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PEDAGOGICAL CONTINUING TRAINING IN HIGHER EDUCATION TEACHING: REFLECTIONS ON THE PLACE OF FACILITATORS IN DISTANCE EDUCATION¹²

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ABSTRACT: In recent decades, there has been an expansion in access to higher education in Brazil. The high demand for distance learning undergraduate courses highlights new ways of accessing higher education and new institutional arrangements in teaching and learning processes. In the context of distance education, the pedagogical work carried out by facilitators becomes important in the students' learning process. This study aims to analyze the perceptions of facilitators about the pedagogical experiences lived in the continuing education of higher education teachers at Virtual University of the State of São Paulo (UNIVESP). The research is qualitative and used a virtual questionnaire for data collection during the first semester of 2023. The research participants recognize the experience of being a facilitator as important in their professional formation, but perceive the practice as an ambiguous task due to the combination of teaching and non-teaching functions. Regarding the training course undertaken by the facilitators, some see it as an initial approach to pedagogical work. For others, the training is merely a source of income.

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Other facilitators view the training as an important pedagogical experience in their career but point out limitations. Thus, there is a complexity in the facilitator's role, and the existing difficulties in pedagogical practice demand greater recognition of these facilitators' pedagogical work.

Keywords: distance learning; facilitators; continuing education; higher education pedagogy.

A FORMAÇÃO CONTINUADA PEDAGÓGICA NA DOCÊNCIA DO ENSINO SUPERIOR: REFLEXÕES SOBRE O LUGAR DOS FACILITADORES NA EDUCAÇÃO A DISTÂNCIA

RESUMO: Nas últimas décadas houve uma expansão do acesso ao ensino superior no Brasil. A grande procura por cursos de graduação a distância destaca novas formas de acesso ao ensino superior e novos arranjos institucionais dos processos de ensino e aprendizagem. No contexto da educação a distância, o trabalho pedagógico exercido por facilitadores passa a ser importante no processo de aprendizagem dos estudantes. O estudo tem como objetivo analisar as percepções dos facilitadores acerca das experiências pedagógicas vivenciadas na formação continuada de professores do ensino superior da Universidade Virtual do Estado de São Paulo (UNIVESP). A pesquisa é qualitativa e empregou questionário virtual para a coleta de dados durante o primeiro semestre de 2023. Os participantes da pesquisa reconhecem a experiência de ser facilitador como algo importante na sua formação profissional, mas percebem a prática como uma tarefa ambígua devido à combinação de funções docentes e não docentes. Em relação ao curso de formação realizado pelos facilitadores, alguns entendem como uma aproximação inicial com o trabalho pedagógico. Para outros, a formação configura-se apenas como uma renda. Já, outros facilitadores concebem a formação como uma experiência pedagógica importante na carreira, mas apontam limitações. Assim, há uma complexidade da função de facilitador, e as dificuldades existentes na prática pedagógica exigem maior reconhecimento do trabalho pedagógico desses facilitadores.

Palavras-chave: educação a distância; facilitadores; formação continuada; pedagogia universitária.

FORMACIÓN PEDAGÓGICA CONTINUA EN LA DOCENCIA DE LA EDUCACIÓN SUPERIOR: REFLEXIONES SOBRE EL LUGAR DE LOS FACILITADORES EN LA EDUCACIÓN A DISTANCIA

RESUMEN: En los últimos decenios, el acceso a la enseñanza superior en Brasil ha aumentado. La demanda de cursos de educación a distancia pone de relieve nuevas formas de acceso a la educación superior. En el contexto de la enseñanza a distancia, el trabajo pedagógico de los facilitadores es importante para el proceso de aprendizaje de los estudiantes. El objetivo es analizar las percepciones de los facilitadores sobre sus experiencias pedagógicas en la formación continua de docente de la Enseñanza Superior de la Universidad Virtual del Estado de San Pablo (UNIVESP). El artículo consiste en una investigación cualitativa que utiliza un cuestionario virtual para datos empíricos, durante el primer semestre de 2023. Los participantes de la investigación reconocen la experiencia de ser facilitador como algo importante en su formación profesional, pero evalúan como una tarea ambigua debido a la combinación de funciones docentes y no docentes. Respecto al curso de formación, algunos facilitadores lo ven como un primer acercamiento al trabajo pedagógico. Para otros facilitadores la formación es solo un ingreso. Otros facilitadores ven la formación como una experiencia pedagógica importante en una carrera, pero señalan muchas limitaciones. Por lo tanto, el papel del facilitador es complejo y las dificultades existentes en la práctica pedagógica requieren un mayor reconocimiento de este trabajo pedagógico.

Palabras clave: educación a distancia; facilitadores; formación continua; pedagogía universitaria.

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades there has been an expansion of access to higher education in Brazil, in particular with the accelerated growth of the distance education. Recent data of the National Institute of Educational Studies and Research Anísio Teixeira (Brazil, 2022) show that in 2021, 62.8% of the entrants in the 43,102 courses offered by the higher education institutions were distance learning undergraduate courses. The great demand for learning undergraduate courses in the distance modality highlights new forms of access to higher education and new institutional arrangements in the teaching and learning processes. Therefore, it is necessary to rethink the pedagogical practices in this context, in which the pedagogical mediation is carried out in different times and spaces.

Carneiro and Sampaio (2015) point out that in times of democratization of access and expansion of higher education, it is necessary to understand who is the currently attended public in universities and what are their functions in this space of knowledge construction. The students who occupy the university today are not the same as they were in the past, when it was reduced to the young elite. Despite the still striking social and economic inequalities, it is possible to consider a more heterogeneous Brazilian university context, as Sampaio and Santos (2015) point out. Since there are social changes over time, the university demands permanent reflections on the type of training that is offered to students (Brito; Santos; Ribeiro, 2017). Having said that, the university needs to dialogue with knowledge that makes sense to students' daily lives, thus providing meaningful, dialogical, critical-reflective and liberating training.

Based on the the understanding that the university is a sociocultural space in which the student builds a relationship with the institutional rules and knowledge (Coulon, 2017), it is necessary to consider the training of those ones who teach and, often accompany the university student's journey. In addition to the role of the teacher to promote the teaching and student learning processes, the public and private higher education institutions that offer Distance Education (EaD) also use the work of tutors (Mendes, 2012; Garcia; Silva, 2013), a term that is used in many distance higher education courses in Brazil. In the Virtual University of the State of São Paulo (UNIVESP), they call facilitators to those ones that role this activity (Jürgensen et al., 2021; Silva et al., 2021). For Mattar et al. (2020), these subjects are the human components in a context that is characterized and permeated by digital technologies, mechanization and rigidity of processes. However, Mendes (2012) warns about the challenges that exist in this form of work at the university and also about the discrepancies in relation to its pedagogical practices.

The term facilitator is used by UNIVESP to refer to the educational agent who promotes the didactic-pedagogical mediation with the institution's students (Soares et al., 2022). Maroubo et al. (2020) point out that facilitators are agents that encourage students' participation and monitoring in the learning process during the courses subjects. Facilitators are responsible for answering questions about the teaching material, mediating forums and coordinating synchronous interaction activities (lives) (Galasso; Matuda, 2021). Furthermore, the mediation between students and subject modules is done through facilitators (Souza et al., 2022).

UNIVESP is the fourth public university in São Paulo, besides the University of São Paulo (USP), the State University of Campinas (UNICAMP) and the State University of São Paulo (UNESP). It is an institutionally relevant public space, because it is one of the few public universities that is focused on distance education in the country. It was implemented in 2012, by the law n° 14.836 (São Paulo, 2012) and it registered 59,781 enrolled students in undergraduate courses in 2022 (UNIVESP, 2022). According to the information that is available on the institution³ portal, UNIVESP developed training activities in 370 municipalities in São Paulo state in 2023, that are distributed in 424 centers, which represents more than 50% of the state municipalities⁴. Current data indicate that the institution has around 62 thousand regularly enrolled students in undergraduate and postgraduate courses, of which 1,493 are postgraduate students who are also facilitators (UNIVESP, 2022). This way, UNIVESP stands out in the distance learning and in the teacher training project in the distance learning modality, unlike private institutions, which are regulated by the market logic exclusively.

It is in this scenario of discussion about the training and performance of professionals in the university context that UNIVESP had created, since 2019, the proposal to train professionals to work in Distance Higher Education. The institution offers to the postgraduate students from USP, UNICAMP and UNESP a *lato sensu* specialization in Didactic-Pedagogical Processes for Distance Education Courses, through an agreement with these institutions, to provide a theoretical in-depth about the distance learning modality in higher education and contribute to the field of research in this area (UNIVESP, 2023b). In addition to the theoretical in-depth, the course presents a practical workload that allows the development of activities with UNIVESP undergraduate students.

The didactic-pedagogical experience of the facilitators is the object of analysis in this study. Pedagogical training for higher education teaching is highlighted by some researchers as a urgent question (Masetto; Gaeta, 2019; Sordi, 2019; Melo; Campos, 2019; Saviani, 2020; Garbin; Arroio, 2022; Bolzan; Pappis; Dewes, 2023). Many university professors, when started their teaching activities, did not have didactic pedagogical experience throughout their academic career, because there are few institutional requirements for pedagogical competence to be a university professor (Almeida; Pimenta, 2014; Garbin; Arroio, 2022). In view of this, taking a training students course during the master's or doctorate can train future teachers that will be able to be more engaged with university pedagogy.

In this context, this research is relevant in terms of reflecting on the role of facilitators within the scope of pedagogical practices in a training course for higher education. It is necessary to understand what they think about themselves, about their learning and their relationships in concerning to the pedagogical practices. There is still little research that seeks to reflect on the practice and training of facilitators in higher education, which occupy an important place in the learning and mediation process of distance learning students. Therefore, understanding this place can contribute to reflections on continuing education with regard to pedagogical practices that are carried out in distance higher education, at public universities.

³ Available at: <https://univesp.br/institucional> Accessed on: 19 September. 2023.

⁴ The state of São Paulo has 645 municipalities.

In view of this, this paper aims to analyze the facilitators' perceptions regarding to the pedagogical experiences that are practiced in the continuing education of higher education teachers at UNIVESP. In the first section of the study, it is presented a more theoretical debate on the continued training of teachers in higher education, with the aim of problematizing the importance of didactic-pedagogical aspects in teacher training. The second section of the paper emphasizes the perception of the facilitators who are the subjects of this research through the highlighting aspects of their characterization, and their place and relationship with the pedagogical training experience.

METHODOLOGY

The paper consists in a qualitative research, which used a virtual questionnaire to collect empirical data. The central steps of this study involved carrying out a literature review, that was complemented by a documentary analysis. These steps were conducted with the aim of theoretically substantiating the research and providing guidance for obtaining relevant data. As part of the documentary analysis, two institutional pedagogical documents were examined: the UNIVESP Institutional Development Plan (PDI) for the period from 2023 to 2027, and the Course Pedagogical Project (PPC) of the course named Didactic-Pedagogical Processes for distance courses.

The document analysis performs a relevant function as a primary and secondary source in data collection in qualitative studies, as is the case in this paper. As pointed out by Lüdke and André (1986), a diversity of written documents can be used as a source of information, such as institutional and pedagogical documents, like those ones that were analyzed in this research. This variety of documentary sources offers resources for investigation, allowing a more in-depth understanding of the topic under the study.

A virtual⁵ questionnaire was also carried out with the enrolled facilitators in the Course Completion Work (TCC) discipline, that was offered in the first semester of 2023 at the Lato Sensu Postgraduate Course in Didactic-Pedagogical Training for Distance Learning Courses at UNIVESP. The questionnaire was sent by email and official communication channels to the 460 facilitators, and had a total of 16 questions, of which 13 are objective questions and 3 are discursive ones, which are in line with collaborating with the objectives of this study. Data collection took place during the month of May 2023, with the purpose of obtaining information from the facilitators about their learning processes throughout this training.

After sending the questionnaire, 47 responses were obtained, representing approximately 10.2% of the enrolled facilitators in the TCC discipline, in the first semester of 2023. From this, the sociodemographic characterization of the participating facilitators in the research was carried out. To support the analysis of the discursive responses, a theoretical debate on continuing education in higher education was initially considered. Then, the discursive analysis of the collected data took place. In data analysis, the connections and similarities of the responses

⁵ The tools used were Teams applications that allowed the questionnaire to be created and shared with the research subject facilitators.

were identified so that it was possible to group them into thematic categories, according to Bardin (2011). The organization into analysis categories is an important tool in structuring empirical content, making it possible to achieve results that can expand and problematize the object of study (Ciavatta, 2000). Based on this assumption, two thematic categories were articulated: the place of facilitators and the pedagogical experience of the training. The category of facilitators' places seeks to capture the impressions that facilitators have about their place in the institution, while the category of the pedagogical training experience involved the facilitators' perspectives on the pedagogical practices they carry out in the UNIVESP continuing education course. Thus, it was possible to contemplate the meanings the facilitators attributed to themselves to their pedagogical practice.

DIDACTIC-PEDAGOGICAL TRAINING OF TEACHERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

In the recent years, the didactic-pedagogical training of higher education teachers has become a recurring debate in the university context. One of the reasons that makes this discussion relevant refers to the lack of pedagogical training in the trajectory of the university professors, which indicates the lack of preparation of these professionals in relation to the teaching and learning processes. For Garbin and Arroio (2022), it appears that many higher education teachers have a lack of scientific knowledge about the teaching and learning process throughout their training. This problem becomes more complex, because only 35% of public universities offer training actions for their teachers and in the most they are often non-mandatory. (Nunes et al., 2018).

In these social and historical circumstances, the didactic-pedagogical training of higher education teachers often takes a secondary place when it is compared to the qualification requirements (master's degree and doctorate) that are regulated by the Education Guidelines and Bases Law (Brazil, 1996) to be a university professor. In general terms, those ones who enter the higher education teaching career are not assessed regarding their didactic competence for teaching undergraduate courses (Almeida; Pimenta, 2014). In fact, for university professors who train teachers who will teach in Basic Education schools, it is not necessary to have didactic competence to practice teaching (Ibid.). What happens in higher education is that the teaching training is limited to only a one course, that is often optional, on teaching methodology for postgraduate students (Anastasiou, 2005; Garbin; Arroio, 2022). Thus, what will define the training of teachers (initial and continuing) in higher education will be the course and type of the received training during postgraduate studies, which are not associated with postgraduate programs in education in the most of the times.

It is important to consider that the concept of continuing education crosses the institutional aspects and promotes a broadening of the vision that relates to the locus of the daily work, which is the teaching in Brazilian higher education (Martin, 1995). In this sense, it is a process that takes place through teachers' reflection on their own teaching practice and which can be carried out in different ways, such as through study groups, collective moments with other

teachers, courses, lectures, post- stricto and lato sensu degrees, among others. Therefore, in the same way as in initial training, in the continuing training the teachers are not required to undergo the continuous training in order to prioritize the didactic-pedagogical aspects.

Cunha (2013) also clarifies the initial and continuing training conceptually. For the author, the initial training refers to the institutional processes of training a profession that enable its legal and public exercise. The continuing training involves actions with different formats and developed durations throughout the teachers' professional career. She also points out that these trainings can occur through the institutional programs or by the teacher's own interest.

From this, it is necessary to think about the university beyond the technical and curricular domain. Under the current conditions, the mastering knowledge of a respective area would be implicitly sufficient to act as a teacher in the university context (Silva, 2017). However, the concept of teaching is much more complex and challenging. Santos and Melo (2018) warn about the mistaken perception that the mastering knowledge of a certain area is capable of ensuring teaching activities for teachers. After all, the teaching is a complex activity that requires careful and committed training to the conditions for teaching (Melo; Campos, 2019). Furthermore, there is a great risk when the degree overlaps with the importance of pedagogical experience in the teaching practice in higher education, and makes the teaching decontextualize itself from social problems. And also, as Saviani (2020) highlights, the teaching that is based on the scientific productivism is too much. In fact, at the university, there are many qualified professors, with little or no pedagogical competence (Viela; Melo, 2017). Having said that, it is necessary to place the pedagogy at the center of the university context (Nóvoa; Amante, 2015).

To face the new learning challenges in higher education, pedagogical training programs for teachers are needed (Masetto; Gaeta, 2019). From this perspective, the idea of a reflective teacher, that is engaged with the emotional and intellectual students needs and with the social functions of education, comes from their own training practice (Junges; Ketzer; Oliveira, 2018). Essentially technical approaches are not reasonable, because they distance themselves from the theoretical references that subsidize and support the pedagogical practice that is grounded and committed to the human formation (Sordi, 2019). Complementing this perspective, Oliveira-Dri (2023) emphasizes the importance of the historical, social and human character of the teaching. For the author, the teacher training must combat the unilateral training that is caused by an alienated work, the social division of the labor and the maintenance of classes, to strive to promote emancipated subjects.

Sordi (2019) clarifies that it is necessary to think about the teacher training and criticizes the flagrant disqualification of teachers' work, who often have a lightened and precarious training, based on neotechnicism and the standardization of training processes. The author points out that university professors are moving away from the relevant pedagogical knowledge to their teaching work and they are discouraged from thinking about existing pedagogical practices. As a result, many pedagogical practices are conceptually outdated and are not able to deal with the current challenges of the university context. In this context, she warns about pedagogical solutions for the training of university teachers that do not take into account local experiences and are dysfunctional for other realities. Therefore, the author proposes a longitudinal perspective on the

teacher training that goes against the quantitative logic, which confuses the quality teaching with excessive publications in journals, often without any alignment with social problems.

From this angle, Bolzan, Pappis and Dewes (2023) understand that it is necessary to think about how the teaching is being constructed. For the authors, learning how to teach happens through the multiple senses and lived meanings by the teaching experiences themselves. Therefore, for the practice to be conceived as a source of knowledge and epistemology, the process of the teachers' reflection on their own action, questioning the beliefs they express and the institutional practices they develop is fundamental (Bolzan; Powaczuk, 2017). As a result, teachers' awareness of their constant learning needs is essential for their teacher training (Baptglin; Rosetto; Bolzan, 2014). In collective terms, the reflection on teaching also needs to be a shared process, as stated by Bolzan, Isaia and Maciel (2013), with an exchange of common and divergent ideas about the pedagogical processes experienced, which enhance the teaching learning (Bolzan; Powaczuk, 2017).

At universities in São Paulo, Silva (2017) points out some voluntary initiatives for didactic-pedagogical continuing training for teachers that have been implemented in recent years. At USP, they include the Pedagogical Support Office (GAP, 2004) and the Pedagogical Support Commission (CAP, 2008); at UNESP there is the Pedagogical Support Center (NAP, 2000) and the Center for Pedagogical Practice Studies (CENEPP, 2008); at UNICAMP there is the Teaching and Learning Support Space (EA)², created in 2011 (Silva, 2017). In addition to these spaces for training university teacher at public universities in São Paulo State, the Specialization in Didactic-Pedagogical Processes for Distance Learning at UNIVESP is considered the object of this study.

At UNIVESP, the constructed and adopted pedagogical model aims to promote and develop teaching and learning processes in a diversity of problem situations, in which students are at the center of the learning processes, and they seek, reflect and build their knowledge. Such guidelines aim to make the students independent and able to managing their learning, as well as developing skills that are inherent to the training and performance from didactic-pedagogical interrelations, which occur in virtual environments, and which are based on the assumptions of the methodologies. active learning.

Despite the fundamental importance of the teaching work, institutional spaces are needed for discussion and reflection regarding the university teaching and the complex challenges that are faced in the exercise of the profession (Melo; Naves, 2014). There are many gaps and fragmentations in the didactic-pedagogical training of university professors as it is not an institutional policy in itself, but a set of specific management policies (Melo; Campos, 2019). For Almeida and Pimenta (2014), the stability of a focused institutional policy at pedagogical training requires the establishment of budgetary and organizational guidelines. In other words, it is necessary to think about the place of the training within the scope of institutional political strategies (Cunha, 2013). Thus, it is necessary to consider the importance of experiences in training courses for future university teachers, as they provide opportunities for master's degree and doctorate postgraduates to have practical and theoretical contact with pedagogical practice, and awaken the importance of didactic-pedagogical training when throughout their university teaching career.

PEDAGOGICAL MODEL AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE FACILITATOR'S ACTIVITIES

The facilitators are students in the specialization course in Didactic-Pedagogical Processes for Distance Learning at UNIVESP, at the same time they are master's degree and doctoral students at UNICAMP, USP and UNESP. This course lasts 24 months and it is divided into seven modules with a total workload of 960 hours (UNIVESP, 2023b). The activities must be carried out during 12 hours a week, with four hours of theoretical activities and eight hours of practical activities (UNIVESP, 2023b), and for that, they receive master's degree or doctoral scholarships, according to their bond with the origin institution.

The course content is divided first into a theoretical part, whose contents can be accessed in the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) and in a practical part, developed together with UNIVESP undergraduate students. According to its pedagogical project, the course aims to train facilitators in the development of didactic-pedagogical skills and competencies in a distance learning based on Digital Information and Communication Technologies, mainly those ones that use active learning methodologies (UNIVESP, 2023b). For a year and a half, students take modules that last three months, and the last semester is dedicated to preparing a Course Completion Work (TCC) collectively, (UNIVESP, 2023b), as presented in Chart 1. In these modules, active learning methodologies are considered together the use of technological strategies, that aim to place the student at the center of the learning process as well to think critically about what they are doing. For each taken module, the facilitator needs to describe, through monthly reports, their pedagogical practice, and relate it to the covered concepts in the bibliographic material. In this way, the facilitators' pedagogical work is monitored by supervisors throughout the training course.

Chart 1 – Modules of the UNIVESP training course.

Modules	Linked points to active methodologies
Learning strategies for pedagogical mediation in Distance Education (120h).	Dialogical communication, qualitative feedback.
Learning assessment - Development of assessment instruments (120 h).	Formative assessment and summative assessment.
Work with projects (120 h).	Pedagogical mediation.
Active Learning Methodologies (120 h).	Collaborative teaching and collaborative learning.
Strategies for the use of technological resources in Distance Education (120 h).	Open educational resources and digital learning objects..
Educational design for developing teaching material (120 h).	Accessible content planning and feedback.

Source: Own authorship from UNIVESP documents (2023b).

In relation to the practical part that is developed by facilitators in undergraduate courses, there are four types of activities that are related to the types of subjects that are offered by the institution, according to the curricular matrices: regular subjects, integrative projects, mandatory curricular internship and course completion work (UNIVESP, 2023a). Regular subjects have a workload of 40 to 80 hours, and they are offered bimonthly, with the teaching material that is prepared by professor-authors (UNIVESP, 2023a). Integrative Projects are offered every six

months and they are based on active learning methodologies, and a group project is built by students. The mandatory curricular internship is offered according to the course's curricular matrix, and with the delivery of a final report each period. Finally, the Completion Work, that is offered every six months as a curricular component for some of the courses, is carried out in a procedural manner with a professor's guidance and the delivery of a final work.

Facilitators are responsible for carrying out pedagogical, social, administrative and technical functions, and they conceptually are a mediator whose objective is developing skills that are related to didactic-pedagogical practice in the distance learning courses (UNIVESP, 2023a). According to the course's pedagogical project (UNIVESP, 2023b), facilitators must monitor and offer support for correcting activities and assessments; they must take part in online meetings, as well as mediate the content communication between the teacher and students; they must regularly access the AVA, and online study materials; they must provide support to students through discussion forums and web conferencing; they must monitor and guide the Course Completion Work and the Integrative Project, and they must monitor internship activities.

Facilitators mediate curricular activities in the most of the time, asynchronously. In the discussion forums on the AVA platform, they constantly interact with students, raising and clarifying doubts about the program content and institutional rules, and this can happen by an institutional email. In these forums, facilitators should also encourage students to be active and ask questions about the classes. Furthermore, it is the facilitator's responsibility to generate the electronic address (link) of the synchronous meeting by scheduling it in the virtual tool, configuring the title, the guest access, the beginning, the end and repetitions of the sections until the end of the two-month period, as well as making this information available in the forum, including the day, the time and the theme of the synchronous meeting. This disclosure can be accompanied by available posters in the subject teams.

The communication with students synchronously takes place during synchronous meetings, called lives, that are held throughout the two-month period. In these meetings, the facilitator must dialogue, complement and deepen the discussed ideas, associating them with the programmatic content, as well as indicating complementary materials or suggesting additional exercises (UNIVESP, 2023a). If there are no doubts, it is up to facilitators to problematize the studied topic, and mobilize the student to participate, according to the planned dynamics. It is worth noting that during lives, communication can occur through chat, in contexts in which the communication is not dialogical, but in writing. Because of this, the facilitator has a fundamental role in institutional communication with the student.

The facilitator is also supported by the institution's professors-authors and contracted professors. Qualified teacher-authors to produce teaching material prepare and monitor curricular activities (UNIVESP, 2023a), so students also have support from these teachers in the disciplines. And the facilitators, in turn, receive guidance and training from these teachers, to better guide their activities with students; in some courses, these teachers who follow the disciplines also hold synchronous classes on YouTube to answer questions at the end of the two-month period.

In addition to the teachers, all the facilitators' activities are monitored by a pedagogical supervisor who weekly holds orientation meetings with a group of facilitators, and monitors the

development of academic activities and teaching material, grades, attendance and dropout rates of the institution's students. (UNIVESP, 2023a). Supervisors are also responsible for the facilitators and they meet with them, weekly or fortnightly to guide the pedagogical work that is developed throughout each curricular activity (UNIVESP, 2023a), promoting a meeting space with other facilitators, and also counting on the presence of responsible teachers for the disciplines. Therefore, facilitators must carry out an integrated pedagogical work with teachers and supervisors, informing all actions that are carried out, and also students' performance in relation to what is done in the discipline.

The supervisors' guidelines refer to the facilitators' action to send notifications and warnings to students during the due dates of assessment activities, according to the discipline schedule. They also warn the students about access, scores or below average activities, through the monitoring center in the AVA. It should also be noted that the days and times of scheduled meetings are included in a Schedule of Meetings (lives) by supervision and in the Schedule of courses for all classes.

So, when the facilitator joins UNIVESP training course as a scholarship holder, in addition to carrying out his pedagogical work with undergraduate students in the different curricular activities, he also needs to follow the institutional guidelines. When the facilitator mediates the pedagogical work in the higher education, he becomes important in the institution because he is in constant contact with the everyday life of the undergraduate student. So, it is important to know how facilitators recognize themselves in the institution to comprehend the dynamics of their pedagogical work.

THE FACILITATORS: CHARACTERIZATION, PLACE AND PEDAGOGICAL EXPERIENCE OF THE TRAINING

Facilitators' characterization

First of all, it should be noted that many of the facilitators are teachers at primary schools, colleges or possibly university teachers, considering that they are taking a training course at UNIVESP to work in higher education. Most of the facilitators identified themselves as female (51%), white (75%) and aged between 30 and 39 (47%). Concerning to their initial training, 59.6% had a degree in the humanities and social sciences. The majority of them are PhD students (60%), mainly at UNESP (45%). In terms of teaching activities, it can be organized as follows: 96% of the participants have already worked on regular disciplines, 47% on integrative projects, 19% on course completion work, and 23% on supervised internships.

Our data also shows that 90% of respondents used active methodologies in their facilitator practice at UNIVESP. Of this amount, 51% used active learning methods in the mediation of the regular course, followed by 26% in the integrative project. However, 51% of the survey participants became familiar with active learning methods at UNIVESP, i.e. approximately half of these facilitators were not familiar with the methodologies in which students were at the center of the learning process. In addition, this data connect to the first section of this article, which presents researches and references that have shown that the majority of teachers in higher

education do not have didactic-pedagogical training, in which they can reflect on their students pedagogical work. This data also demonstrates the influence of the course on the training of higher education teachers. Finally, the facilitators' discursive responses were addressed in the following thematic categories: *the place of facilitators and the pedagogical experience of their training*.

Facilitators' place

The participants recognize the experience of being a facilitator as an important pedagogical process in their professional training, since many see themselves as a “*mediator of knowledge*”. Or even a “*link between the student and the university*”. For the facilitators, pedagogical practice helps students in the process of understanding concepts by clarifying doubts and providing guidance. They also identify that they play a supporting role in institutional matters, going beyond the study program. As one of the participants put it, “*the facilitator is an essential educational agent for the training of students in distance learning*”. Thus, based on the assumption that training is not quick in the pedagogical field (Melo; Naves, 2014), the experience as a facilitator brings postgraduates closer to institutional and academic university dynamics, going beyond the experience of the institution where they are doing their master's degree or doctorate course.

In this context, the facilitators' perceptions of pedagogical practices are diverse. In addition, they emphasize that it is necessary to learn the concepts covered in the discipline in which they act as mediators. One participant explains the facilitator's activities at the institution: “*Mediating the teaching-learning process that is developed in the weekly class program. To do this, it is essential: to study the weekly content beforehand; to research teaching resources as tools for discussing the content; to discuss the content in a form of problems, bringing the student into the discovery and continuous construction of knowledge jointly*”.

Even with important pedagogical intentions, these answers can lead to a weakened understanding of the pedagogical work. To the extent that concepts are covered and discussed during the facilitator's work, it is needed a more in-depth and social perspective of pedagogical work. Many facilitators are teachers from basic education schools or from other higher education institutions, possibly future college teachers. Therefore, UNIVESP facilitators need to constantly reflect on their pedagogical practice, going beyond an instrumental understanding of learning activities. This allows them to build a critical perspective on the historical, social, cultural and organizational contexts in which they work (Almeida; Pimenta, 2014).

From the responses, there is an understanding that it is with the facilitators that students have most of the synchronous interaction in the course. In direct contact with the students, the facilitators consider themselves “*a point of humanization of the teacher-student relationship, considering mostly the asynchronous interaction*” proposed by the institution. For them, having a facilitator at the

institution is *“an attempt to humanize contact and bring distance learning students closer to the teacher/tutor”*. Going further, for one participant, they mediate a large part of the discussion held on the course study programs: *“We maintain eye-to-eye contact with the students”*. Mattar et al. (2020) also point out that the work of pedagogical mediation in distance education humanizes the relationship in an educational environment that is dominated by technologies. So much so that the participants answered that *“the student's perception of the institution is based on the experience they have with the facilitators”* during the two-month period.

It's worth to stand out the facilitators' dedication to making students learning more humanized, despite the challenges posed by the many technological resources. It's important to point out the complexity of pedagogical work at the institution, especially because the facilitators themselves often don't feel recognized themselves in their role. For some of them, the facilitator's role in the institution is not clear. Much more than being a monitor, facilitators consider that their practice also has pedagogical functions, similar to those of a teacher.

In relation to the recognition of the facilitators' role, Goffman (1982) reveals how the visibility shapes the experiences and interactions of individuals in society, when analyzing the social dynamics of identity. One of his central concepts is that of the “discredited”, that individual whose stigmatized characteristics are visible or immediately recognizable. In the context of facilitators, we can use this concept to understand how the visibility of their crucial role in mediating the teaching-learning process does not translate into institutional recognition. Facilitators find themselves in a position analogous to “discredited”, because although they are fundamental to the running of the courses, their contributions are not fully recognized or valued by the institution.

Directly, one facilitator considered that there is a lack of definition and regulation of the activity. Brod and Rodrigues (2016) problematize the lack of identity and qualification of distance learning mediation and propose standardizing the practice as a way of professionalizing the category. Goffman (1982) points out that the “discredited” face the constant challenge of managing their stigmatized identity. Similarly, facilitators deal with the lack of clarity and regulation of their roles, which leads to precarious working conditions and a fragmented professional identity. Even though they are in direct contact with students, their role is often not clearly defined, which creates a feeling of institutional invisibility. Based on these ideas, we understand that the lack of regulation leads to a devaluation of the facilitators pedagogical work in the context of higher education.

From this perspective, different from the institutional proposal, several facilitators said that many students recognize them as teachers. On this issue, one participant explains that the *“facilitator often takes on the role of the teacher within the virtual environment, as we are responsible for directing and supporting*

the student, especially in the regular disciplines, which we often teach in the weekly lives so that they can learn the content". For another facilitator, he *"mediates between the students and the content of the disciplines; he has the function of maintaining contact and interaction with the students; he is a teacher, in the end"*. In a similar idea, another facilitator says: *"From my perception, based on my experience at UNIVESP, I see myself as a teacher, because we are the ones who mediate the learning with the students"*. Another participant characterizes the functioning of the organization in three levels, one of which corresponds to the facilitator: *"the teacher who created the discipline (author), the teacher who provides the content (intermediary) and the facilitator (front-line teacher)"*. Another participant says that she feels *"a bit like a teacher too, I learn the content, prepare the lives, and answer questions"*.

This discussion is important in the context of what it means to be a teacher in the distance education, considering that the production of the knowledge and the provision of a course in this modality involves the pedagogical work of a multidisciplinary team of tutors, facilitators, teacher authors, instructional designers, among others. Unlike a face-to-face course, in which the whole process is centred on the teacher, who organizes the classes and interacts with the students, in the distance learning, the teacher prepares a course long before it begins, and due to the high number of enrolled students, it is usually necessary to work closely with other professionals, such as facilitators.

In the same idea, the participant explains that the facilitator is like *"a university professor, but without the salary"*. In fact, one of them believes that the role of facilitators should be that of civil servants. Reaffirming this point of view, one of them considered that the facilitators' work is *"precarious, without information, support or infrastructure"*. Another said that *"we are the front line with the student"*. The expressed thinking by the facilitator corresponds to the findings of research about tutors (Mendes, 2012; Mattar et al., 2020). For Mendes (2012), there is a complexity in the work that they carry out, because the demands are prerogative of teaching activities and the remuneration is not the same. From this point of view, it is clear that they do the teaching work, even though the activity is not considered to be teaching by many (Mattar et al., 2020).

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Another issue that was raised by the facilitators was the workload. They argue that the minimum workload is often not enough to carry out the pedagogical activities and there is an overload of work. To make the workload more evident, one facilitator pointed out that *“PI demands a level of teaching baggage and a workload far above what is expected”*. Another facilitator warned that *“it takes a lot of organization to take care of everything”*. The work, in this sense, corresponds to something greater than what is established in the rules of the training course. What can also be seen here is an idealized flexibilization of work (Pereira, 2017), due to the fact that the facilitator has a certain freedom to adapt their working hours according to their routine, but this actually leads to intensification.

An important aspect that was pointed out by the participants is that the facilitator is often addressed to a discipline in which they have no training. Even if they study the subject bibliographic material, they point out there is a risk of sharing incorrect information. One of them noted that *“the guidance for writing the final report in the integrative project in the area of computing, which is not my speciality, was a great challenge for me”*. They also point out that they have *“no prior preparation, we learn together with the students”*. We can see here that although most of the facilitators are qualified, because many of them are studying for a doctorate, there is a theoretical conflict in the mediations they are asked to carry out, and a certain spontaneity that is not expected for this role. The fact of not having a degree in the discipline in which they work is a condition that was discussed by Brod and Rodrigues (2016) as a weakness in the work of pedagogical mediation in the distance learning.

These perceptions point to the complexity of the roles and place of the facilitator, indicating the difficulties that exist in this pedagogical practice. As one facilitator points out, *“I believe that the facilitator is important, but there is space for improvement the format. There are many facilitators who think they are Capes/CNPq scholarship holders and don't carry out the practical activities. Others see the practical activities as the seriousness of a CLT job”*. Facilitators are faced with the challenge of mediating student demands, enabling a more human relationship in the virtual learning space, but there are questions about their institutional role. Although they recognize the experience of being a facilitator as an important formative process for their professional career, there is a fragility in exercising the function, due to working conditions, pay, workload and the ambiguous roles that these individuals occupy. Like Goffman's (1982) "discredited" people, facilitators find themselves in a position where their contribution is evident and visible, but the fragile working conditions to which they are subjected reflect a professional identity that needs to be constantly negotiated and affirmed, in search of recognition and regulation. And there is no way to dissociate this fragile

condition of being a facilitator from the pedagogical work that is being built in the institutional context. After all, the experience of being a facilitator and its perceptions depend on the working circumstances that are built up throughout the training course.

The facilitators and the pedagogical experience of the training

Pedagogical training enables facilitators to experience the space of a higher education institution aimed towards the distance learning. For one facilitator, *“it’s an experience in the field, and for those who are looking to clear their doubts, deepen their studies and, in the end, have a professional training”*. Another facilitator believes that *“it’s a different kind of scholarship, because you can work in higher education, even if it’s a distance learning, and you gain experience in this segment”*. In this academic environment, it is up to the facilitator to understand the dynamics of learning in the distance learning and to think up pedagogical strategies to deal with the social, intellectual and emotional demands of the student.

During the training course, the facilitators also take part in weekly or fortnightly orientation meetings with other facilitators, supervisors and teachers that are responsible for the disciplines, promoting spaces for sharing pedagogical practice. As Melo and Campos (2019) explain, training activities favor the exchange of experiences and knowledge, and the construction of new and updated learning. According to the authors, it also allows for a re-dimensioning of practices and limits on the acquisition of pedagogical knowledge. In this way, thinking about pedagogical practices and sharing reflections on them is in itself a formative process for the facilitator.

The exchange of knowledge can promote meaningful training, which involves the experience of learning and teaching (Cunha; Alves, 2019). Most of the time, each facilitator shares mediation with other facilitators. One of the facilitators explained the importance of collective work when she said that *“I tried to start from the reality of each class and my work colleagues, so we tried to bring examples and appropriate didactics to the virtual room for those ones who were present”*. These socialization processes help the development of professional identity and the construction of teaching knowledge (Melo; Pimenta, 2019) for facilitators who are already teachers or future teachers. For the authors, professional socialization is a transition from student to teacher. Thus, facilitators learn how to be facilitators and how to think about pedagogical practice by socializing.

For the facilitators, who have never had any teaching experience, the training is an opportunity to experience the academic environment. As one facilitator points out, *“I think it’s important for our training and brings a lot of learning”*. Specifically, this pedagogical training brings the facilitator closer to the reality of the distance learning. For one facilitator, the training *“opened my mind to a prejudice I had in relation to the distance learning, but I realized through the practice of the exercise as well the theory, that the distance learning also has its value and difficulties, but that between these issues it tries to*

adapt". There are many challenges in the distance learning, especially in the field of undergraduate courses, which will not be addressed here, but it is not possible to deny the reach of this form of higher education.

Considering the facilitator's reality, the way they think about the learning process places the student at the center of the developed pedagogical practices. It is stood out here active learning methodologies, a theoretical and practical focus of the training course and one of UNIVESP's methodological benchmarks. Some facilitators see the methodology as a tool that enhances student's autonomy and improves the learning process by *"actively including students in our pedagogical practices, with them being at the center of the construction of knowledge"*. One facilitator points out that active methodologies are *"alternative teaching strategies that put the individual at the center of learning, so that they have an active role in the learning process"*. Similarly, another facilitator believes that they are *"methods that put the student in a leading position in the appropriation of content, that require him or her not to be a mere recipient of previous content, but to participate in the process of construction and critical elaboration"*.

Sharing the same idea, a facilitator explains that *"the perspective of the active methodology is, first of all, to put the student (whether online or face-to-face) at the center of the teaching and learning process, so that they develop skills and competencies that are related to educational autonomy, and can lead their learning. There are various strategies, methodologies and resources that education professionals can use to promote meaningful learning for students, in an innovative way and with frequent use of digital technologies"*. Another participant summarized that methodology is *"an understanding that allows us to leave traditional educational practices by the wayside, in which the teacher was the holder of the knowledge and the student was just an empty glass, ready to be 'filled' with the knowledge"*. For another facilitator, *"active methodologies focus on the teaching-learning process, that is based on problems. In this way, it dialectically values the students' prior knowledge and proposes objectives that encourage the construction of knowledge jointly. The aim is to develop skills and abilities through the active participation of students in the (re)construction of the programmed content in the lesson plans"*.

Other facilitators see the active methodology is about *"inviting students to adopt an active stance in the construction of their knowledge, rather than seeing it as a repository of information. It would be the overcoming of banking education"*. This impression is also described by another facilitator: *"Generally speaking, from the training offered to facilitators, active learning methods have the ultimate goal of putting the student at the center of the learning process (interesting classic references such as Freire, Vygotsky etc.). Let them be the authors of their own knowledge and let the teacher mediate this process. This has intensified with the advent of technology, and nowadays it is more often used in conjunction with some technological apparatus"*. This perspective is also interpreted by a facilitator when she says: *"These are practices that aim to transform students into active agents of their own education. Based on socioconstructivist pedagogy, active learning methods seek to ensure that the relationship between the teacher and the student in the classroom is not unidirectional (teacher speaking and student*

listening), it is about transforming the learning environment into a more plural and open place for the construction of knowledge”.

In practice, some facilitators use active methodologies, especially during synchronous meetings. One facilitator details her form of mediation: *“In IP, active methodologies helped in the teaching process by using interactive whiteboards, students’ feedback, correction together with the students, because each group had a reality, some had already done IP, others knew little about how to write an academic paper, others were alone in their group”*. Similarly, one participant reported that she used the methodology *“mainly during the virtual meetings, I always tried to get the students to reflect through problem situations, I asked for examples etc.”*.

Thinking about active methodologies becomes relevant, as Anastasiou (2014) points out, because we often don't know what this means. For the author, in active methodologies, the knowledge goes beyond the simple information, allowing it to be processed in a meaningful and intelligent way. She explains that the acquisition of curricular knowledge occurs through the student's action on the object of learning, who must face it and reflect on it with the teacher's mediation. This is different from the formal methodology, in which the classic teacher-centered lecture prevailed in teaching, as the author points out. However, she warns that there are no rules for all teaching and learning processes, since each lesson involves individual and collective construction, which requires the teacher to be open, flexible and mature in order to know and act. Therefore, according to the author, curricular intentionality requires knowledge and commitment from those ones are involved, because it demands conscious, shared, supportive, directed and critical action.

Some aspects such as autonomy and responsibility are identified in the facilitators' perceptions in the learning process. For a facilitator: *“they allow you to assume part of the responsibility for your learning, educating yourself before classes and knowing how to act with knowledge within proposed practices in which you go from mere knowledge to real application”*. In the same direction, Anastasiou (2014) understands that sharing responsibility for learning with students is a primordial condition in the process of learning and teaching. For the author, apprehending is much more than understanding and memorizing, it is appropriating the intended object that becomes part of the learner's brain, thought, references and life, so that, if the desired object does not belong to the student's perception, understanding and action, it will be necessary to reconstruct the used path for the intended apprehension.

For some of the facilitators, it is not always possible to work with active methodologies in the disciplines. A facilitator explains that *“I did not use any active methodology during my facilitation process. I had difficulty in using this methodology in mathematics subjects.”* Another facilitator explains that *“during the facilitation process I did not use active methodologies because the structure of the classes, activities and so on has*

already been established by the author-teacher, together with the platform (AVA). In the lives, students prefer to talk, ask questions and even review some content". Using the same logic, a facilitator states that "in regular disciplines, the methodology was defined by the teachers. We still use expository lives", and another participant considers that "I used the traditional teaching method during the facilitation process, especially in the lives. I presented the content of the weeks through slides and made myself available to solve any possible doubts the students might have". There are also facilitators who signal conflicts with supervisors regarding mediation, as claimed by a facilitator who did not use the methodology because "my suggestions were always ignored by supervisors". This mismatch is warned by Anastasiou (2014), when clarifying that there is often a lack of alignment between the institutional proposal for active methodologies that is recorded in documents and the teachers' pedagogical exercise.

There is a criticism about the format of the regular discipline here. A facilitator considers that "In regular disciplines, the student participation in lives and forums is ridiculously low (a maximum of 10 students in classes of 1000 students), because the quizzes and tests dynamics do not encourage interaction". For a facilitator, "In regular disciplines, there is a little space for active methodologies, but I tried to encourage students to participate in forums and do researches in other ways on the proposed topic in classes. In only one specific discipline of active methodologies, I was able to accompany students who were guided by the teacher to create their own projects. This was the only case in which I was able to write specific feedback, so that each student could think about solutions to problems in the field of educational sciences on their own". Likewise, another facilitator narrates that he did not use active methods in regular disciplines "because students reported that they have participated in the lives to have some human contact (to reduce the transactional distance) with a teacher, and they have preferred the lives in the format of classes, because the content had been difficult to assimilate". This report is an evidence of the held debate in the first section of this article, because the majority of professors in the disciplines at UNIVESP are USP, UNICAMP and UNESP professors, and they reproduce the most evident teaching and learning in these universities, in which the knowledge about a specific area does not have the same importance as a didactic-pedagogical teaching training. This way, knowing how to teach is less important than what is taught, and this establishes a vertical and fragmented relationship of knowledge.

It is important to point out that some facilitators criticize the directions towards this type of approach in recent years, as it is the case with active methodologies. For a facilitator, "theoretically, it is a term that dates back to Dewey's proposal, at the beginning of the 20th century. But it seems that nowadays, it has reappeared in pedagogical discourse as if it were fashionable, as if it were something new, and it is not. I think this is common in education: people want to reinvent the wheel, but without a theoretical consistency. This even empties the process, because there is a lot of improper mixing of points of views/ references. But if we leave that aside, I believe that at least one consensus is the active methods involve a much greater degree of student's participation (in

the movement of appropriating the knowledge, in the production of records and systematizations, and so on)". Concerning this problem, a facilitator explains that *"the expository, banking and anti-dialogical method is very harmful and very inefficient. But I think it is necessary to emphasize that we need this theoretical consistency behind it, because in common sense, there are people who push the issue of active methodologies towards a productivist, technicalist, alienated and knowledge-empty logic (in the case of BNCC, for example). If we draw on more critical currents, such as Freirian pedagogy, Maguerez arch, the historical-critical pedagogy (which rescues Vygotsky's activity theory in a coherent way), the ethnomathematics or critical mathematical education, and so on, then it brings enormous contributions for students' knowledge, and to stimulate deeper problematizations about the learning process itself and its importance"*.

The answers that are lived by the facilitators in relation to pedagogical experiences at the UNIVESP training course are important contributions, and they invite us to think about the perceptions the facilitators have about pedagogical practices. Although they have expressed the importance of methodologies in which students are at the center of the learning process, it is possible to observe their difficulty in moving themselves away from pedagogical models, in which students are passive and do not have spaces for greater autonomy, development and innovation . This reality constitutes a constant challenge for facilitators, because there was no reference or experience of active methodologies in the student career of many of these students, which causes resistance to a methodological change (Ibid.).

Thus, the training course allows facilitators to think about the pedagogical practice. For those facilitators with no teaching experience, it promotes an approach of the university pedagogy perspectives. For those ones who are teachers in other institutions, it can allow the reflection, deconstruction and reinvention of their practices in the classroom. A course like that does not solve the problem of the lack of knowledge and historical didactic-pedagogical strategies of teachers or future higher education teachers, but it presents references and experiences that seek to awaken the importance of pedagogical training in these facilitators, throughout their training way to a higher education teacher. The focus on reflection about the epistemology of these practices guarantees a leading role to training teachers in their educational work that will only be exercised when they are experienced their activities (Soares; Cunha, 2010), especially because teaching is a constant theoretical-practical activity that redoes itself throughout a teacher's life. Thus, the training experience for facilitators encourages reflection on teaching, despite the many existing obstacles.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Based on collected and analyzed data, it was possible to identify and problematize the perceptions of UNIVESP facilitators in relation to their pedagogical experiences as mediators of pedagogical activities, in the *lato sensu* specialization course of Didactic-Pedagogical Processes for Distance Education Courses. In this context, it was observed that mediating pedagogical activities in higher education is a complex educational challenge. The new contemporary demands in the academic context of the distance learning modality require new practices for monitoring the students' learning process. In these circumstances, UNIVESP proves to be a peculiar teaching space, because it is a public university that offers undergraduate courses in the distance learning modality. With a teaching perspective that doesn't refer only to undergraduate courses, the institution coordinates continuing education courses for facilitators who deal directly with the student's reality at UNIVESP.

Facilitators are responsible for pedagogical actions that involve aspects of the knowledge of the mediated disciplines, as well as the experience of being a student on the continuing education course. Throughout the training course, they dedicate hours of pedagogical work to the disciplines for which they are responsible. In carrying out their duties, facilitators build daily practices that promote student's learning in relation to the concepts that are covered in theoretical classes that are after available in videos of the subjects. In the mediation experience, they also build their own form of facilitation, making the process unique.

On the other hand, being a facilitator represents in collective terms a group of fellows with institutional tasks and obligations, during the training course. We therefore see the importance of discussing the place that is occupied by them in the distance learning higher education. When analyzing the facilitators' answers, we have verified their concerns regarding their place and the functions they carry out in the specialization course at the institution. We recognize that the answers do not indicate the experience itself, but rather than the perception of your way in such a training course. Taking the role of facilitator is often a complex pedagogical practice, due to the responsibility of mediating student's learning in the academic context. It is also an ambiguous task for many of them, because of the combination of teaching and non-teaching roles. Although they are not considered in institutional terms, most of them recognize themselves as teachers.

During the training course, many facilitators have noted the importance of their pedagogical work in the students' learning process. There is an effort on the facilitators' part to try to reduce the student's difficulties in the process of building the knowledge during their journey through the course. Most participants legitimize the student's role in learning, however it is not always possible to exercise dialogical mediation in practical terms. Problems of work overload, recognition and remuneration are variables that harm the quality of the facilitator's practice. So, it

is necessary to review the institutional conditions concerning the pedagogical work that is carried out by facilitators.

In relation to the training experience, we consider it like an opportunity to reflect on pedagogical practice in the academic context of the distance learning. For some facilitators, the training becomes an initial approach to the pedagogical work, as well as a possibility to study and think about the foundations of university pedagogy. For others, the training is simply an income because of the historical difficulty of obtaining master's degree or doctorate scholarships in higher education. Other facilitators see the training as an important pedagogical experience in a professional career, but they point out many institutional limitations between the theoretical concepts that are covered during the courses and the conditions for exercising their pedagogical practices. There is here a complexity in the pedagogical practice itself, that requires more in-depth understanding of everyday life of facilitators and their pedagogical functions. In view of this, we see the importance of new studies on the practice of facilitators, because these scholarship holders participate actively in the trajectory of students who enter at UNIVESP higher education.

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