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A Educação Superior em tempos de pandemia:  
 entre docentes e estudantes (\*)

Higher Education in times of pandemic: between  
 faculty and students (\*)

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## Introduction

The International Journal of Higher Education (RIESup) began to adopt the system of continuous publication from volume 5 of the year 2019. The texts of each volume, once approved by the Editorial Board and after the positive recommendation of two reviewers - in a faster way - are available for interested researchers to access online. However, this way of working generates an increase in the evaluation in the impact of the Journal's publications by Google Scholar. As the texts approved with positive evaluation are integrated into the current issue and within the sections of the journal in the order of approval, it is not known throughout the year of publication which themes are predominant, deepened or emerging in the volume. Therefore, we have to justify them, make them explicit, and highlight them in the editorial. As of volume 10, a new editorial format is being evaluated. We have created a code to identify and classify each text in thematic categories and express this classification in a more synthetic way, respecting its order of entry in the summary sections.

For the classification of the texts, we chose four categories: (a) line of research/publication of the journal; (b) type of work (article, research, experience report, book review, essay) and its respective author(s); (c) methodological approach; and (d) authors' country of origin. This categorization is especially useful to graduate students who are experiencing research in search of emerging themes and methodological approaches adopted by more experienced researchers. Moreover, it outlines the journal's annual profile and they seek in the editorial space to organize their texts a posteriori, especially in relation to three of the four categories mentioned above: line of research, methodological approach and country of origin of the authors.

## About Volume 10 and the Classification

Volume 10<sup>1</sup> of 2024 of the International Journal of Higher Education RIESup contains thirty-three articles, four research papers, four experience reports, three reviews and one essay, written by 110 authors/researchers. Most of the texts include three authors per paper, expressing a culture and consolidation of research groups and/or collaboration among

<sup>1</sup> This volume of the International Journal of Higher Education RIESup pays tribute to the University of Naples Federico II, which will celebrate its eight hundredth anniversary in 2024. The Università degli Studi di Napoli (Italy) is one of the oldest in the Western world and currently promotes several internationalization actions, such as: exchange of researchers, professors and administrative technicians; exchange of students and trainees; joint development of research of common interest; exchange of documentation and scientific and technical publications; organization of colloquia, seminars or scientific meetings with other institutions; co-supervision of theses and participation in examination boards.

researchers from different institutions, indicating a greater focus and articulation of the research conducted. We have assigned a numerical code<sup>2</sup> to each text in this volume, respecting the order of the texts in the sections of the journal. In this way we identify the thematic perspective, the type of text, the methodological approach and the country of origin of the authors. In future volumes, we will ask the authors themselves to define these characteristics in their texts.

### About the Thematic Centers

The largest number of texts (research/publication) approved for this volume make up the thematic core on the university student. We have classified nine articles (numbers [1], [6], [8], [12], [13], [16], [19], [23] and [29]), one experience report [39] and one book review [44] in this line. The majority of the papers deal with pedagogical or psychosocial support for students in distance education during the two-year Covid-19 pandemic period and the impact of this online learning modality on student retention in higher education (nos. [6], [8], [12], [23] and [29]). These researches are directly or indirectly related to the actions of the Community or Student Services and Undergraduate Deans' Offices of Brazilian Universities. Among the different types of support to students, the "Study practices in the academic-digital community" (experience report) [39] and the "Reflection about pedagogical support in Brazilian higher education" (book review) [44] deserve special mention. This pedagogical support is particularly relevant in the top universities of the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia. There is often a pedagogical support center for students to turn to at the beginning of their academic life, in order to improve the arts of reading, studying, writing, thinking, speaking and listening, and thus get more out of their university education. In addition, it is common for universities to provide students with psychological counseling, individual academic advising, and scholarship services. Some of these services are offered to the neediest students as well as to those who are more gifted and culturally diverse. The impact of these various practices and policies of universities and other higher education institutions in enabling students to persist in their programs and to make the most of the undergraduate experience for their future lives as responsible and competent citizens and professionals is worthy of study. Several other aspects need to be studied as well, whether they relate to the undergraduate, the transfer student, or the graduate. The aim is to provide higher education institutions with a more accurate feedback on the impact of their actions on the human and

<sup>2</sup> If you want to open the cited text, click on the numerical code that will take you to the full work indicated.

professional formation of young people, making public the expression of social responsibility. Society, which in turn largely finances the educational experience of these young people, deserves and expects an adequate return on this investment in the quality of life for all, in responsible citizenship, and in competent and ethical professionalism. Inspiring in this regard is the research of Ernest T. Pascarella and Patrick T. Terenzini (1991; 2005) published in two volumes on "How college affects students. It is about three decades of research on the same subject, which, especially in certain dimensions, theorizations and methodological approaches, are transferable to the Ibero-American reality.

The topic of university didactics or pedagogy was the second research/publication line with more approved texts in this Volume 10 of the International Journal of Higher Education RIESup: three articles (No. [3], [11] and [22]) and two experience reports (No. [40] and [41]). The studies on faculty performance seem to reflect and mirror the emphasis on research on university students and the concern to respond to faculty problems in the Covid-19 pandemic period. Texts [3] and [41] deal with teaching health-related topics, and text [11] talks about students' perceptions of their professors' evaluation practices. The development of didactic resources and the evaluation of student learning are typical activities in the teaching practice of university professors. In general, professors have been prepared and oriented in their doctoral programs to learn scientific research and, more rarely, to learn teaching at the undergraduate level.

In the case of American universities, and more recently in the context of Brazilian universities, some doctoral students have received grants or fellowships to work as assistants to a full professor and have taken on undergraduate teaching. In the American case, the doctoral student acts as an Assistant Professor (A.P.), and in the Brazilian case, as a Trainee Professor. The training of a researcher requires a reasonably long period of study and research experience under the supervision of an advisor, but the preparation for teaching is done only with a brief practice without a solid theoretical foundation and without critical reflection on practice. The question remains: Is this preparation sufficient for excellence in undergraduate teaching? Certainly not. In this volume, however, we continue with four equally represented themes, each with three texts. Two articles and one research paper deal with professional development of professors (No. [2], [15] and [37]), two articles and one research paper deal with curriculum in higher education (No. [25], [26] and [34]), three articles deal with higher education policy (No. [14], [27] and [28]), and one article and two reviews deal with higher education as a field of research (No. [31], [42] and [43]). It is important to note that, in addition

to the above-mentioned articles on higher education didactics, we have three texts related to this line of research/publication, which respectively deal with 1. the production of podcast content for the continuing education of university professors; 2. the challenge and difficulties of beginning university professors in the field of natural and process sciences; 3. the interactions and challenges of continuing education for university professors. These studies seem to represent initiatives for the professional development of professors in the states of Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo and Rio Grande do Sul. They are laudable initiatives but limited and restricted considering the number of higher education institutions in the country. For this reason, it seems appropriate that these institutions be encouraged by governmental policies to take the commitment, *motu proprio*, to create an internal body that contributes to improving the quality of undergraduate education. The design and implementation of the pedagogical projects of the courses must have the pedagogical support of this body or nucleus. Under different names, this body has been functioning for some time in American universities of excellence, particularly stimulated by the recommendations of Ernest L. Boyer (1997), Santos Filho; Dias (2016), Harvard University (2023), Stanford University (2023) and MIT (2023). To this end, excellence at the undergraduate level is a prerequisite for excellence at the graduate level.

It is important to emphasize that the production of research on higher education in some regions of Brazil and in Hispanic American countries has grown in these first decades of the 21st century, as can be seen in the article [31]. While the Faculties of Education of some first-world universities recognize this area of research as another field of study within their mission, and offer masters and doctoral programs in higher education, most of the Faculties of Education of Latin American universities ignore this new field of educational research. The number of higher education institutions has increased exponentially in the last decades, and more recently by focusing on conglomerates of educational corporations that may be adept at generating billion-dollar profits but are probably ineffective in having a positive impact on their students. Research is urgently needed to assess the social responsibility of these institutions and their contribution to the formation of democratic citizens and competent professionals.

Below, we present five topics, each with two texts. The article format includes nine papers, and one is an experience report. Articles [17] and [21] deal with the internationalization of higher education. The first compares the perceptions of Brazilian students with those of American students about the reality of Brazilian universities, and the second analyzes the limitations of Brazilian students to take advantage of academic mobility.

Regarding this last aspect, the main problem is the lack of fluency in a foreign language, which represents the failure of the Brazilian primary school in this curricular dimension. The articles [20] and [33] analyze gender relations in the university environment, exploring the relations of oppression and the students' perception of these relations. Since the eighties of the last century, the themes of human rights, equality, feminism, respect for individual differences and multiculturalism have conquered the space of discussion and academic research in the university environment of many Western countries, including Brazil.

Through these themes, laws of coexistence and social tolerance more in line with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights have been generated. Articles [5] and [18] deal, respectively, with the training of literacy professors and the training of field educators who are open to dialogue with indigenous and peasant cultures without a "colonialist" spirit. The articles [7] and [32] present research on the university professor as an academic professional, the first dealing with the aspect of professional stress in emergency remote teaching. The second deals with the experiences of female professor-researchers in times of pandemic. Finally, the article on graduate studies is the subject of a research [36] and the experience report deals with scientific education in graduate studies in an approach to applied linguistics [38].

To conclude the presentation of the texts of this volume, we have the other articles or researches about: MEC/USAID agreement and North American hegemony [4]; university management [9]; access to the Argentine university [10]; continuing education of employees of a university in the south of Bahia [24]; Paulo Freire's pedagogy and anarchist educators [30]; and performance of scholarship and non-scholarship students in a social sciences course [35]. Finally, an essay-reflection [45] on the popular peasant university in East Timor, written by a Brazilian professor who lived an academic experience in the country.

### About the Methodological Approaches

Analyzing the methodological approach of the papers, we found that eighteen used a qualitative approach, fourteen a quantitative approach, eight were qualitative-quantitative or mixed, three were critical-dialectical, and three were descriptive. The predominant approaches are qualitative and quantitative, with a hegemony of the qualitative approach. The critical-dialectical approach, once hegemonic in educational research in the country, seems to reflect the impact of the renewal of generations of researchers in Brazilian universities. However, the book reviews used a descriptive approach, highlighting the central themes of the work and informing the reader about the main contribution of the book's author.

## About Geographical Distribution

Finally, we made a brief analysis of the geographical origin of the authors of this volume and found that eighty-four are Brazilian. Of these, thirty-four are from the Southeast region, thirty-two from the South, fourteen from the Northeast, eight from the Center-West, and six from the North. Among the foreign authors, one is from Argentina, another from Portugal, and the third from Spain. As these data show, the participation of foreign authors in our journal is still very low. We invite them to send more contributions related to higher education in their countries.

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