

CONFLICTS OF THE UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR: WHAT DO WE KNOW?

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ABSTRACT. This study aimed to understand and evaluate psychic suffering and sickening of university professors based on the perception of their work and their relationship with it. With a qualitative approach, seven professors, between 31 and 66 years old ($M = 50$; $SD = 11,87$), from public and private institutions from the state of Rio de Janeiro were interviewed. The evaluation of the content was made by means of the Descendent Hierarchical Classification, using the Iramuteq software. The interviews showed that the professors perceive their work as fascinating but subjected to neuroticization. This conflict can lead them to suffering and sickening. Even though the adoption of new educational and organizational policies is a common wish among professors, it was possible to notice their engagement in genuine actions as job crafting as a form of dealing with labor demands and create new condition that will not lead to sickening.

Keywords: Teaching work; colleges; psychic conflict.

CONFLITOS DO PROFESSOR UNIVERSITÁRIO: O QUE SABEMOS SOBRE ISSO?

RESUMO. A pesquisa objetivou compreender e avaliar o sofrimento psíquico e adoecimento do professor universitário a partir da percepção de seu trabalho e de sua relação com ele. Utilizando-se da abordagem qualitativa, foram entrevistados sete professores de instituições públicas e privadas do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, com idades entre 31 e 66 anos ($M = 50$; $DP = 11,87$). A avaliação do conteúdo se deu com o *software* Iramuteq, por meio da Classificação Hierárquica Descendente (CHD). As entrevistas mostraram que o professor percebe seu trabalho como fascinante, porém neurotizante. Esse conflito pode levá-lo ao sofrimento e adoecimento. Mesmo que a admissão de novas políticas educacionais e organizacionais seja um desejo comum aos professores, foi possível notar a conquista de ações próprias, como o redesenho do trabalho (*job crafting*), como forma de lidar com as demandas laborais e criar condições que não levem ao adoecimento.

Palavras-chave: Trabalho docente; universidades; conflito psíquico.

CONFLICTOS DEL PROFESOR UNIVERSITARIO: QUÉ SABEMOS?

RESUMEN. Este estudio tuvo como objetivo comprender y evaluar el sufrimiento y la enfermedad psíquica de los profesores universitarios en función de la percepción de su

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trabajo y su relación con él. Empleando un enfoque cualitativo, se entrevistó a siete profesores, de edades entre 31 y 66 años ($M = 50 / DP = 11,87$), de instituciones públicas y privadas del estado de Río de Janeiro. La evaluación del contenido se realizó mediante la Clasificación Jerárquica Descendente, utilizando el software Iramuteq. Las entrevistas mostraron que los profesores perciben su trabajo como fascinante pero sujeto a la neurotización. Este conflicto puede llevarlos al sufrimiento y la enfermedad. Apesar de que la adopción de nuevas políticas educativas y organizativas es un deseo común entre los profesores, fue posible notar su participación en acciones genuinas como rediseño del trabajo (creación de trabajo) como una forma de tratar las demandas laborales y crear nuevas condiciones que no conducirán a enfermar.

Palabras clave: Trabajo docente; universidades; conflicto psíquico.

Introduction

From the 1990s onwards, Brazilian on-campus higher education, in the public and private administrative sphere, underwent significant changes. The work of the university professor was also affected by these changes that impacted the exercise of their functions and duties. The Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (Lei nº 9.394, 1996), the Program to Support Plans for Restructuring and Expansion of Federal Universities - REUNI (Decreto nº 6.096, 2007), as well as the National Education Plan - PNE (Projeto de Lei nº 8.035, 2010) drove these changes. Among other aspects, these measures proposed as targets the increase in the number of vacancies for students and the creation of units within the states. However, the intended growth was not necessarily supported by solid foundations that could support it. This dystonia had an impact on the precariousness of the university and on the work of the university professor (Arbex, Souza, & Mendonça, 2013; Dalagasperina & Kieling Monteiro, 2016).

Among the theoretical-methodological approaches on health/mental illness and work, the epidemiological perspective, advocates that work constitutes the human psyche, as well as the health/mental illness process (Jacques, 2003). In addition, work activity is a transforming relationship between man and his environment, to which it generates meaning. Thus, as the main human activity, work is a robust source of meaning. In turn, psychological suffering and mental illness manifest themselves when significant areas of human existence are affected (Jacques & Codo, 2002; Machado, Soratto, & Codo, 2010).

Therefore, when involved in an alienating and productivist logic, the professional may have psychological suffering and illness as a consequence of their activity. In this perspective, work can produce painful paths for workers (Jacques & Codo, 2002). Thus, complex changes in organizational policies in higher education directly affected the objective and subjective experience of the university professor work, as well as their personal dynamics. Previous studies demonstrate the influence of professor work relationships on their psychic health (Elias & Navarro, 2014; Freire & Fernandez, 2015).

Often, teaching suffering has been explained by the occurrence of burnout syndrome, by repetitive strain injuries/work-related musculoskeletal disorders (RSI/WMSDs) or by the use of voice. This close perception of the teacher suffering and illness impoverishes the analysis of the complex problems that involve their work activities. Furthermore, in practical terms, what is statistically registered about teaching suffering, in general, is reduced to panic, depression or heart disease syndrome (Alves & Krug, 2017). These problems can be symptoms of the aforementioned sufferings, as well as several psychological problems that

can have these occurrences as comorbidities (American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2014).

In this context, in relation to scientific production, suffering and illness of the university professor is not unheard of, much less new (Jilou & Cecilio, 2015; Pizzio & Klein, 2015; Vilela, Garcia, & Vieira, 2013). However, studies are scarce about its process of involvement and co-occurrence. Thus, it is essential to know and understand the uniqueness of the university professor activity, the handling of the relationship between their peers and students, the conduct of the teaching, research and extension, as well as the administrative commitments with the institution itself, only then understand the process of suffering and illness to which the professor is subjected to.

Thus, the present research has as main objective to understand and evaluate the suffering of the university professor from the understanding of their work and their relationship with it. In order to achieve these objectives, we intend to: deepen the understanding of higher education, the demands generated by the work organization and the work-worker relationship; to know the social relations of production and feelings of the teaching worker and, finally, to analyze the impacts of the work organization for the university professor.

The pressures to reach 'production goals', concomitant with academic and bureaucratic burdens, or even, the growing attendance to more and more students and activities (Bernardo, 2014), have repercussions on the professor health and social relations at work (Freire & Fernandez, 2015; Vilela et al., 2013). It is necessary to understand the changes and transformations that have occurred, both objectively and subjectively, as well as the possible consequences for the professor health. Understanding this context and its multi-determinations can lead to the development of methodologies and public policies whose objective is to improve the conditions that promote the health of the university professor.

Method

Participants and collection procedures

In order to achieve the objective of understanding the suffering and illness of the university professor according to the understanding of their work and the relationship with it, we decided for the predominantly qualitative approach, with an exploratory and descriptive design. Participating university professors were presented with the research objectives, the Free and Informed Consent Form, the commitment to confidentiality of information, the voluntary nature of participation, as well as the possibility of giving up at any time.

All information were treated and analyzed, with restricted possibility of identification following the instructions of the Research Ethics Committee (REC), Resolution 466/2012, of the National Health Council. This project was submitted to and approved by CEP - Platform Brazil with CAAE 65103317.6.0000.5289.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted between January and February 2018, using a script to investigate: feelings and perceptions of the professor about their work and their relationship with it; trajectory and construction of the professional career so far; and possible changes in their relationship with work. The sample consisted of four women and three men aged between 31 and 66 years old ($M = 50$; $SD = 11.87$). Inclusion criteria were: exercise the function of university professor and accept to participate. The sampling closure

in seven participants was due to saturation. All were undergraduate professors from public or private institutions located in the state of Rio de Janeiro.

They were between five and 31 years of experience in university education ($M = 14.71$; $SD = 6.87$). It is important to note that 71.4% ($n = 5$) of professor started their teaching career working at the elementary, high school and/or technical levels. More than half ($n = 4$; 57.1%) work in federal public institutions, with previous experience in private higher education and, sometimes, along with other levels of education. Only one professor taught at more than one institution, having been hired as an hourly employee in private institutions. The rest worked on a 40-hour or exclusive dedication basis. With regard to the area of knowledge and performance, the study included two professors in the humanities field and five professors in the area of exact and earth sciences. Regarding marital status, most were single/divorced/widowed ($n = 5$; 71.5%), followed by married/stable partners ($n = 2$; 28.5%). Considering the degree, three professors had a doctorate, three had a master's degree (one of whom was a doctoral student) and only one had specialist training as the highest degree (but attending a master's degree).

Data analysis procedures

Textual analysis is a particular type of data analysis. The Iramuteq software provides different ways of performing lexical analyses, as well as presenting rigorous statistical results on the studied textual corpus (Camargo & Justo, 2013). In addition, the program objectively integrates quantitative and qualitative analyses, allowing it to consult the context in which the word is found. Such a resource provides more robustness to the analyses (Camargo & Justo, 2013).

To this end, each of the collected interviews was recorded, recorded (transcribed) and organized, as required by the software, in a single corpus for textual analysis. The study was developed through the descending hierarchical classification (DHC). This analysis aimed to form classes of text segments (TS) and organize them in a dendrogram showing the relations obtained between the classes. DHC is a post-factor analysis that structures and recognizes a group of words related to the purpose of forming classes (sub-axes) that have proximity, distance or opposition. As a criterion for the inclusion of elements in the dendrogram, the level of significance ($p < 0.001$) was used as the cutoff point.

The initial analysis of Iramuteq recognized the corpus with seven interviews divided into 714 text segments (TSs). To illustrate the discussion, excerpts (phrases) were selected using the software that bear, in bold, the griffin of Iramuteq. For the analysis, a minimum 75% retention is required (Camargo & Justo, 2013). The resulting analysis indicated that 75.56% corpus was employed at DHC, which in turn produced a graph formed by two axes and five sub-axes (classes).

Results

The qualitative analysis was carried out to capture the meaning of the textual context, through the descending hierarchical categorization analysis using the Iramuteq software. The graphic composition of the axes, with the respective sub-axes and the words related to each one, can be seen in Figure 1 (Dendrogram). By means of the percentage of TSs retained, each of the five sub-axes is more or less relevant. For the analysis, the classes/categories, the internal relations between the words and the TSs, as well as the associations between the sub-axes (proximity, distance or opposition) were evaluated.

Through the division into two major axes, the Dendrogram presents the relational support of 'University teaching' as follows: (1) 'Conflict and suffering of the professor' and (2) 'Teaching work'. The two axes, in graphic opposition, show the perceptions about the work experience. The axis (1) 'Conflict and suffering of the professor' shows the feelings and consequences experienced by the teacher as opposed to the axis (2) 'Teaching work'. In turn, the axis (2) 'Teaching work' is subdivided into two sub-axes, (2.A) 'Career path and construction' and (2.B) 'Massification of work', where each of them is subdivided into 2 classes.

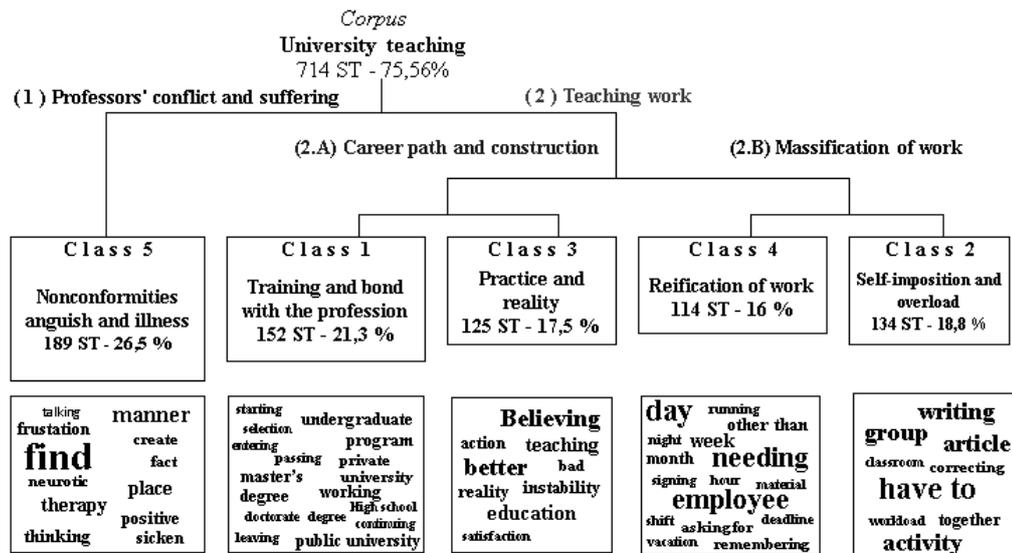


Figure 1

Dendrogram of classes/sub-axes on university teaching.

Source: The author's.

Axis (1) 'Conflict and suffering of the professor' consists of a single class, 'Nonconformities, anguish and illness' (class 5). The percentage of TSs retained stands out for being the highest in relation to the entire Dendrogram, with 26.4%. The elements (words) that are most associated with the class (high χ^2 and $p < 0.001$) are: finding, therapy, place, different, thinking, sicken, positive, neurotic, competitive and frustration.

Class 5 shows the pain and responses of the professor to suffering, the weight of competitive relationships and frustrations in the work process. In this sense, the sinuous process that hurts psychically and causes suffering, is also where the university professor finds, in the assertive aspect of teaching, the strength to continue. The experience of this conflict is inevitable, not only due to the current requirements of the function, but mainly due to the structuring of the teaching work. Thus, as can be seen from the following statement, the professor's suffering is characterized by a great conflict in the face of a context with antagonistic elements.

I think academic work is very neurotic. I think so. The university is a very 'competitive', 'neurotic place', but I 'think' it is a powerful, complexifying 'place'. If I were to define the university, the work of the university professor, in a few words, I would use the idea of neurosis, I would use the idea of power, I 'think' it is a place of great power, which is why it is fascinating. [...] I think it generates a lot of 'frustration'. Then, I think that brings the professor, in a general way, in the different treatments he/she is in, because we are all very frustrated, for different reasons (P6).

The other axis, (2) 'Teaching work', consists of four classes subdivided into sub-axes. The first sub-axis, (2.A) 'Career path and construction', is subdivided into two classes: class 1 – 'Formation and connection with the career' and class 3 – 'Practice and reality'. The percentage of TSs retained for class 1 is 21.3%, while for class 3, it is 17.5%. This percentage difference, even if small, may suggest that the investment in professor training and the connection with the career has a preponderance in relation to the issues and impasses of the university professor's daily life. This, in a way, supports the understanding that despite the difficulties and suffering, the professor remains.

The elements that show the greatest association (high χ^2 and $p < 0.001$) for class 1, 'Training and bond with the profession', are: undergraduate program, master's degree, passing, entering, public, high school, private university, elementary school, leaving, working, public university, doctorate degree and year. This class shows that the university professor goes through a long and specific academic formation. There are years of study accompanied, also, by the affective investment and expectations regarding the profession. It is not uncommon that, throughout training, the professor already exercises teaching. Thus, the trajectory of professional activity can begin in elementary and high school, and after completing the training, come to work in university education: "I 'worked' for many 'years' in basic education, 'elementary' and 'high school'. I worked a lot with pre-university entrance exam and all the possibilities that you may know, projects etc." (P3, emphasis added). Often, the professor starts to act in private higher education institutions to later reach public institutions: "[...] I worked at the 'private university'. What the 'public university' gave me was exclusivity" (P5, emphasis added).

The investment in training for the teaching career necessarily passes through the master's degree and goes, for the most part, to the doctorate. However, for all professors or future professors, this trajectory does not refer only to the manifestation of standardized stages. In addition to academic training, there is also psychic investment that remains latent throughout the professional training process and that emotionally impacts individuals, as shown below: "[...] there is still a 'doctorate', which occupies my head than time" (P5, emphasis added); "It was pressure from the 'private university' to do a 'doctorate' [...]" (P6, emphasis added).

Another point that marks the professor's relationship with their career is the fact that the professional does not imagine themselves acting in a different career. The strong link with their profession, as well as educational and social changes, not only influence but also modify the teaching interaction. Thus, in the work scenario, the professor changes, taking their work for themselves in order to reconfigure their place of professional and personal existence: "I like what I do. I don't see myself following another 'profession'" (P2, emphasis added); "It may seem strange, but I don't love this 'university'. I love my 'profession' and doing what I do" (P3, emphasis added).

The elements that show greater association (high χ^2 and $p < 0.001$) for class 3, 'Practice and reality', are: Believing, better, percent, city, good, education, action, basic, gaining, reality, teaching, instability, professional, unique, existing, bad, satisfaction and teacher training. The professional routine marked by the action of doing, which impels them to believe in the transformation and to continue doing, suggests the professor's manic relationship with their profession. The professor experiences a continuous twinkle: they believe they can, they do it, in turn, they did it, then they believe it and do it again (Codo, 1999). Thus, the professional relationship of the university professor may suggest the experience of high expectations, satisfaction, idealization regarding the scope of education and research as a contribution and social transformation, but also of wear and tear with the

unstable reality that hinders their emancipation to better horizons, such as seen in the following statement: “I ‘believe’, maybe I am a little dreamy, but I really ‘believe’ that we can take ‘action’, at least in the first years, then time can end up overcoming us, the tiredness of the teaching career [...]” (P5, emphasis added).

However, the professor continues their action. They believe and try again. After all, the professor does not give up and, consequently, further strengthens their bond with each new start. This was very present, as in the following statement: “Sometimes we feel like this with a bitter mouth [...] then we go on ‘believing’ that we are ‘having’ a renewal of ideas. People bringing new things to the university. Returning again or going back to the University” (P7, emphasis added).

Also, in axis (2) ‘Teaching work’, but in opposition to the sub-axis (2.A) ‘Career path and construction’, there is the sub-axis (2.B) ‘Massification of work’. This sub-axis is divided into two classes: class 4 – ‘Reification of work’ and class 2 – ‘Self-imposition and overload’. The percentage of TSs retained for class 4 is 16%, while for class 2, it is 18.8%. The greater percentage difference for class 2 may indicate that the process of massification of work occurs more naturally due to work overload and the self-imposition in doing it, than due to the wear and tear caused by the reification of their teaching activities.

The elements that show the greatest association (high χ^2 and $p < 0.001$) for class 4, ‘Reification of work’, are: day, morning, need, week, month, vacation, data show, employee, other than, weekend, shift, friend, help, night, asking for, beach, preface, effect and remembering. This class, in addition to showing material and administrative obstacles and setbacks that permeate teaching in everyday life, point to the routine of the activity. In this reality, the professor carries out their work in education and research, structures deadlines and schedules defining days, weeks and shifts, almost living in the future and experiencing little in the present. In addition, it is important to emphasize that it is not uncommon for the professor to accumulate teaching functions with some type of leadership or coordination. In other words, the exercise of the teaching function is not just for educational and research elaboration, but competes with academic bureaucracy themes that reify and consume the university professor. In this way, it is not always possible to count on a functional reality in administrative and material terms, in order to account for everything that is foreseen and charged, as can be seen below: “I am going to make one less article this ‘year’. It is not possible. [...] We have to do this, because there is no ‘employee’” (P6, emphasis added); “Why are those grasses always cut? The only thing that works there! ‘Other than’ that, nothing works” (P5, emphasis added).

In class 2, ‘Self-imposition and overload’, the elements with the greatest association (high χ^2 and $p < 0.001$) are: writing, group, board, activity, classroom, workload, class, article, test, together, knowing, dude, taking, have to, bringing, correcting, complaining, falling and teaching. This class shows the teacher’s conflict in coping with multiple activities, as well as their own expectations regarding compliance, as seen in the following statement:

It is this idea that the professor is always in debt. They ‘have to’ update the curriculum, they ‘have to’ report, coordinate the ‘group’, they ‘have to write’ an ‘article’. [...] So you ‘have to’ do it. ‘Dude’, I participate in a huge number of examining boards, you know? [...] When you see it, you are trying to respond to that pressure (P6, emphasis added);

Short deadlines for ‘class hours’. [...] So you want to expand, you have to dedicate a lot more. [...] You ‘have to’ teach, ‘correct tests’, publish an ‘article’ [...] ‘You have’ to [...] all these demands to be part of the academic world, you know? (P1, emphasis added).

This brings a feeling of eternal lack, consequently, the professor imposes self-charges. So, they ‘have to’ take care of everything all the time. Overload and self-charge

are not differentiated in the professor's perception, which makes their possibilities of redesigning their professional and personal life more distressing and distant, as the following statement: "Ah [...] I always have this feeling that I owe, that I'm always doing less than I would have to do" (P5, emphasis added).

Discussion

The present study deepened the understanding of higher education, the demands generated by the organization of work and the work-worker relationship. In this sense, we sought to know the social relations of production and the feelings of the teaching worker, in order to analyze the impacts of work organization on the psyche of the university professor. The interviews made it possible to perceive the teaching work from two perspectives: the work itself, as well as the conflict and anguish experienced by the professor. It is possible to perceive the emphasis given to the conflict experienced by the professor that can lead to suffering and sicken. In this context, the university professor perceives academic work both fascinating and neuroticizing.

Even though they recognize themselves in a fascinating, privileged place and with the possibility of reflecting and complexifying reality, the professor lives with inadequate working conditions and experiences the frustration of their anxieties in everyday academic life. The interviews showed wear and tear, feelings of anguish, suffering and illness due to the conflicting working conditions, be they environmental, bureaucratic, as well as in relation to subjective work issues.

Oliveira, Pereira and Lima (2017) also discussed the suffering and illness of professors in public institutions as a result of working conditions. When analyzing articles published between 2009 and 2015, the authors found three main forms of illness of the professor. They are: those of psychosomatic origin, psychic pathologies and, finally, physical wear and physiological illnesses. It is worth mentioning that physical issues represented less than 20% results, which shows the preponderance of psychosomatic, psychic and emotional illness over the physical. In this sense, Dalagasperina and Kieling Monteiro (2016) pointed out how the stress generated by the adverse working conditions in private institutions, also significantly affected the health of professors.

Just as Oliveira et al. (2017) and Dalagasperina and Kieling Monteiro (2016), Jilou and Cecílio (2015) and Rozendo & Dias (2014) relate teaching work conditions, illness and suffering. Such studies discuss how the intensification and precariousness of the university professor's work, brought about by changes in the work organization, can lead to impairments in physical and mental health. In a survey carried out with professors hired under the exclusive dedication regime of a São Paulo university, Gradella Júnior (2010) examined the relationship between psychological distress and intellectual work. The survey found that after entering university, about a third of professors had acquired health problems. The study pointed out that such results were related to the organization of work and/or its conditions, with the university being a space for the production of alienation and psychological suffering. Nevertheless, as discussed by Ortiz, Toro and Rodríguez (2015), Oliveira et al. (2017), even though the consulted professors recognize that, physical and mental health impairments, they have symptoms that can have consequences in different areas of their lives, as in the relationships with family, friends and peers, in the quality of life and in the personal life, the professors perceive the little visibility given to these occurrences. Therefore, the lack of visibility demonstrates the lack of attention given to this context, which

can contribute to the acceptance as 'something that is part', making natural the suffering and illness of this class.

As discussed by Lago, Cunha and Borges (2015), the professors interviewed showed that the reality that places them in a place of distinction, is the same reality that leads them to conflicts with themselves and with the work itself. This ambiguity makes it often, in a distorted way, to always be perceived in debt, either with work, with students, with the organization or with the family, not being recognized for their academic performance, by their peers, students and family or for their dedication configured by the immaterial production of their work. The professor's work does not follow a dynamic flow of construction, exchange and increasing social complexification. In this sense, Vilela et al. (2013) argue that the social importance of work is often ignored or overlooked. In an academic structure that is not very flexible, it is not uncommon for professors to perceive themselves as alienated, distanced from themselves and from others, without recognition. As a result, as discussed by Carvalho Neto and Braga (2015), the university professor gradually suffers the expropriation of their work and its social importance. Thus, as pointed out by Bernardo (2014), although with an inalienable task, the professor becomes, in certain circumstances, alienated at work as a defense against recurrent frustrations.

Another issue that contributes to the professor's internal conflict is the one that falls on the basic and driving factor of their career: the time necessary for the production of their immaterial work, that is, the opportunity for dedication to study and research. The construction of the higher teaching profession is long and complex. It has curriculum requirements such as master's, doctorate and as many post-docs as they can complete. It is dedicated to constant readings of updating that, although not formalized in its workload, occupies significant time, often stolen from other activities related to work, family or even leisure. In other words, until and to get to university teaching, or to remain in it, the professor invested a lot of their time. However, what has fueled the entire process of professor development and training over the years, is what finds little space for implementation and support. Silva (2015) reported that the adjectives used by university professors when referring to the conditions and opportunities for conducting research were: 'insufficient', 'terrible' and even 'nonexistent'. The present research also found statements in this sense, showing how frustrating and disturbing this process is for the professor.

The same university that has not shown the organization and conditions necessary for the professor to produce intellectually and exercise their full function, is the same university that measures and charges quantitatively their performance in teaching, research and extension. It is worth mentioning that the evaluation structure does not distinguish working conditions or areas of knowledge. Souza et al. (2017) emphasize how this form of evaluation is also valid for funding agencies, which are essential for research funding and, consequently, for the production of knowledge. Thus, as appointed by Maués (2010), the professor becomes a 'product' manufacturer, where the end process leads to a list of achievements. Besides teaching subjects at the undergraduate level and, when applicable, at the graduate level, the professor has to produce texts and books, provide guidance, organize and participate in events, participate in examining boards and admission contests, issue opinions for journals and development agencies. In the face of so many attributions, exposed to various mechanisms of collection and control, how to preserve what is fundamental to the work of the university professor, that is, their autonomy?

It appears that the university today lives in a managerial, massifying and productivist logic. Work is emptied of meaning and is constructed of massive voids. It reifies itself. As if it were not enough, the professor, in addition to feeling compelled to respond to external

pressures, also lives with the eternal feeling of debt. Soon, professors charge themselves and goals are self-imposed, since they have for themselves that it is their 'obligation' to take care of. It is relevant to note the number of times that the 'have to' was mentioned in the interviews. Most of the time, this repetition sought to justify the self-imposed charges, in addition to the overload. However, even if they surrender the burden and their own feeling of self-charge leads to the notion that they 'have to' cope, professors find themselves experiencing an illusory feeling of 'happiness', as they feel the high costs for their health in the wide sense, that is, with physical and psychic consequences. In view of this, it was possible to note the achievement of own actions in the sense of accepting what is possible to produce in conditions that do not lead to illness.

When studying elementary and high school teachers, Codo (1999) found a strong link with the profession. In agreement with Jilou and Cecílio (2015), in the case of the university professor, the reports showed that it is no different. It is important to note that the changes that have reached the university have also changed the classroom and the professor-student relationship. Today the professor perceives a student placed in the condition of a client and teaching understood as a commodity. Therefore, the teaching-learning process gives way to processes of emptying mutual construction because it is reduced to indices. Despite this, the classroom and the relationship with students is remembered with satisfaction. As shown by Silva (2015), in spite of everything, professors continue to believe that there they can still find the possibility of autonomy and self-realization. In this way, even if the professor realizes their suffering, recognizes their illness, realizes, at times, that there is something wrong in their relationship with work, they are also faced with their satisfaction and values their bond with the profession. Thus, it is in this space where the professor persists and resists.

The university professor, like any worker, is not passive to their work context. This can enable them to act in order to reconfigure demands and available resources, in order to seek greater alignment with the existing academic structure, with their attributions, with their interests and values. It was possible to perceive that some professors showed to move in this direction, starting from reflections on the contradictions that mark the whole work process. In doing so, many times, this professor enters into another conflict, which is what they are able to produce and what is expected by peers, managers, the educational system and society. So, how to be happy with something that presents you with so much anguish and conflict? How to continue to be a professor, produce in the different spheres of teaching, research and extension and maintain the quality of life?

The perception of conflict and subsequent suffering, due to the fact that some measure of perceived difficulties is necessary, which often does not depend solely on it, makes some professors begin to rethink their relationship with work and what they can change from themselves. Oldham & Hackman (2010) highlight the emergence of proactive actions in the sense that, on their own initiative, workers customize their work in order to better deal with changes in the work context. One of the proactive actions pointed out by these authors is the job crafting, a construct presented by Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001).

Job crafting refers to the physical and cognitive changes leveraged by the worker in order to modify the task and the relationships understood in their work. It is important to note that this process is not instantaneous, not even immediate. As defined by Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001), crafting refers to proactive actions on the part of the teaching professional that leads them to drive changes in the relational, cognitive and task contexts. At the interpersonal level (relational dimension), it encompasses the changes made by the professor in their working relationships, whether they are related to their nature, but also in

relation to their peers and students. In changes in the level of perception of work activities, the professor transforms cognitive limits in order to give meaning and purpose to their activities and relationships at work. In relation to the performance of these activities (task dimension), the professor seeks better options to deal with the demands of the job.

Thus, the possible actions to improve work can be understood as a process of changing the perception of the cognitive frontiers of educational and teaching action. As seen by Souza et al. (2017) and Dalagasperina and Kieling Monteiro (2016), even though the admission of new educational and organizational policies is a common desire for professors, this personal process is not only linked to these expectations. In this way, the professor does not 'wait' for changes 'from the top to the bottom', but rather seeks for their personal construction to change their context of construction, work and personal accomplishment. In this perspective, job crafting has been a sought-after path, as evidenced in the speech

I'm changing. I started to re-transform this way of dealing a little. My way of being at the University has greatly improved and my courses have taken a very impressive leap in terms of production and student involvement (P6).

I never want to be the same professor. I started to reflect on what it would be better for me to change [...] for me, for myself (P2).

Não quero ser nunca o mesmo professor. Eu comecei a refletir no que seria melhor eu mudar [...] por mim, por mim mesmo (P2).

Final considerations

The present study aimed to understand and evaluate the suffering of the university professor from the understanding their work and their relationship with it. We sought to investigate the demands generated by the organization of work, as well as the peculiarities in the relationship of the professor with their work. To this end, semi-structured interviews were conducted with professors from public and private institutions located in the state of Rio de Janeiro. Thus, through the manifestation of conflicts, anxieties and perception of illness, the research highlighted the suffering experienced by university professors, as well as the main impressions that mark their relationship with work.

For the exercise of their profession, the professor needs to deal with different demands of teaching and research, as well as with several administrative demands that drain their productive time. The results found allow to say that the university professor lives the consequences generated both by changes in work organization, as well as by the lack of adequate conditions for teaching. Even valuing the link with teaching, it was possible to perceive the suffering and anguish in dealing with the imbalance generated by the intensification and overload of work. Moreover, charging for so many activities still competes with their own self-charging, demonstrated, for example, in the imperative feeling that they 'have to' handle everything. Although university professors search for new educational and organizational policies, it was found that actions of their own initiative, such as the job crafting, is one of the ways perceived by some professors to deal proactively with both the demands of work and with personal demands.

Our findings allowed to know a little of the anguish, conflicts and suffering that afflict the university professor in a context of multideterminations. Regarding the limitations, the research counted on the participation of professors from two areas of knowledge from institutions located only in the state of Rio de Janeiro. Only one of them had an employment contract as an hourly employee, dividing their working time among the demands of several

institutions. In order to overcome these limitations and seek the possibility of generalizations, it is suggested to expand the research to other Brazilian states, with the participation of professor from other areas of knowledge and with different work regimes. Furthermore, the choice for a quantitative study could provide the application of scales that deepen the understanding of the psychological suffering and illness of university professors, as well as the identification of job crafting actions and their possible contributions to the best relationship of professors with their work.

The teaching category requires attention so that new organizational policies can adequately meet their desires. Thus, it is proposed to expand this study so that it is possible to develop methodologies and public policies, whose objective is to improve the conditions that promote the psychological health of the university professor.

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