer to each other, because UFU is a universe [...]. So, there is the establishment of a network of contacts, [...] these spaces allow networks to be established[...] (PERSONAL COMMUNICATION FROM PEDAGOGUE ORQUÍDEA, OCTOBER 29TH, 2019).

It was very satisfying [...]. It is a very rewarding moment of affection, sharing, exchange, involvement. And they say this: “Ah, I’m glad I’m not alone, it’s not just me!” So, it is a wonderful, very rich space (PERSONAL COMMUNICATION FROM PROFESSOR VIOLETA, DECEMBER 10TH, 2019).

When legislation determines that teacher training should happen primarily in post-graduation, “the public policies do not set directly pedagogical orientations of university teachers” (VEIGA, 2009, p.44). Such courses do not offer specific training to practice in high education teaching, something accentuated in research work and left, under HEI’s responsibilities, the initiative of creating spaces for training to supply this need. Cunha (2009) states that, through scientific/academic investigations, we have the possibility of proclaiming the need for public policies aimed at investing in the professional training of university teachers.

When questioned whether they consider that the space created by Dicap and Difdo are part of an institutional policy of university teacher training, two respondents considered this actually occurs, but one respondent disagrees and makes the following observation:

The Teacher Training Division is part of an organizational chart [...]. Being part of an organizational chart does not mean that it is part of an institutional policy. An institutional policy is a set of actions that start from diagnoses [...]. So, an institutional policy would start from this diagnosis and should bring a set of actions, goals and training principles that guide the work, changing managers, entering managers and leaving managers [...]. It is not an institutional policy; it is part of an organizational chart (PERSONAL COMMUNICATION FROM PROFESSOR VIOLETA, DECEMBER 10TH, 2019).

Different initiatives to train university teachers at UFU attest to the existence of movements that recognize the need for specific knowledge to work in higher education. However, these movements are fragmented and not institutionalized. There is no official recognition and no legal document that defines the actions, goals and proposals for teacher training at the university. In this way, the teacher training initiatives and proposals established by UFU are interrupted or completely modified at the end of each administration.

Currently, the careers of UFU professors are based on legal provisions based on scientific production resulting from research, which practically, however, do not refer to the knowledge necessary for teaching. If the professional training of university teachers is not based on changes in the work context, the organizational structure of the institution, management and established power relations, there will be few significant changes to the training and professional development of university teachers.) teachers (IMBERNÓN, 2009).

Professional teacher development is related to the work conditions offered by the universities to the teachers. Thus, “the organization of training spaces is a demand imposed to the teaching work at the HEIs, from institutional policies that enable the improvement and strengthening the profession in HEI’s context.” (BOLZAN E POWACZUK, 2019, p.78).

When questioned about the connection between training and teacher's professional development, professor Margarida states that "there is no way we can be a teacher without thinking our training is permanent; it is continuous. And I am a person that feeds on that" (COMUNICAÇÃO PESSOAL, 13 DE NOVEMBRO DE 2019). Such understanding is also present in the statements of our interlocutors:

We hope that [...] continuous training contributes effectively to this professional development in the classroom; however, as the actions are small and teacher participation is also meager, obviously the impact of this work in the classroom is also small, it is a cycle. (PERSONAL COMMUNICATION FROM PEDAGOGUE ORQUÍDEA, OCTOBER 20TH, 2019).

I make this relationship from the perspective of Carlos Marcelo García, of professional development, who seeks to make this rupture, to break with this division [...] between initial training and permanent formation. Thinking about training on a continuum, in such a manner that the teacher understands that teaching is a profession that requires knowledge, elaboration, the re-signification of knowledge, the rupture of conservative models, the re-signification of pedagogical practices [...] (PERSONAL COMMUNICATION FROM TEACHER VIOLETA, DECEMBER 10TH, 2019).

Teacher training marked by specific and isolated actions does not bring significant results; frequently, they only serve for teachers to accumulate certifications, without promoting actions that address the real needs of these professionals. Professional development not only results from the individual interest of teachers, but also encompasses the investment of universities in creating training spaces for critical and collective reflection on practice, in order to promote "the break with crystallized practices and conceptions is a

process that requires time, availability and, above all, the will to modify professional practice” (BOLZAN AND POWACZUK, 2019, p. 92).

It becomes urgent to sever the idea that it is possible to solve formative fragilities of university teachers through generic/magic recipes which disregard heterogeneity. Teacher training ought to focus on the social and institutional context in which the teachers are inserted in, because variations and plurality influence decisively the understanding of permanent formation.

The complexity of teaching demands institutional commitment by Brazilian universities in the creation of specific spaces for teachers, designed and built to meet your daily needs and demands.

Final Considerations

The dialogue with various interlocutors made us understand how are constituted the pedagogical formative spaces of UFU professors and identify the work of Dicap and Difdo directed towards the pedagogical teacher formation of UFU professors. From the dialogue with the subjects responsible for both sectors we understand that, although there are limitations, formative actions have potential and are fundamental for the pedagogical formation and professional development of UFU professors. They allow the reworking and permanent resignification of professional identity, knowledge, praxis and the relationship with the various responsibilities required in the work involving the teaching, research, and extension and administration activities.

It is important to note that UFU does not yet have an institutionalized teacher training project and, although we recognized the efforts of the responsible for the investigated spaces, the formative actions allowed by UFU have reproduced models that reinforce the fragmentation of teacher formation and are interrupted by the end of each administration. Thus, we consider it difficult to constitute a space committed to excellence in teaching, research and extension

Through the reflections brought up by the dialogue with the research

subjects, we point out some ways to strengthen training spaces at UFU, namely: i) the expansion of DICAP actions aimed at the pedagogical formation of university teachers; ii) the administration of UFU's pedagogical formation spaces conducted by specialists in the area; iii) the identification of the formative needs of teachers and, from them, the planning, structuring, organization and guidance of work and actions to be implemented in these spaces; iv) the expansion of studies on initial and permanent formation; and v) the creation of an institutional training program for university teachers at the researched university.

The institutionalization of a teacher formative space at UFU should come from a process of critical reflection proposed by the university. The pedagogical project produced in this space must be collectively constructed by the university professors and conducted by specialist commissions in the field of university pedagogy studies, through articulation with the different academic units to attribute to them decision power about the organization of the institutional space itself and administrative issues within their skills.

In this manner, we expect this research bring new concerns and encourage the creation and regulation of an institutional teacher training program at UFU. Furthermore, it is vital to officially assure its permanence, in order not to be interrupted or modified at the end of each administration.

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