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The perception of students, professors and managers of the philosophy course/UFMS regarding dropout

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ABSTRACT

Introduction/Objective: This research aimed to verify how managers, students and professors of the Philosophy course at the Federal University of Mato Grosso do Sul (UFMS) perceive the dropout phenomenon. **Methodology:** To achieve the objective of the research, documentary data from UFMS available on the internet, interviews with professors, managers and dropout students were collected, a questionnaire was also sent to students entering in 2021. **Results/Conclusions:** It was evidenced, at the end of the research, that the dropout rate of course is higher than the national average for other Philosophy courses. In relation to managers and teachers, it was noticed that the issue is thought of in everyday life, since their perceptions about the reasons that lead to dropout are convergent with the reasons alleged by dropout students. However, there is the conception that the responsibility for actions to combat dropout lies with the central administration and not with the course.

KEYWORDS

Evasion. University education. University Management.

A percepção dos professores, alunos e gestores do curso de filosofia/UFMS a respeito da evasão

RESUMO

Introdução/Objetivo: Esta pesquisa objetivou verificar como os gestores, alunos e professores do curso de Filosofia da Universidade Federal de Mato Grosso do Sul (UFMS) percebem o fenômeno da evasão. **Metodologia:** Caracterizada como estudo de caso, foram coletados dados documentais da UFMS disponibilizados na *internet*, entrevistas com professores, gestores e alunos evadidos, também foi enviado questionário para discentes ingressantes, em 2021. **Resultados/Conclusão:** Ficou evidenciado, ao fim da pesquisa, que o índice de evasão do curso é superior à média nacional para os demais cursos de Filosofia. Com relação aos gestores e professores, percebeu-se que a questão é pensada no cotidiano, uma vez que suas percepções sobre os motivos que levam à evasão são convergentes com os motivos alegados pelos alunos evadidos. No entanto, verifica-se a concepção de que a responsabilidade pelas ações de combate à evasão é da administração central e não do curso.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Evasão. Ensino Superior. Gestão Universitária.

La percepción de estudiantes, profesores y directivos de la carrera de filosofía/UFMS sobre la deserción

RESUMEN

Introducción/Objetivo: Esta investigación tuvo como objetivo verificar cómo los directivos, estudiantes y profesores de la carrera de Filosofía de la Universidad Federal de Mato Grosso do Sul (UFMS) perciben el fenómeno de la deserción. **Metodología:** Para lograr el objetivo de la investigación, se recogieron datos documentales de la UFMS disponibles en internet, entrevistas a profesores, directivos y alumnos desertores, también se envió un cuestionario a los alumnos que ingresan en 2021. **Resultados/Conclusión:** Se evidenció, al final de la investigación, que la tasa de deserción del curso es más alta que el promedio nacional para otros cursos de Filosofía. En relación a los directivos y docentes, se percibió que el tema es pensado en el cotidiano, una vez que sus percepciones sobre los motivos que conducen a la deserción son convergentes con los motivos alegados por los estudiantes de deserción. Sin embargo, existe la concepción de que la responsabilidad de las acciones para combatir la deserción es de la administración central y no del curso.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Evasión. Enseñanza superior. Gestión Universitaria.

CRediT

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1 Introduction

The issue of dropout is a social and, at the same time, administrative phenomenon that is present in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). With rare exceptions, almost all courses suffer from a much lower number of graduates than entrants (Cardoso; Ludovico, 2017). This difference is the result of those who, for the most varied reasons, have given up or interrupted their intention to finish the course they started (Gaioso, 2005). Rationalizing this process is a challenge faced by both public and private institutions, but when seen from an exclusively mercantilist and quantitative perspective, it arouses a feeling of failure and impotence in those involved in the training process (Prestes; Fialho, 2018).

It is necessary to analyze the issue of dropout from a wide variety of perspectives and find out which practices are or are not feasible so that the phenomenon can be understood and controlled, which would result in a reduction in the loss of economic, social and academic resources (Da Silva et al., 2020).

The analysis of this issue cannot be generic, because although there are general factors, the specific factors give the phenomenon unique characteristics for each institution, modality, course, etc. From the daily experiences of the authors, who include a manager linked to the Philosophy/UFMS course and former students of the same course, as well as a higher education teacher, questions emerged that led to a literature review on dropout. However, as will be explained later, there are a few topics dealing exclusively with the Philosophy course and its unique characteristics in the context of undergraduate degrees, which is why this study was original. It is from this perspective that the object of this research focuses on the Philosophy degree course at the Universidade Federal de Mato Grosso do Sul (UFMS).

The course in question was created in 2009 and had its first intake in 2010. It was created as a result of the Program to Support Restructuring and Expansion Plans for Federal Universities (Reuni). Thus, it followed the guidelines of this program, establishing itself as an evening degree, with the aim of meeting the need for professionals generated by the implementation of Law 11.684/08, which made the teaching of Philosophy compulsory in Basic Education, so that every high school was required to hire at least one Philosophy teacher. In addition, private schools sought to introduce philosophy teaching in the second stage of elementary school, resulting in even greater demand (UFMS, n.d.).

However, it was observed that the course has been suffering the effects of dropouts, with a high discrepancy between the number of entrants and the number of graduates. So, in order to analyze this phenomenon, the following question was posed: Is the view that teachers and managers have of dropout in the Philosophy/UFMS course related to the factors presented by the students who have dropped out?

In view of the above, the general objective of this research is to analyze the perception

of the different actors that make up the formation process of the Philosophy/UFMS course in relation to evasion, especially the course managers, students and teachers.

2 Theoretical elements of the research

This section will cover two topics: conceptions of dropout and dropout at Brazilian HEIs.

The model proposed by Tinto (1975) of student integration is recognized as the most influential in Brazilian studies on dropout (Durso; Cunha, 2018). In this model, there are four factors that play a major role in the student's decision to leave the institution: individual characteristics, student context, institutional environment and educational context. In addition, three critical stages have been identified that can affect dropout: the transition from high school to university, the mistaken reality about student life and academic performance (Santos et al., 2017).

Tinto (1975) considers the academic and social perspectives of the student's life, thus revealing that socio-cultural elements play a decisive role in the university experience. Thus, based on empirical research, it has been observed that the lack of adequate integration can be a decisive factor in student dropout (Ambiel et al., 2016).

Tinto (1975) proposes that the issue of dropout in higher education should be understood through two aspects: the need to belong and the student's constant evaluation of cost-benefit. Thus, the absence of a connection and identification with the institution and the perception of few future benefits can lead to students abandoning their studies. This analysis from the 1970s is very current and influential, since it focuses its criticism on the individual's community context and makes the act of dropping out a social issue, involving the entire community in which the student is inserted and not just an act of the student's subjective will. Socio-emotional issues are also shared by many researchers, however, when highlighting the issues involved, research focuses on fundamental and underlying points, since they are made up of complex and multidimensional phenomena (Cardoso; Ludovico, 2017). Thus, the phenomenon extends into the analysis of these factors (Souza et al., 2019).

In this same vein, Fritsch (2015) makes a similar contribution by saying that dropout "[...] is a complex phenomenon, associated with the non-fulfilment of expectations and a reflection of multiple causes [...] It is characterized by being a process of exclusion determined by factors and variables internal and external to educational institutions" (Fritsch, 2015, p. 2).

Morosini et al. (2011) list factors such as: finance - the student is unable to support themselves during the period of study and may eventually have to acquire a source of income -; chosen course - incompatibility of expectations -; sociability - lack of connection between

the student, classmates and teachers -; academic performance - low grades and unsuitability for higher education -; social status of the course - when the course does not give the individual the feeling of expected social gain -; timetable - when the course has timetables that do not coincide with the needs of the student's social life -; family - when problems with close relatives affect the student -; among others.

Lobo (2012) points to the following factors as preponderant for dropout: poor quality of basic education - literacy conditions that lead to poor academic performance -; finance - financial problems that lead students to abandon the course -; immaturity - when the career choice is hasty and the student later adjusts -; quality of the institution - when the course does not guarantee good results -; among others.

Due to the diversity of factors, it is necessary to develop local research that explains the regional nuances and specificities of each institution, as well as the potential of socio-cultural, economic and academic factors (Santos et al. 2017). The same authors point out that there are general factors, namely: institution, professionalization and individual, which should serve as starting points for further research.

The research by Santos et al. (2017) follows the view of Tinto (1975), placing dropout as a social fact, which is taken as a function of personal, institutional and professional issues, among others. Thus, when students enter university, they bring with them social, cultural and economic experiences and, by establishing a bond with the institution, they bring these experiences into contact with the culture and norms of the academic environment.

This bond is temporary and unstable, and can be broken at any time when the student doesn't find enough reasons to keep it. This model, which combines social/academic/professional integration, is based on the cost-benefit theory, in which "[...] students drop out if they perceive that there are other ways of investing time, effort and resources that can offer them higher benefits in relation to the costs if they remain at the educational institution" (Prestes; Fialho, 2018, p. 874).

2.1 Dropouts at Brazilian HEIs

According to the 2020 Census of Higher Education carried out by the National Institute of Educational Research (Inep), there will be 304 public and 2,153 private higher education institutions in Brazil, which represents a percentage of 87.6% private institutions and 12.4% public ones. In terms of places, "the private network offered 95.6% of all places in undergraduate courses in 2020. The public network accounted for 4.4% of the places offered by higher education institutions" (Inep, 2022, p. 15).

In terms of graduates in 2020, 16.0% will come from the public education system, while 84.0% will come from the private sector. According to data from Inep (2022), it can be

seen that over the last decade, public institutions have shown a lower percentage growth in graduates compared to other segments of higher education, since between 2010 and 2020, the private network recorded a 37.2% growth in the number of graduates, while the public network showed a rate of 7.1% (Inep, 2022).

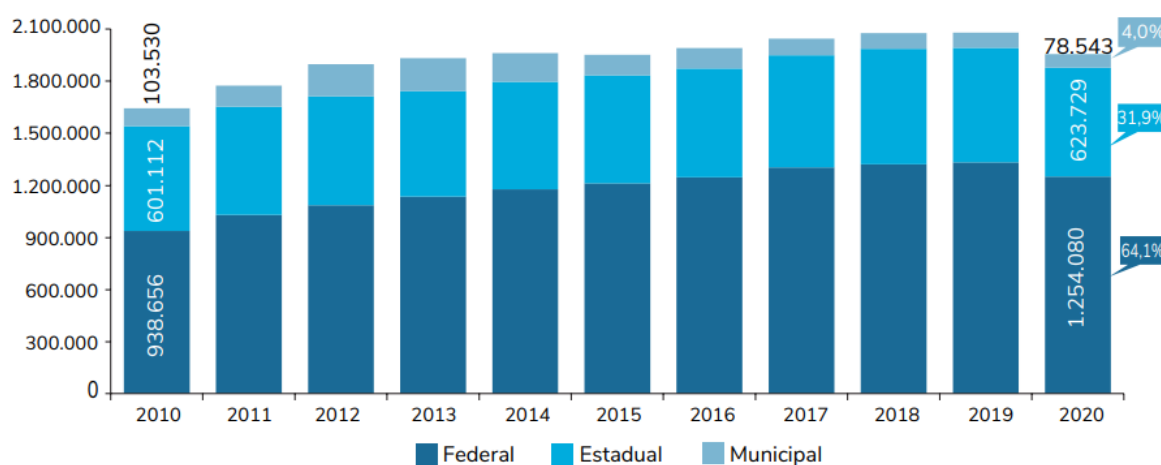
The same report highlights the existence of remaining vacancies in higher education institutions. These are due to students dropping out or not filling the places offered. In 2020, this report showed that public institutions had 184,700 remaining vacancies, while private institutions had an even higher number, with a total of 5,052,743 vacancies (Inep, 2022).

Indeed, these figures reveal a problem of wasted financial, human and academic resources. Vacancies represent a quantity of unused resources, which is an issue that should be analyzed from the perspective of public policies for higher education in the country. In the last two decades, there has been a shift in the focus of public policies for higher education, and some policies have had significant impacts - both positive and negative - on the issue of dropout.

The implementation of the Program to Support Restructuring and Expansion Plans for Federal Universities (Reuni) in 2007 aimed to gradually increase the completion rate of face-to-face undergraduate courses to 90%, while reducing the student-teacher ratio from 18 to 1 (Brazil, 2007).

An important aspect of the program is the first of several directives aimed at reducing the dropout rate and the number of vacant places, while proposing an increase in the number of enrollments, especially at night (Brazil, 2007). In this way, the federal government facilitated a physical, academic and pedagogical expansion that led to the creation of several courses and an increase in the number of places offered. The reflection of this expansion can be seen in the 35.5% increase in the number of new entrants between 2010 and 2020.

Figure 1. Historical series of public and federal school enrollment - 2010-2020

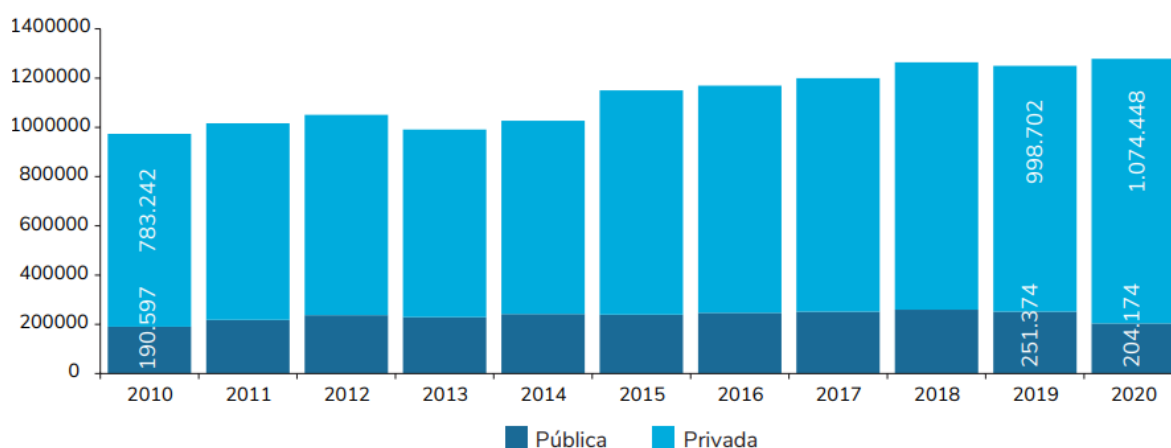


Source: Inep (2022).

As can be seen in the figure above, in ten years the number of enrolments has more

than doubled at federal institutions, resulting in a considerable expansion in the supply of new places for public higher education. As illustrated in figure 1, the last decade has seen a significant increase in the number of students enrolled in federal institutions, resulting in a greater availability of places in higher education. However, while one of Reuni's objectives was to increase the number of places by 100% in ten years, this was achieved, but was accompanied by an increase in the "[...] average completion of face-to-face undergraduate courses to ninety percent" (Brasil, 2007), the reality of Inep's data in the 2020 Higher Education Census shows results that are far from the program's expectations.

Figure 2: Historical series of the number of graduates in Higher Education - 2010/2020



Source: Inep (2022).

An analysis of the graph shows that although the number of enrolments has increased significantly, the number of graduates has not kept pace with this increase. In this sense, it seems clear that Reuni did not achieve its goal of reducing dropout from undergraduate courses, as there is a disparity between the increase in the entry rate and the completion rate, i.e. despite the significant increase in access to university, there was no proportional increase in completion rates. Thus, dropout becomes the biggest educational obstacle for those who overcome the difficulties of access to universities and who, due to various socio-economic and cultural factors, have to face the constant challenges of remaining in higher education (Gaioso, 2005).

3 Methodological aspects

In order to establish a solid and up-to-date theoretical and methodological base, a bibliometric analysis was carried out. For this purpose, three databases were consulted: SciVerse Scopus; the database of the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (Capes) and the Institutional Repository of the Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC). The search terms used were "dropout", "higher education" and "evasion". The Boolean operator used between the terms was "AND", as a way of including a search number. This resulted in 35 (thirty-five) studies, divided according to their objectives: state of

the art and knowledge (2), conceptual (3), academic engagement (1), factors and reasons (13), student trajectory (7), predictive models (4), student profile (3), professional training (1) and consequences of dropout (1).

An analysis of the selected articles shows that the reasons for dropout are addressed in a comprehensive manner. However, it should be noted that there are particularities both in the approaches and in the issues underlying the topic. While some articles seek a precise conceptualization of dropout, others focus on the analysis of predictive models, educational pathways, student profiles, and engagement. These approaches aim to identify and highlight critical aspects of the dropout phenomenon.

It can be concluded that the factors that lead to dropout are multifaceted and complex, difficult to identify because they involve different nuances and elements that emerge at different times and in different cases. As Scali (2009) notes, these factors can be grouped into three spheres: individual, internal to institutions and external to institutions. In other words, with all the complexity and dynamism of the phenomenon, these three categories had an impact on the decision to abandon the course.

In view of the above, in order to achieve the proposed objectives and based on the classification determined by Saunders et al. (2016), in terms of its nature, the research was classified as applied, since it aims to generate practical and timely knowledge to identify solutions to problems specific to institutions. In terms of philosophy, it was chosen as interpretive and pragmatic philosophy, since it seeks to understand the phenomenon, but also aims to solve the problem.

As for logic, it was abductive since it was necessary to verify the analysis of reality on the theory and vice versa. The time horizon was cross-sectional, since the data on entrants, leavers, teachers and managers were collected in 2021 and refer to a short period.

The problem was analyzed using a mixed sequential research strategy, which involves alternating qualitative and quantitative approaches at different stages of the analytical process. Finally, the aim of the research was exploratory-descriptive in nature.

The subjects selected for the study were: teachers, administrators, entrants and dropouts from the Philosophy program during the first and second semesters of 2021. They were chosen because they are directly involved in the dropout phenomenon and are able to provide different and rich insights into the dynamics of the course. By including a variety of subjects, the study obtains a broad and heterogeneous understanding of the phenomenon.

On the other hand, the same reasoning was used to capture the perceptions of teachers and managers, who had the point of view of those who actively worked on the formulation of the course and could present reflections on the indices presented.

The data collection strategy included the use of questionnaires, documentary research

and interviews, as shown in Figure 1.

Chart 1: Research instruments, data collection methods by specific objectives and subjects

Specific objectives	Study subjects	Collection instrument/form	Sample and population	Collection period
Identify the percentage of dropouts in the ratio of entrants to graduates	All course entrants	Documents in the UFMS academic system	All entry, graduation and dropout data were analyzed	2011-2021
Analyze the factors that influence dropout rates in the course.	Dropouts	Semi-structured interview via <i>e-mail</i>	9 interviewees out of 9 who dropped out in 2021	January to August 2021
	Professors	Semi-structured interview via <i>WhatsApp</i>	8 professors interviewed out of 12 course professors	July 2021
To identify the profile of entrants and the reasons for their choice.	Entrants	Questionnaire via <i>e-mail</i>	70 questionnaire respondents out of 110 entrants	March 2021
To understand how managers view dropout in the Philosophy course.	Managers	Semi-structured interview via <i>WhatsApp</i>	5 interviewees out of 5 who were invited	July 2021
To understand professors' views on dropout in the Philosophy course.	Professors	Semi-structured interview via <i>WhatsApp</i>	8 professors interviewed out of 12 course professors	July 2021

Source: Prepared by the authors based on Oliveira Junior (2022, p. 70).

Multiple sources were used in the data collection process, namely: dropout data collected by the academic system; semi-structured interviews with students who dropped out in 2021; semi-structured interviews with professors and managers, with 8 respondents and 4 refusals out of a total of 12 invited to participate in the survey. Of the managers, 5 were invited and all responded. It should be noted that all of these interviews were conducted via Whatsapp, using the messaging application to send the interview questions, since with the Covid-19 pandemic, the work was done from home.

Finally, questionnaires were also sent to 110 incoming students, of whom 70 responded. This research tool was applied through Google Forms with the following categories of analysis: dropout percentages, based on the work of Lima and Zago (2018), considering the numerical relationship between entrants and dropouts; factors and reasons, weighted in the work of Bardin (2016), to know the convergences and divergences between the perceptions of teachers, managers and dropouts; and student profile, based on the work of Marques et al. (2020), considering the attractiveness of the course and the socioeconomic and cultural profile of the students.

The data analysis techniques were divided into quantitative and qualitative. Regarding the quantitative technique, simple descriptive statistics were used, i.e. simple mean and absolute frequency. With regard to the qualitative data, discourse analysis was used, based on the teachings of Bardin (2016). The aim was to correlate the theoretical basis with the

responses of the subjects used in the study, in order to verify the convergence or divergence of the state of the art in relation to the results found.

All the participants in the study were informed about the objectives and methods of the study, about their participation and spontaneously signed the free and informed consent form, as established in Article 17 of CNS Resolution No. 510 of April 7, 2016.

The research complies with the guidelines established by the Research Ethics Committee (CEP) and the National Research Ethics Commission (CONEP), according to the principles established in CNS Resolution No. 674 of May 6, 2022, specifically in Article 26. In addition, the research complies with the guidelines contained in the Circular Letter No. 12/2023/CONEP/SECNS/DGIP/SE/MS, which provides guidelines related to the aforementioned Resolution, responsible for the classification of research and the process of submitting research protocols to the CEP/Conep system. Thus, there is an exemption from the need for ethics committee approval as required by Resolution 674.

4 Case study

This section will present the phenomenon of dropout in the Philosophy/UFMS course. To do this, it is necessary to analyze the background to its creation and its objectives. In addition, an analysis will be made of the profile of entrants, as well as the main reasons they have for seeking the course. Data on dropout, permanence, retention and completion will be presented. And finally, the perception of managers, teachers and dropouts in relation to dropout.

4.1 The Philosophy course at UFMS

As a result of the approval of Law 11.684/08, which made it obligatory to include the teaching of philosophy in basic education, there were vacancies in schools for philosophy graduates. As a result, the public universities of the State did not include the study of philosophy in their curricula. This fact, together with the need to meet the demand for professors in secondary schools, led to the creation of a degree course in Philosophy at UFMS (UFMS, 2017).

According to the guidelines of the Political Course Project (PPC), the aim of the training process is to develop the graduate's ability to critically understand the history of philosophy, to analyze and reflect on the main themes, problems and philosophical systems, and to acquire the necessary skills to act as an educator and philosopher, within the technical, ethical, political, cultural, personal development and social training dimensions (UFMS, 2017).

4.2 Profile of entrants and reasons for choosing the Philosophy course

When students enter an undergraduate program, they bring with them expectations and practical issues that deserve to be analyzed so that the treatment they receive is appropriate to their needs and gives them a better chance of staying. Understanding the profile of new students is fundamental to understanding their main characteristics and peculiarities. This topic therefore presents the results of the survey carried out with new students in the first semester of 2021.

The results obtained through questionnaires include information related to several variables, namely: age group, gender, ethnicity, marital status, family composition, high school education, previous degree, method of entry, income, employment situation, career choice in philosophy, course choice, and expectations regarding the degree.

The profile was thus as follows: predominantly between 25 and 35 years old, male, single and without children, having graduated from a public high school before the age of 18, and already holding another degree at the time of entering the Philosophy program. In the selection process, they enrolled in the broad competition with a monthly income of between two and four minimum wages.

The main reasons for studying philosophy are to fulfill their self-declared personal aptitudes and to improve their professional skills in their current position. The greatest interest is in acquiring philosophical knowledge with the aim of gaining a social advantage through scholarship. In addition, expectations are more focused on existential issues and individual development than on economic or functional factors.

These reasons lead individuals to look to philosophical knowledge and the title of philosopher for a prominent social position in society, i.e., a status anchored in idealistic conceptions that may not find support in reality and during the course of study. In this way, it appears as something illusory, which leads the individual to be discouraged from the course, generating another implication: a separation between the objectives proposed by the philosophy course, the expectations of the students and the practical reality. As mentioned above, the course was originally developed to train professors, but it ended up attracting an audience that has other goals.

4.3 Dropout rate in relation to Philosophy/UFMS entrants

The 2019 Higher Education Census, published in October 2020, points out that the average completion rate for Philosophy courses in Brazil is 35%, with a dropout rate of 63% and a 2% retention rate (Brazil, 2020). The average completion rate for the Philosophy/UFMS course was less than 9%, as can be seen in Table 1:

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Table 1: Ratio of entrants, leavers and graduates by year 2010/2021

Year	Newcomers	Graduates	Dropouts	Evasion	Link 2021
2010	59	19	41	69,49%	0
2011	60	10	50	83.3%	0
2012	56	11	47	83.9%	0
2013	80	16	72	90.0%	0
2014	79	14	64	81.0%	2 retained ¹
2015	102	18	78	76.4%	6 retained
2016	51	9	38	74.5%	4 retained
2017	108	4	85	78.7%	19 retained
2018	69	- ²	26	37.7%	35 enrolments ³ and 8 withdrawals ⁴ .
2019	71	-	23	32.4%	44 enrolled and 24 withdrawn
2020	58	-	9	15.5%	31 enrolled and 16 withdrawn
2021	110	-	6	5.5%	104 enrolled

Source: Prepared by the authors, based on Oliveira Junior and Dalmau (2022, p. 13).

The dropout rates presented in Table 1 show rates ranging from 83% to 90% in the period without retained students (2011-2013), as there was no possibility of retention since the first intake took place in 2010. However, in the period from 2014 to 2017, the dropout rates are lower, ranging from 74% to 78%, as there are also retained students who can still complete or leave the course. In the following period, from 2018 to 2021, the percentages decrease, but there is a significant increase in the number of transcripts and a decrease in the number of enrolled students in relation to new students, which may indicate the persistence of high dropout rates.

In an interview with Manager A, who is responsible for academic management at UFMS, it became clear that the main cause of student dropouts is failure to renew or failure to enroll. This may indicate a number of underlying factors, including personal, financial, and academic issues. These factors may interact in complex ways to contribute to the occurrence of dropout.

Similarly, dropping out increases the likelihood that the student will simply not re-enroll. This is due to two factors: a) in the absence of renewal, according to COUN/UFMS Resolution 550/2018, the student's enrollment is automatically suspended, i.e. in many cases the student has already dropped out, but due to an institutional procedure, their enrollment remains suspended; b) even if the student intentionally suspends their enrollment, this results in a distance and a decrease in the emotional bond of belonging, which may lead them to follow new paths (UFMS, 2018).

¹ The student has exceeded the deadline for completion, but is still enrolled (Santos, 2018).

² Newcomers from 2018 onwards had not reached the minimum deadline for completing the course at the time of data collection.

³ Newcomers from 2018 onwards are not included in the retained category, as they had not reached the 8th semester at the time of collection.

⁴ The process by which a regular student can temporarily interrupt their studies while maintaining their link with UFMS (UFMS, 2021).

4.4 The perception of professors and managers in relation to dropout

Firstly, the managers were asked what they perceived to be the most interesting elements of the course. Their view was as follows:

In Philosophy, problems have to be formulated, the exercise of investigating the fundamentals, reaching the "origin" of questions through cognitive effort is the great attraction of the course. I think this element makes Philosophy an interesting option for a second degree (Manager B).

In other words, the theoretical nature of the course, according to Manager B, has a very strong attraction for individuals who already have a degree and a professional career in other areas, but see in the course the possibility of complementing the curriculum and a greater general culture. This perception can be seen in the words of another manager when he states that: "The greatest interest is the search for philosophical knowledge, especially on the part of people with diplomas" (Manager D). In both analyses, it can be seen that the search for philosophical knowledge and the second degree are elements that the managers see as highlights of the course.

With regard to the differences between first-year students and graduates, the perceptions were listed as follows: "Lack of identification with the course; not clear about possible areas of activity and the job market" (Manager C). Managers B and D added the following factors to those already mentioned: "[...] having to work and study; not understanding that you can make a living with 'philosophy'. In other words, 'will I be able to apply what I'm learning'" (Manager B). "The low level of knowledge brought by entrants; the quality of the written production and the difficulty of understanding philosophical concepts; a failure in communication between teachers and students; a lack of professional prospects" (Manager D).

It can be seen that from the managers' point of view, the factors that lead to dropout are easy to identify, although it is not easy to recognize which of them have the greatest impact in a given context. However, the perceptions are assertive about the factors that are pointed out in the literature (Souza et al., 2019).

From the teachers' point of view, two approaches to the interest in and demand for the philosophy course can be highlighted. The first focuses on the fact that the main attraction is the acquisition of knowledge. Teachers point out that students who study philosophy are interested in elements, discussions and theories that deal with essential issues. In addition, they point out that there is an opportunity to come into contact with classic texts from the history of philosophy that deal with everyday issues.

Professor B. points out that the course is attractive not only because it offers everyday knowledge and the formation of a critical sense, aesthetic and humanistic perception, but above all because of an imaginary that idealizes the formation of sages and their eventual rise to prominence.

These observations reiterate the importance of the status derived from scholarship, as has been pointed out. Added to this is the aspect of culture, of knowledge, which underpins much of the humanities and social sciences that are the mainstay of universities today. The question of a critical sense becomes more important, especially if we consider that the pasteurization of knowledge seems to be more prevalent among the younger population.

On the other hand, it is also mentioned that many students enter the course expecting an institution that does not represent the reality of everyday academic activities. Prof. H. highlights the presence of illusory attractions associated with the philosophy course, such as: the perception of easy entry, the idea that the course itself is easy, the belief that expressing opinions and talking about life is enough, and the illusion of obtaining higher education without much effort.

Among the factors mentioned by the teachers, some related to professional issues emerged, such as the future expectation of employability and salary gains in the future profession, as well as the possibility of teaching.

What stands out in the teachers' comments is the structural problem of the education system, which, in the selectivity of the admissions process, does not allow for choice and relegates students who could not pass courses to which only high entrance exam scores are admitted to less popular courses (Zago, 2006).

When faculty are asked about the reasons for the disparity between enrollment and graduation, a variety of views emerge, all of which have in common an increase in the number of graduates and an improvement in the quality of the course.

However, there are other perspectives that point to other reasons, and these are listed in the table below:

Chart 2: The reasons for dropout as seen by professors

	Reasons for evasion	Prof.
1	The realization that their aspirations are not being met.	B, C, G, H, E
2	The difficulty of reconciling work and evening classes.	A, E, G e H
3	The academic difficulties of studying philosophy (reading and writing).	E, F, C e H
4	The high number of places on offer.	E
5	The lack of support from a more robust public student funding policy.	E, C e G
6	Lack of professional and financial prospects upon completion.	C, D e F
7	Pedagogical issues.	D

Source: Prepared by Oliveira Junior (2022, p. 143).

These issues identified by the teachers fall within the factors proposed by Scali (2009) as fundamentally structural and therefore external to the institution, with little or almost no scope for intervention by the course or even the university. This leaves the ability to adapt to structurally imposed issues through policies that establish a link between factors internal to the course, training and the needs of the external environment.

Factor 2 highlighted the difficulty of reconciling the evening course with work, which

is important if we consider the priorities of Reuni. In the case of the Philosophy degree at UFMS, which was created with workers as its target group, there is a certain similarity with the daytime bachelor's degree, which shows the lack of a methodology to deal with students in this condition. Thus, the course is a degree,

[...] but which is actually characterized more as an evening bachelor's degree, there is a risk of not achieving the objectives advocated and outlined by Public Policies, which aim for quality teacher training that meets the expectations of Basic Education (Da Silva; Figueiredo, 2018, p. 241).

Therefore, in this case, it is understood that the adaptability factors of students who study at night and work during the day can be addressed in the classroom. It is particularly important to develop a specific methodology for undergraduate students, considering the characteristic profile of these students. This would enable them to adapt better to the academic environment and respect their practical needs, thus promoting a more inclusive educational experience.

The sixth factor focuses on the professional and financial perspective of the study of philosophy, which, according to the professors, may indicate structural economic and labor market problems for philosophers, but may also be an indicator of the mismatch between the skills produced by the course and the needs that the market requires of philosophy teachers.

In this way, dropout factors are directly related to what is proposed in the course guidelines and what is done in the classroom, since "keeping students in the course involves providing good relational conditions and general well-being, as well as the possibility of developing skills to deal with career decisions" (Ambiel et al., 2016, p. 295).

In other words, employability factors are the responsibility of those planning the course policy project. Assessing the extent to which the professional profile proposed by the course corresponds to the demands of the labor market, and the extent to which the graduate has the necessary skills required by the market, becomes a prerequisite for ensuring a solid education that meets the needs of society and the individual.

The fourth factor is the high number of job vacancies. In this regard, two points should be discussed: first, a smaller number of places and, consequently, greater competition would be able to select candidates who are better prepared for academic life and who are able to stay in the course until it is completed. The second point worth highlighting is the variation in the number of entrants (see Table 1) over the period analyzed, which shows that there were 60 places filled in 2011 and 110 in 2021. From this perspective, Manager E, linked to the academic management of the UFMS, explained that

The number of entrants is fixed at 60, however, as and when students drop out, vacancies open up and these are filled by diploma holders, i.e. in a course of 8 semesters, there are a total of 240 vacancies to be filled over the course of 4 annual selection processes. However, when 5 students eventually drop out, the next selection process opens up the 60 vacancies listed in the PPC and a further 5 vacancies resulting from idleness caused by drop-outs (Manager E).

The very high number of new students is the result of dropout rates, which leads first semester classes to become overcrowded, while those in later semesters have low numbers of students. From this perspective, the high number of places on offer is one of the factors behind the dropout rate. This creates a vicious circle in which the dropout rate leads to a higher number of new students in the first semester and the high number of new students leads to dropout.

Finally, the seventh factor was mentioned by only one of the teachers interviewed, referring to pedagogical issues as one of the causes of dropout. This observation draws more attention to the other professors who didn't see the pedagogical approach as a possible factor in dropout, perceiving it as something adequate and satisfactory.

4.5 The evader's perspective

The question about the reason for the interruption of the course was asked to the students who applied for the exclusion by withdrawal from the Philosophy course in 2021, and the answers are compatible with the perceptions of the professors and managers.

Change of interest was mentioned by 33.0% of students: "Because I ended up taking another course" (Dropout A); "At the time it was something I identified with a lot, but I went through a transition of changing interests" (Dropout C); "Because I didn't identify with the course" (Dropout J). This shows what happens to many students: when they enter the course, their perspectives no longer correspond to their reality, which leads to demotivation.

Among the dropouts, 22% stated that the main reasons for dropping out were the prospects of the job market and the salary, which can be seen in the following statements: "Not very easy on the job market, badly paid" (drop-out B); "Job opportunities" (drop-out F). Here, the structural problems identified in studies on dropouts (Santos et al., 2017) and the empirical perceptions of managers, professors and dropouts converge. In this sense, the issue of professional inadequacy stands out, reinforcing the need to consider the expectations and needs of students with regard to the professional training provided, since:

[...] the limited possibilities of financial success as an employee or in teaching are already palpable at the beginning of university life. With limited chances of employment, lack of prestige, working conditions and financial success, professional fulfillment becomes just a fantasy in the minds of students on courses that lead to professions with these characteristics (...) at the first difficulty, the candidate's evasion from these professions is the natural consequence (Bueno, 1993, p. 11).

A similar issue is that of the student who said that he already had "a degree in philosophy, but a bachelor's degree" (Student D), i.e. the reason he left the course was that he wasn't interested in the degree and, consequently, in teaching in primary education.

The work-study relationship was also mentioned as a reason for dropping out, as there

was "incompatibility with the working day" (Evadido I); "lack of time to dedicate to the course activities" (Evadido E). The literature on evasion highlights that the reconciliation of work/employment is mainly a challenge faced by evening students, who are already dedicated to finding an alternative during the day, but are often subjected to strategies similar to those applied to day students, who dedicate themselves exclusively to their studies. Canal and Figueiredo (2021) point out that the difficulty of adjusting the work and study routine is one of the main reasons why students drop out of their courses.

Academic difficulty was one of the reasons given for dropping out, although "difficulty in keeping up" (Student H) was not mentioned in these terms as a reason for dropping out. This fact was also mentioned by managers and professors as one of the problems that affect retention and requires constant attention and the search for leveling, especially in the first semesters of the course. However, such a procedure depends on the actions of the professors, who, as seen above, do not consider pedagogical issues as one of the reasons for dropping out. With the exception of Prof. D, all the others pointed to other factors and at no time did they see the pedagogical relationship as a problem that could lead to dropout.

Poor academic performance, when motivated by deficiencies in basic education, as stated by Scali (2009), is a structural problem that the institution has a pedagogical obligation to find ways to mitigate. Although it is not a comprehensive issue related to the educational process as a whole, especially basic education, it is important to implement actions that help level the academic performance of those who entered in less favorable conditions, especially in relation to primary and secondary education. This is because "the effects of this exclusion from knowledge appear in full force when choosing a course and are also felt when the student enters higher education, especially in the early stages of the course" (Zago, 2006, p. 232).

Another factor was that the student had been approved for "another [course] closer to home" (Student H). The reason given as a factor for dropping out is the need to move to another city to study for a degree, which makes it difficult for new students to maintain their ties with the institution, since they have to adapt to a new reality, far from their family and social circle.

Among the 2021 entrants, of the 70 respondents to the questionnaire, 8 declared that they had moved to another city in order to enter the undergraduate course, in other words, more than 10% of the students are in this condition and need to be specifically monitored, since "a student born in a city other than the one where the HEI is located will have to start their social relationships from 'scratch' when they move to another city to study for their degree" (Durso, 2015, p. 81).

5 Final considerations

The aim of the research was to identify the perceptions of the different actors involved in the dropout phenomenon in the Philosophy/UFMS course, focusing in particular on the professors, students and administrators associated with the course. To this end, the phenomenon was mapped in terms of data on entrants, graduates and dropouts from the Philosophy course. Subsequently, the profile of the 2021 students was analyzed by means of a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews were conducted with managers, professors and students who had dropped out.

As for the identification of the dropout rates in the ratio of entrants to graduates, it was concluded that the dropout rates in the ratio of entrants to graduates are high and above the national average for Philosophy courses, which is 35%, while the Philosophy/UFMS course has reached rates of 80%, coupled with high retention and withdrawal rates, which contribute to maintaining very expressive dropout rates.

Thus, when analyzing the factors that influence the dropout rates in the course, it was found that there are specific factors that should be studied in detail and specifically. These include the motivations that lead students to take the course for non-professional purposes and, above all, the professors' and managers' conception of a bachelor's/graduate degree at night.

The search for the profile of the enrollees and the reasons for their choice led to the conclusion that the majority already had a degree and were looking for a second degree. There are common characteristics, such as being male, between 25 and 35 years old, single and without children. In other words, they already have a degree and a job and have no urgency to complete the degree, seeing it as a complement. This makes the relationship more fragile and ephemeral.

It is clear that students are looking for the course to satisfy their personal aptitudes and/or to improve their current profession. In addition, they are interested in philosophical knowledge because it is a way to achieve greater social prestige by acquiring a status of erudition. However, they don't have professional or economic expectations, but see the fulfillment of existential questions as the main goal to be achieved after the course.

When examining the elements that have a direct or indirect impact on the dropout rate, it can be seen that they are multiple and act in different ways. However, the following should be mentioned: lack of knowledge of what is studied in the course; the false perception that it is an easy course; the search for a status of erudition that is often not confirmed in practical reality; low competition for admission compared to other courses, which leads the candidate to choose without understanding the daily life of the course; the perception that after graduation the graduate will be faced with low employability potential and low wages.

In terms of understanding the perception of managers and professors regarding the dropout in the Philosophy/UFMS course, it was observed that there is a convergence in the factors identified and the solutions proposed. Their perceptions are characterized by the understanding that dropout is something structural and that it is up to the top management of the university and the educational system to take action to mitigate this problem. In other words, for them, dropout is an issue that goes beyond pedagogical actions in the classroom and structural actions must be taken to combat it.

The perception of the professors and managers is also similar to that of the students who have dropped out, when they give the following reasons: change of interest; job market and remuneration; relationship between study and work schedule; difficulty in keeping up with the content taught; taking a course closer to home (city of origin). This shows that the factors are identifiable, although it is not easy to see which ones have the greatest impact in certain contexts. In other words, the reasons are there, but the peculiarities of each course and institution have a significant influence on how the phenomenon manifests itself in each context. And that's the point!

In the case of the UFMS, it is hoped that this research, the essence of the results of which have been presented here, will make it possible to reflect on what strategic actions should be taken to reverse this very significant dropout chart, while at the same time coming closer to a healthier cost-benefit ratio for the institution itself.

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