

## Professor habilitation: the recognition of a trajectory committed to teaching, research, and extension

*Livre-docência: o reconhecimento de uma trajetória comprometida com o ensino, pesquisa e extensão*

*Habilitación a la enseñanza: el reconocimiento de una trayectoria de comprometido con la educación, la investigación y la extensión*

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### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** to describe faculty member training as a strategy for the development of leaders and the promotion of continuous academic progress in teaching, research, and extension.

**Method:** this reflection article presents a history of the highest academic degree obtained in Brazil, describing the characteristics of the competitions and highlighting aspects and activities that show, nowadays, intellectual and scientific maturation. **Results:** aspiring professors submit their academic trajectory to analysis and judgment by peers, based on strict assessment criteria, to receive a professor habilitation. Its purpose is to promote a moment of analysis of their academic career and to identify the remarkable contribution to the advancement of the university and the country through consolidated and impactful activities. **Final considerations:** pursuing this highest degree in the Brazilian academic career can be a moment of individual and collective advancement, contributing to the consolidation of areas of knowledge.

**Descriptors:** Higher Education; Graduate Education; Quality Improvement; Higher Education Institution; University.

### RESUMO

**Objetivo:** descrever a formação do Livre-Docente como estratégia para o desenvolvimento de lideranças e a promoção de contínuo avanço acadêmico no ensino, na pesquisa e na extensão. **Método:** este artigo de reflexão apresenta histórico da titulação acadêmica mais alta obtida no Brasil, descrevendo características dos concursos e destacando aspectos e atividades que evidenciam, nos dias de hoje, amadurecimento intelectual e científico.

**Resultados:** professores aspirantes à Livre-Docência submetem sua trajetória acadêmica à análise e ao julgamento realizado por pares, com base em rigorosos critérios de avaliação. Tem por finalidade promover um momento de análise da carreira acadêmica e identificar a contribuição marcante para o avanço da universidade e do país, por meio de atividades consolidadas e de impacto. **Considerações finais:** a busca por esta mais alta titulação da carreira acadêmica brasileira pode constituir momento de avanço individual e coletivo, contribuindo para a consolidação de áreas de conhecimento.

**Descritores:** Educação Superior; Educação de Pós-Graduação; Melhoria de Qualidade; Instituições de Ensino Superior; Universidade.

### RESUMEN

**Objetivo:** describir la formación de profesores universitarios como una estrategia para el desarrollo de líderes y la promoción del progreso académico continuo en la docencia, investigación y extensión. **Método:** este artículo de reflexión presenta una historia del **más alto grado académico** obtenido en Brasil, describiendo características de las competencias y destacando aspectos y actividades que muestran, hoy, maduración intelectual y científica.

**Resultados:** los aspirantes a habilitación a la enseñanza someten su trayectoria académica al análisis y juicio de pares, con base en estrictos criterios de evaluación. Su propósito es promover un momento de análisis de la carrera académica e identificar el aporte notable al avance de la universidad y del país, a través de actividades consolidadas e impactantes. **Consideraciones finales:** la búsqueda de este grado más alto en la carrera académica brasileña puede ser un momento de avance individual y colectivo, contribuyendo a la consolidación de áreas de conocimiento.

**Descritores:** Educación Superior; Educación de Postgrado; Mejoramiento de la Calidad; Instituciones de Enseñanza Superior; Universidad.

## INTRODUCTION

The University has a long history and tradition. It is an institution with medieval roots, a meeting place for multiple knowledge. For Marcovitch<sup>(1)</sup>, "it is the best possible place for an enriching transition from adolescence to youth and, later, to adulthood (...) it is up to them, and perhaps that is their main function, to develop anxiety of the social being".

Master's degree holders went to great lengths to offer the most current knowledge to students demanding knowledge. The PhD came when the universities were already established, a dignity inherent to investing in *licentia docenti* and teaching<sup>(2)</sup>.

With the advancement of postgraduate courses in Brazil and the increase in the number of universities, the number of PhD holders has been progressively increasing, boosting the development of research, a fundamental pillar of the university's tripod, teaching, research and extension. However, the quality of teaching, research itself and extension has not always kept pace with this growth.

Taking as a reference the number of PhD holders in nursing and teaching (in which the field of health education is inserted), from 1995 to 2018, the training of 4,195 PhD professionals in nursing is identified. These data were obtained through the 2016 four-year assessment report<sup>(3)</sup>, added to the 2017/2018 *Plataforma Sucupira* (Sucupira Platform) report of 1,500 in health education<sup>(4)</sup>.

For Brazil to move forward PhD training for teaching is essential. However, the encouragement to a continuous training of leaders is also fundamental. This is where professor habilitation comes in as a strategy for recognizing teaching trajectories committed to teaching, research, and extension.

Considering that a faculty member trains many master's degree and PhD degree holders, investing in institutional policies so that universities have faculty members, in addition to professionals with a PhD, is part of a political-academic strategy to promote the production, dissemination and application of scientific knowledge.

## OBJECTIVE

To describe faculty member training as a strategy for the development of leaders and the promotion of continuous academic progress in teaching, research, and extension.

## RESULTS

### Professor habilitation in Brazil

Professor habilitation admission competitions began in Brazil in 1911, at the then University of Brazil, now *Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro* (UFRJ), with the Rivadávia Correa Reform (organic law of higher education and elementary school in Brazil)<sup>(5)</sup>.

Professor habilitation is regulated by Law 5.802/72 and 6.096/74, Decree 76.119/75 and by Opinion 826/78 of the extinct Federal Education Council. The title attests candidates to superior quality in teaching and research. This recognition of academic merit enables more success in obtaining funding from research agencies<sup>(6-7)</sup>.

Previously, professor habilitation was open to any professor at the institution, but, since September 11, 1976, only professors with a PhD degree can apply<sup>(5)</sup>.

Aspiring professors of this title, when mobilizing for a career development that recognizes professor habilitation as a moment of synthesis of academic life cycles, they must commit themselves, throughout their teaching career, to activities that will signal scientific and intellectual maturation. Among these activities, it is understood as fundamental:

1. insertion in undergraduate courses and with extension activities, in addition to insertion in a *lato sensu* graduate course;
2. involvement and deep knowledge of the university in its instances of academic and administrative management, occupying different representative positions;
3. full insertion in the graduate programs to which it belongs, assuming teaching, guidance, and research activities;
4. construction of a consolidated research line, with research results published in journals with editorial policy, national and international;
5. training of undergraduate students, master's and PhD students, with peers in the research students from post-graduate programs assessed positively by CAPES, as well as undergraduate students, other researchers of the programs to which they are inserted and other fellow researchers nationals and internationals;
6. leadership of study and research groups certified by their university and registered on CNPq research group portal;
7. international insertion through the establishment of partnerships with researchers from respected international universities, having carried out scientific programs in them and/or sending graduate students under their responsibility;
8. raising research funding from state research support foundations, Brazilian National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq - *Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico*), Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES - *Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior*) and private initiative;
9. active and purposeful participation in the scientific field in which they operate, covering holding conferences, lectures and courses in scientific events and/or organization of national and international scientific events and/or participation in the boards of scientific entities;
10. development of ad hoc advisory services for research funding agencies and scientific journals in the area of knowledge to which it belongs.

In the case of state universities, take as an example those in São Paulo, which demand the title of habilitation professor to the aspiring to the position of full professor, since the holder is understood to be the one who administers and watches over the University's destinations guaranteeing the rigor that this space occupies in society.

In federal universities, from Law 12772 of December 28, 2012, the position of Full Professor became part of Class E of the Higher Teaching Career<sup>(6)</sup>. Thus, most federal universities, by career plan, do not require this title to ascend to the position of Full Professor.

Still having the state of São Paulo as an example, a professor qualification at *Universidade Federal de São Paulo* (UNIFESP) is configured as an academic recognition of the course of action at the university, and should be considered and valued, but not required, as it did in the past.

Faculty members are now recognized by their national and international academic peers, with the same title, as those who are leaders in research and have academic and scientific training, being important members to occupy seats in examining boards of admission competitions in universities, obtaining their recognition.

The country and universities need professors with this profile and degree of academic and scientific commitment; for instance, we can mention Carlos Chagas, a national researcher who was a faculty member, among other prominent international researchers, such as Karl Marx, Georg Hegel and Sigmund Freud<sup>(5,8)</sup>.

At UNIFESP, professor habilitation is inscribed as a tradition that marks the history of *Escola Paulista de Medicina* and *Escola Paulista de Enfermagem*. With the expansion of the university, Baixada Santista, Guarulhos, Diadema and Osasco *campi* have also held a competition for faculty members. In this way, the importance of developing a policy of induction to professor habilitation is evidenced, understanding it as an academic and scientific function.

### Professor habilitation admission competition

The admission competition for professor habilitation is extremely demanding, requiring careful preparation and consisting of four to five tests, in a period between three and four days. For certain areas of knowledge, practical proof is required. In the exams, professors must demonstrate the whole body of theoretical and practical knowledge built throughout their academic life.

It is important to highlight that professors do not compete with other candidates, as it is not a job, but a job; however, despite being an open competition, it is subject to the competition rules and its assessment will follow them, being approved or not. Thus, in the same habilitation professor competition, one or more professors can be approved with the right to become a faculty member.

The competition is open by public notice, and all registered candidates must, in addition to taking a written test, take a didactic test, a defense test of the memorial and also develop a monographic or cumulative thesis on an academic topic and defend it before an examining board. Depending on the field, a practical test may also be required for the development of this competition<sup>(9)</sup>.

The criteria for registration in the competitions are variable, with some of the possible prerequisites: a) independent research line; b) research funding under its direct responsibility; c) publications in high quality journals/books in a specific area of knowledge, in which the candidate appears as the main author (first or last author or correspondence author); d) human resource training, necessarily in PhD training; e) minimum time passed after completion of their PhD training (i.e., five years). The specificities related to raising extramural resources and assessing intellectual production are analyzed within the parameters of large areas of knowledge<sup>(9)</sup>.

Candidates applying for professor habilitation must present, in a broader documentary perspective: academic and professional history composed of activities in undergraduate and university extension; academic and investigative activities (Research Line, Research Group, research projects, publications, guidelines, fundraising); academic management activities, as well as, if applicable, filing or granting patents; CNPq research productivity grant; publishing scientific journals; board of scientific societies, awards and distinctions<sup>(9)</sup>.

Candidates must submit, for application assessment, the information presented in sequence, in the order indicated, emphasizing the last 5 years, in a document of a maximum of 10 pages: 1. Academic and professional history (maximum 1 page); 2. Research line description (maximum 1 page); 3. Publications in journals/books considered to be of high level in the area of knowledge (last 5 years); inform: journal index and impact index; explain, for each publication, their participation in the work (collaborator, group leader or main executor); indicate the most relevant five publications, including abstract and impact in the field; 4. Supervised theses and dissertations, giving priority to PhD level (do not include co-supervision): student's name; graduate program; dissertation/thesis title and defense date; stock exchange financing agency, if any; 5. Funding for extramural resources (do not include scholarships): list the research projects under the candidate's responsibility, financed by government agencies, financing agencies or industry, indicating the effective date and the amounts received (present receipt); 6. Other information deemed relevant, such as: academic activities in undergraduate and graduate courses; filing or granting patents; administrative activities; CNPq research productivity grant; exchange or collaboration with research groups from abroad; editorial of scientific journals; board of scientific societies; organization of scientific events; awards and distinctions<sup>(9)</sup>.

### FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

With the main objective of describing faculty member training as a strategy to develop leadership and promote continuous academic advancement in teaching, research and extension, the contents presented in this reflection article are intended to encourage, in Brazilian university professors, the search to undertake a critical analysis of their performance in teaching, research, and extension activities through this title.

Seeking this highest degree in the Brazilian academic career can be a moment of advancement, having a noble moment designated to trajectory analysis and conception of possibilities for new directions, promoting not only the personal growth of unmatched gratification, but also an evolution for each university unit and for the teaching, research, and extension of our country.

Being a faculty member contributes to further advances in the quality of the university's three supporting pillars (teaching, research and extension). Due to the necessary endowment to the title, faculty members must necessarily demonstrate, in their trajectory, the scientific production that contributes to science, human resource training in graduate studies and the insertion in undergraduate courses, thus evidencing teaching; with nursing being an applied science, extension is also considered as the place of choice for this application.

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