

Career perceptions and job satisfaction among teaching staff at entrepreneurial faculties in Brazil

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Abstract

This study aims to understand career perceptions and job satisfaction among higher education teachers in Brazilian entrepreneurial faculties (EFs). The study explores how recent reforms have affected the career concept of these professionals and how changes in the structure of work have affected their satisfaction with teaching work. A qualitative empirical study was carried out in which 12 higher education teachers participated in semi-structured interviews. The information collected was submitted to content analysis in order to identify the association between the career models put forward by EFs and aspects related to work psychodynamics. Evidence was found that the institutions to demand that individuals align their personal career expectations with the organisation's strategies even if the market swings do not allow the development of medium or long-term projects. As a result, the teachers orient their careers in a traditional way but see no guarantees for effectiveness from the institution. This environment leads to dissatisfaction and negative experiences with work, especially with regard to organisational structure. With these results, the study suggests that that EFs do not offer a traditional career model or objective conditions for individual improvement. The way that EFs organise work contributes to distress and dissatisfaction at work, especially with regard to the lack of professional recognition, activity overload and the gap between prescribed and actual work.

Keywords

Teaching career; Satisfaction at work; Psychodynamics of work; Entrepreneurial faculties

Percepções profissionais e satisfação no trabalho entre profissionais de faculdades empresariais no Brasil

Resumo

Este estudo tem como objetivo compreender as percepções de carreira e satisfação no trabalho entre professores do ensino superior nas faculdades empresariais (FEs) brasileiras. O estudo explora como as reformas recentes afetaram a concepção de carreira desses profissionais e como as mudanças na estrutura de trabalho afetaram sua satisfação com o trabalho docente. Foi realizado um estudo empírico qualitativo no qual 12 professores do ensino superior participaram de entrevistas semiestruturadas. As informações coletadas foram submetidas à análise de conteúdo a fim de identificar a associação entre os modelos de carreira propostos pelos FEs e aspectos relacionados à psicodinâmica do trabalho. Foram constatadas evidências de que as instituições exigem que os indivíduos alinhem suas expectativas pessoais de carreira com as estratégias da organização, mesmo que as oscilações do mercado não permitam o desenvolvimento de projetos de médio ou longo prazo. Com isso, os professores orientam suas carreiras de forma tradicional, mas não percebem garantias de eficácia por parte da instituição. Esse ambiente gera insatisfação e experiências negativas com o trabalho, principalmente no que se refere à estrutura organizacional. Com esses resultados, o estudo sugere que os EFs não oferecem um modelo de carreira tradicional ou condições objetivas de aprimoramento individual. A forma como os FEs organizam o trabalho contribui para o desgaste e a insatisfação no trabalho, principalmente no que se refere à falta de reconhecimento profissional, sobrecarga de atividades e distanciamento entre o trabalho prescrito e o real.

Palavras-Chave

Carreira docente; Satisfação no trabalho; Psicodinâmica do trabalho; Faculdades empresariais

Percepciones profesionales y satisfacción laboral entre el profesores de las facultades empresariales en Brasil

Resumen

Este estudio tiene como objetivo comprender las percepciones profesionales y la satisfacción laboral entre los profesores de educación superior en las facultades empresariales brasileñas (EF). El estudio explora cómo las reformas recientes han afectado el concepto de carrera de estos profesionales y cómo los cambios en la estructura del trabajo han afectado su satisfacción con el trabajo docente. Se realizó un estudio empírico cualitativo en el que 12 profesores de educación superior participaron en entrevistas semiestruturadas. La información recopilada se sometió a análisis de contenido para identificar la asociación entre los modelos de carrera presentados por los EF y los aspectos relacionados con la psicodinámica del trabajo. Se encontró evidencia de que las instituciones exigen que los profesores alineen sus expectativas profesionales personales con las estrategias de la organización, incluso si los cambios del mercado no permiten el desarrollo de proyectos a mediano o largo plazo. Como resultado, los profesores orientan sus carreras de manera tradicional, pero no ven garantías de efectividad por parte de la institución. Este ambiente lleva a la insatisfacción y a las experiencias negativas con el trabajo, especialmente con respecto a la estructura organizacional. Con estos resultados, el estudio sugiere que los EF no ofrecen un modelo de carrera tradicional o condiciones objetivas para la mejora individual. La forma en que las EFs organizan el trabajo contribuye a la angustia y la insatisfacción en el trabajo, especialmente con respecto a la falta de reconocimiento profesional, la sobrecarga de actividades y la brecha entre el trabajo prescrito y el real.

Palabras clave

Carrera docente; Satisfacción en el trabajo; Psicodinámica del trabajo; Facultades emprendedoras

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INTRODUÇÃO

This study investigates how changes in the structure of teaching work have affected job satisfaction among higher education teachers working in entrepreneurial faculties (EFs). For the purposes of this study, EFs are institutions set up specifically to offer higher education to the general population with the explicit purpose of making a profit from the sale of this service. In general, EFs are organised as isolated colleges and can be distinguished from universities by not requiring investment in extension and research. The term 'entrepreneurial' is used as a way of differentiating these institutions from two other types of private but non-profit higher education institution (HEI): vocational and community colleges (McCowan, 2007; Neves, 2002).

Although there have been institutions of this type in Brazil since the 1970s, they were previously focused on executive training and located in large urban centres. From the early 2000s, higher education reform has stimulated a growth in their dissemination especially in small and medium-sized cities in the country. These new institutions meet the government's desire to expand the education on offer by giving lower income groups access to higher education. As teaching institutions, EFs are focused on rapid expansion. They seek cost efficiency and employ aggressive marketing strategies in response to increasing competition (McCowan, 2007).

It is in this environment that so-called entrepreneurial universities have arisen. The term was proposed by Clark (1998) to characterise their proactive behaviour in the search for a close market relationship, which is centred on students and reinforces their profit objectives. These universities have long been analysed from a critical perspective with regard to the concept of academic capitalism (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997). From this perspective, an exploratory analysis of the literature points to the risks of the commodification of education (Jones, 2008; Maués, 2010; Mok, 2015; Serafim, 2011), with negative consequences for the processes of professional identity formation (Henry, 2016) and aspects associated with satisfaction in a teaching career (Burke, Aubusson, Schuck, Buchanan, & Prescott, 2015; Clandinin et al., 2015; Hong, Day, & Greene, 2017a; Hong, Greene, Roberson, Cross Francis, & Rapacki Keenan, 2017b; Lam & Yan, 2011). However, few studies have yet analysed satisfaction with a teaching career in an EF by considering the relationship between career perspectives and experiences of pleasure and distress at work.

EFs operate in an environment where the concept of the career has been changed significantly, causing a rupture with the traditional model, which is generally associated with the idea of a lasting relationship between the company and the employee, with linear and vertical progression. Whereas the traditional career model is centred on the idea that the employee values and serves the organisation, the new model, known as a 'self-directed career', emphasises employee autonomy and responsibility (Hall, 1996).

In response to these changes, this study makes a theoretical and empirical effort to understand the relationship between the new teaching career model and related experiences of satisfaction and/or distress, using aspects of work psychodynamics to understand this new context (Dejours, 1992). In doing so, the study hopes to contribute to the understanding of this new teaching work context, allowing a critical balance between the career models suggested in the literature and the perceptions of the individuals working in these institutions. This study raises questions about the relationship between career development and job satisfaction. It examines how teaching staff at EFs perceive career development by exploring the relationship between their individual expectations and organisational strategies.

This discussion is based on a presentation of the theoretical elements of contemporary career restructuring (Hall, 1996) and the concepts of satisfaction/pleasure and dissatisfaction/distress at work (Dejours, 1992). After this, the study presents and discusses the results of our empirical research, which is based on semi-structured interviews with EF teaching staff.

1. CAREER, JOB SATISFACTION AND THE EF

The recent neoliberal wave has altered the foundations of the traditional university, stimulating so-called academic capitalism (Rhoades & Slaughter, 2004; Slaughter & Leslie, 1997, 2001). The main characteristics of this model are an increase in the links between the university and the market, and academic processes that are centred on the student, who is considered to be the real asset of these institutions. The impact of these changes on the teaching career has been investigated around the world, highlighting the risks of outsourcing and the privatisation of academic activities (Jones, 2008).

It is also important to consider the work of Serafim (2011), who analysed the effects of the neoliberal rise in the USA, Europe and Latin America. The result is the so-called commodification of teaching, which has exerted negative pressures on the current university model. A study by Maués (2010) evaluated the literature on educational reforms introduced in Western countries, especially in South America. The analysis shows that these changes have affected academic culture and had negative consequences as a result of the increased flexibility, precariousness and intensification of teaching work.

The neoliberal environment has contributed to the emergence of entrepreneurial universities (Clark, 1998). In coining the expression, Clark emphasised significant changes in the mode of operation of five European universities between 1980 and 1995. In reporting the success of these changes, the author suggests that these institutions started to operate more proactively with regard to the following five elements: 1) diversified financing with revenues from providing services to

the market; 2) the incorporation of management values into traditional academic values; (3) an expanded developmental periphery; (4) a strengthened steering core; and (5) a stimulated academic heartland (Clark, 1998). This idea is reinforced by the findings of a study published in the mid-2000s, where Clark (2004) includes conclusions from case studies in Africa, Latin America and Australia. Recently, the author has made evaluative comments about previous work, identifying the cultural conditions and adaptive efforts necessary for these institutions to respond positively to the demands of society. In this process, according to Clark (2015, p.2), "increased accountability has subjected academics to bureaucratic controls and has weakened academic autonomy".

The results of neoliberal pressure on the teaching career have been the subject of several studies. Tang (2011) evaluated three periods of educational reform in Hong Kong in order to assess the effect of reforms on teachers' professional identity. The results show a negative effect in three directions: 1) changes in the structural conditions of the teaching career; 2) a change in the nature of teaching work; and 3) the changing nature of organisational structure. The study suggests counteracting neoliberal pressures on teacher work by reclaiming a professional identity that is both teacher and student centred.

Mok's (2015) study showed that the pressure of globalisation and the so-called knowledge economy has also had negative effects on the academic profession in Asian countries. According to this study, the pressure on universities to improve their position in the global ranking was intensified after the 1997 financial crisis, when governments began reforms without considering the effects of this pressure on academic staff (Mok, 2015).

Hong et al. (2017a) studied teacher career building from the early years of activities. The authors found that teachers need to deal with tensions and perceptions about the effectiveness of their work in their search for identity. In addition to the self-motivation that forms the commitment to the career, teachers associate a positive and stable identity with permanent employment in a teaching career and institutional support (Hong et al., 2017a). In an earlier study, Hong et al. (2017b) had already demonstrated the complexity of the teaching career. From an analysis of four aspects underlying the formation of professional teacher identity (achievement, moratorium, foreclosure and diffusion), the authors found significant differences between perceived resilience and instrumentality in contrast to the status of occupational identity.

Burke et al. (2015) have shown that receiving support is a fundamental dimension in the intention to remain in the teaching profession, especially with regards to resource sharing and cooperative planning. For Lam and Yan (2011), school factors, such as workload outside the classroom, equity in the distribution of work and professional autonomy, directly influence job satisfaction and teacher motivation.

Henry (2016) looked at the prospect of professional advancement for teachers in schools that operate for profit. His findings are that risks inherent to these institutions, such as breaches of contract, conflicts with employers and long hours of teaching, negatively affect the career projection of teachers. In a similar way, early career destruction is associated with questions about professional identification such as support, feelings of belonging and the family-work balance (Clandinin et al., 2015).

In order to understand issues about the teaching career and professional satisfaction with work in the EF context, the literature starts from an observation that these institutions operate in an environment where work structure has been radically transformed, causing a rupture with the traditional model, which is usually associated with the idea of a lasting relationship between the company and the employee and with linear and vertical progression. The traditional career model is based on the idea that employees value and serve the organisation, whereas the new model, known as a self-directed career, emphasises employee autonomy and responsibility (Hall, 1996).

From the critical standpoint, the psychodynamic perspective of work rejects the idea of identity expansion as it shifts the meaning of work beyond subsistence, assigning to it the demands of meaning creation, self-realisation, appreciation and recognition (Dejours, 2004). Thus, a career, previously associated with entering a stable company that could allow development, remuneration, stability and, above all, belonging to a community, gives ground to the self-managed career, which is oriented towards the individual's psychological success, where the individual is responsible for his or her own personal, professional and family development (Fontanelle, 2005). Where the traditional career focus is on loyalty as the basis for growth, the new model emphasises autonomy, holding the worker accountable for his/her professional development and personal success.

Balassiano and Costa (2006) suggests that the weakening of the psychological loyalty contract and decreased interaction between individuals and companies marks the current work context. Working in unstable environments, with rules that hold employees accountable and burdened by goals, leads to lack of loyalty and disruption of the individual-organisational relationship. In many cases, the worker understands this relationship as being utilitarian on the part of the organisation and ends up directing his or her action in the same way.

This study considers the precepts of the psychodynamic theory of work, according to which contemporary career management can generate psychic damage. Career self-management calls for a much wider engagement of subjectivity. This means that when a worker assumes management goals as his/her own, he/she increases the risk of psychological distress (Dejours, 2012). Unable to engage in a safe and consistent professional manner by having to assume responsibilities for his or her career that were previously supported by the organisation, the worker tends to perceive him or herself as isolated and abandoned. This is associated with feelings of fear, anxiety and insecurity, all common in cases of stress (Linhart, 2009).

The relationship established between the worker and the perception of satisfaction/pleasure or dissatisfaction/distress at work has its central focus in the organisation of work, as the division of tasks and men in the world of work (Dejours, 2004). This is accomplished through the prescribed work, which does not always correspond to the actual work. It is this division that organises the worker through the experiences of pleasure (satisfaction) or distress (dissatisfaction) (Anjos, 2013).

2. METHOD

The decision to use qualitative methodology in analysing career satisfaction among higher education teachers at EFs followed these basic assumptions: 1) the method enables an investigation whose research design is constantly evolving, allowing the discovery of relations between phenomena and the emergence of new theoretical assumptions for the analysis of reality; 2) it is an appropriate method when the research strategy proposes an approximation with new phenomena, allowing the discovery of evidence; 3) it allows for narrative syntheses of complex phenomena; 4) it has meaning in socially and culturally specific contexts; and 5) it allows the researcher-observer to be the agent of the research process (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). It is also considered that the interpretive analysis of phenomena is an appropriate form of approach for research in the field of psychology because it allows the use of different techniques of data collection (Padgett, 2016).

The selection of candidates for interview was based on convenience from the definition of a profile that contributed to the understanding of the proposed research problem. Creswell and Creswell (2020) argue that the researcher intentionally selects the participants and the places that are best suited to help understand the problem or the research question. This should be a typical feature of qualitative research and this freedom of choice does not necessarily suggest random sampling or random selection of quantitative research (Creswell & Creswell, 2020). The data collection observed the resolutions and international ethical criteria of scientific research.

Interpretive and descriptive elements of content analysis should acknowledge that the propositions and speculations that emerge are situational and limited to the context (Kothari, 2004; Kvale, 1983; Maxwell, 1992). The content analysis followed the steps below: 1) generating categories of information (open coding); 2) selecting some of these categories to position it within a theoretical model (axial coding); and 3) explaining the story from the interconnection of these categories (selective coding) (Creswell & Creswell, 2020).

The candidates selected for interview were higher education teachers associated with EFs in Brazil. These institutions are usually organised as isolated colleges that began offering higher education in medium-sized cities from the early 2000s. To accomplish the objective of the study, a

qualitative exploratory study was conducted, with in-depth interviews following a semi-structured script and divided into two parts: 1) questions about individual strategies and positioning regarding the teaching career in the scenarios where they act; and 2) their implications for job satisfaction/dissatisfaction.

The work regime in EFs involves a maximum of 40 hours per week. Regarding the organisation of work, the following EF characteristics are important: 1) they are, in general, organised in small faculties, giving priority to teaching and with few research and extension activities; 2) the institutions are recently founded and are, therefore, not socially recognised by the relevance of the services offered; 3) they operate in small and medium-sized cities throughout the country; 4) they do not offer career plans and most teaching staff are hired on a part-time basis; and 5) they are more affected by market oscillations than traditional universities. Bearing these characteristics in mind, it is important to emphasise that the study does not pretend to universalize its conclusions but, rather, to deepen the characteristics offered by the Brazilian experience.

Twelve higher education teachers from five EF institutions in the northern region of the *Rio Grande do Sul* (Table 1) participated in this research, meeting the diversity and saturation criteria (Flick, 2009). The participants were chosen for convenience and the interviews were carried out in places suggested by the interviewees. Ethical requirements were observed throughout the data collection process. Each interview lasted an average of an hour and thirty minutes and the conversations were transcribed in full for later categorisation. Data analysis followed the content analysis (Bardin, 2011), which generated two categories *a posteriori*: 1) the lack of a career in the traditional sense; and 2) reports of distress and job dissatisfaction relating to difficulties found in the new career context.

Table 1 - Characterization of participants

No.	Gender	Employment time	Graduation / Degree	Workload	Id.
1	Female	02 years	Psychology, Doctoral	20	P1
2	Female	01 years	Communication, Master's	28	P2
3	Male	06 years	Philosophy, Master's	20	P3
4	Male	05 years	Economics, Master's	20	P4
5	Female	06 years	Law, Master's	28	P5
6	Female	04 years	Business and management, Master's	16	P6
7	Female	04 years	Agribusiness, Doctoral	40	P7
8	Female	02 years	Business and management, postgraduate	12	P8
9	Female	03 years	Psychology, Master's	20	P9
10	Male	06 years	Accounting, Master's	20	P10

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. The lack of a career in the traditional sense

One of the strategies reported by the participants was a search for more than one employment relationship in an attempt to remain competitive and ensure employability. Most interviewees maintain bonds with at least two educational institutions where they perform teaching work as part of a liberal profession. This strategy is evident in the following extracts:

I have been a psychologist since 2000 and a higher level teacher since 2006. I currently work as both a higher education teacher and as a psychologist, providing advisory services to an institution for three and a half years so far. (P1).

Yes, I do not live only with the teaching salary. I also have other activities, other sources of income, [...] more service provision than teaching. I do not see myself just as a lecturer. (P8)

When I started my master's degree, I realised that I could enjoy this career and I tried to reconcile it with the law. Today I perform more teaching than advocacy, but I can switch between the two. (P5)

This strategy of maintaining more than one employment bond appears in the interviewees' responses to the context of the instability of the EFs to which they are linked. The fact that EFs are institutions in the process of institutional structuring and are consequently more sensitive to market oscillations, leads teaching staff to take a cautious stance as to their intensive and exclusive dedication to the role. Being a university teacher becomes one alternative among others, with a prevailing view that giving lessons is an extension of one's professional activity. In this context, the liberal career takes place in parallel to teaching activities, creating obstacles to the prioritisation of the teaching career.

This characterisation confirms the theory that teaching work in these institutions does not absorb all the hours of work, forcing staff to divide their workload across other careers. Thus, teaching work seems to point to part-time work, allowing expressions such as lecturer-psychologist, lecturer-lawyer, lecturer-accountant, among others.

By contrast, several interviews described attempts to align more closely with the EFs, suggesting an interest in migrating from another career towards teaching as an integral activity. However, the inability of these institutions to anticipate exclusive dedication proves a barrier to such wishes:

Therefore, I do not think that any of the institutions offer security. By not offering this security, this stability, you are always on the 'tightrope'. You cannot design a career. I also find bad teaching at these institutions. You are not sure about the workload you will have next semester. (P7)

The company itself is not at its best. So that makes me reflect on what my professional goals are, where I want to go, if where I am I can achieve these goals and what are the perspectives that I have staying or leaving. (P10)

These statements show a low subjective commitment to these institutions, given their fragility in securing lasting bonds, as suggested by Fontanelle (2005), and indicating a fragile psychic contract between workers and companies. However, their responses show that the interviewees seek to be teachers and understand the profession as a 'vocation that requires dedication to a cause' (P9), therefore adopting strategies based on the expectation of long and lasting relationships. When asked about how they perceive their careers in these organisations, the responses pointed in two directions: the possibility of increasing the workload by assuming management positions or searching for a degree within these programmes, strictly speaking, as a way of directing their interests for research although such activities are not much encouraged by the organisational structure.

Regarding the research question, having a doctoral degree I do not feel that the institution invests in me. To be able to produce, I have to do voluntary work. (P1)

If you had asked me this question a year ago, I would say that I would not have the will, I would not have this availability (to seek qualifications, strictly speaking). Today I already see it as a path to be followed as a necessity due to the period you have inside a higher institution. Either you suit yourself in every moment and prepare for it or you are just another teacher there, and it is over. (P4)

These responses show that the participants are looking for institutions that offer security and stability, characteristics of the traditional career, although they do not find perspectives for the development of this strategy. This misalignment between the personal perspective and organisational reality is evidenced when the interviewees state that they cannot identify institutional support for their development.

My career is my major concern because I see some progress in federal universities and this has an impact on my perception of which way to go. Maintaining myself in a private school does not guarantee me a decent retirement. Thus, my concern is with the future. (P4)

The observation is that the relationship between the interviewees' objectives and the strategies of the EFs is misaligned. The institutions seem to promote a self-directed career insofar as they present themselves as a space for innovation, creativity and the opportunity for the beginning

of a teaching career, as suggested by Hall (1996). It was also observed that all the interviewees started teaching in EFs. However, in addition to expressing their frustration with the need to self-manage their careers, their expectations are grounded in the traditional career concept, which implies medium and long-term relationships. This was highlighted in their criticism of the lack of support and assistance for research activities:

I am responsible for my career and I have to publish three articles a year. Regardless of research, if I have hours of research, 'Find a way!' It is your career, you need to publish. So, they tell you to be responsible for your career, but it has a counterpoint because we are going to pick up other areas: if I want my employee to improve, I give him conditions to do so. In addition, we have to follow the career path alone, comply with eight classes, final papers and publications, without having hours for research. How to produce and publish without specific time for this [hours for research]? (P5)

These conclusions support the argument made by Fontanelle (2005) who saw that the idea of a career, previously related to joining a stable company which would allow development, remuneration, stability and, above all, belonging to a community, was giving way to a self-managed career, oriented to the individual's psychological success, where the individual was responsible for his or her own personal and professional development. The interviewees did not identify themselves as being in self-directed careers, demonstrating that while the traditional concept is formulated on loyalty as the basis for growth, the new model offers only opportunities for skill development.

3.2. Reports of distress and dissatisfaction at work

According to Dejours (1992, 2004), the starting point for understanding the meaning of work is an investigation as to how it is organised in companies. This plays an important role in triggering the health and/or sickness of workers. In this context, biopsychosocial characteristics of work are involved, such as the division of tasks, affective and socio-professional relations, working conditions, the possibility of initiative and autonomy, the degree of ambiguity about the results of the task, and the level of cooperation and communication presented by individuals.

Two experiences which affect satisfaction at work were identified: work overload and the gap between prescribed work and actual work. With regards to overload, Dejours (2012) separates the workload into two parts: the first refers to the physical (using physiological skills) and mental load, whereas the second reflects the 'psychic load at work'. The psychic charge reflects the affective and relational elements and their experience is subjective, since it refers to 'pleasure, satisfaction, frustration and aggressiveness'. Very often, the goals demanded by organisations are almost unattainable, while a real increase in working hours and the rigidity of technical procedures hamper worker freedom. In many cases, it has become a habit to perform some tasks outside of working

hours. These hours that were previously intended for leisure and rest are used today to meet the demands of work.

In this context, the interviewees reported the following situations:

The lecturer has become much more burdened by this, is spending more time outside the classroom, feeding this system, which is not the job [...]. Why do I have to make it available on the system? Why do I have to respond to student email? Facebook? Give me an equipped room in the institution, and then I will meet the student during the time that I am there. (P7)

I think that the institution gives a very small workload for the internships, which prevents us from actually studying the reality with the students. The internship is often busy and this is something that bothers me because I like to produce knowledge, to have it as a practical activity. That does not always happen. (P1)

The gap between the prescribed and the actual work was also evidenced by the interviewees, when they reported that they are hired because they have doctoral qualifications, but do not have time for research and, occasionally, need to hold management positions to increase workload.

Often we have to take on disciplines that are not our area, but we have to assume it. Of course, when I am working with a discipline that I do not have mastery of, my productivity potential might not be as good. Then the student complains and it is I, the lecturer, who will 'pay for it' because I had to take a certain charge. (P9)

For work psychodynamics, the distance between prescribed and actual work emerges as a dilemma between constraint and autonomy within the framework of strategies directed to relations of power. Thus, there are times when the organisation offers a margin for freedom and creativity, contrasting with restrictions on employees who fear being caught out making mistakes. In the same way, work overload is not determined by the worker, but by the work organisation and appears in the relationship between the prescribed requirements and freedom of choice to execute them. Because of increasing demands, the imposition of rhythm, productivity and quality, freedom has been progressively restricted, influencing psychic functioning and thinking. This gives rise to a number of symptoms and/or pathologies, whereas autonomy, claimed by the protean model, is made unfeasible by the objective conditions of work.

The parallel established between prescribed and actual work opens space for contradictions, conflicts and inconsistencies that obstruct the functional exercise (Dejours, Abdoucheli, & Jayet, 1994). The dynamics imposed by the confrontation with the real may cause the worker to suffer (Dejours, 2012). The research also shows that the organisation of work produces a distance between the prescribed and the real, inasmuch as the teaching work has been configured with needs and obstacles beyond what the educational institutions have formally established.

Another experience that emerged from the interviews is insecurity about the future, evidenced in concerns about the workload for the semester still to come. The insecurity factor emerges from the instability, generating discomfort, since the interviewees do not know how many hours they will have to work each semester. They report that they do not know how much they will be paid the following semester; they cannot take on debt or even carry out economic planning.

Each one strives for their goal to earn hours because they do not have stability. My perception is that this type of management is good, but it is good for the company, but maybe not good for the collaborator; if the institution does not make him feel part of it, he is just a number, and if he is a number, he tends to hone his labour and go elsewhere. (P5)

It is also possible to infer psychic distress from the responses. Such distress is generated by failure to recognise teaching work in the researched institutions. The interviewees feel discouraged and perceive themselves as not being important to these institutions:

You are a number, if you do not want it, there will be someone who wants it. In my opinion, this is the worst form of violence, because it is the violence that influences the number that the institution wants, and discourages the teacher. So I managed to make a transition, but because I realise that this experience is important to my CV, to my life, but I do not see myself as important to that institution. (P5)

The feeling of not being recognised by the EFs is an issue that should not be neglected, as it has a negative impact on the mental health of those involved. Dejours (1992) observes that recognition at work is a major factor in the analysis of the relationships between mental health and work. In addition, the validation of work by the recognition of others is an essential element of the meaning of work and participates in the construction of identity.

I have the feeling that in this type of institution, the teacher was left out. The manager's perception is often that he is an employee who brings results, that he is there directly working with the capturing (of students), but is not often perceived as a professional. The discouraged teacher is the one who will lose students in the classroom and the student will go to another institution. This is a no-win relationship. For this type of relationship, which is business, loses by not adding the value that the teacher must have, and the teacher is worn out, because he does not see this recognition. (P3)

These conclusions contribute to an important debate about the changes that these institutions impose on the traditional way of understanding the teaching career. The higher education teacher who has historically guided his teaching and learning process in socially recognised and consolidated institutions is now forced to consider his work in an environment of economic instability and institutional fragility where, in most cases, he or she can only rely on interpersonal relationships with colleagues and students to assert his or her satisfaction with the work.

Consistent with this line of reasoning, it was noted by the interviewees that lack of recognition is accompanied by the emergence of feelings of frustration:

I have before been more enthusiastic about my teaching career, more excited and motivated as well. I notice this in myself, when I was more inventive, I used to create more methods, and I could have more time and desire to invest in teaching. I realise that my excitement has diminished (P1).

The responses also suggest the existence of a malaise in teaching work, in line with Bendassoli's (2011) arguments, which results from the alienating and destructive effects of the work environment in which the interviewees operate. The presence of malaise at work is part of their daily life and is associated with distress. In this context, the idea of malaise assumes a new meaning as it derives from subjective wellbeing. What is inside does not cause discomfort but, rather, the impossibility of fighting what is outside. The existence of malaise within teaching work seems to take place in the interviewees' perception of the nature of the EFs and the market environment in which they act – in the sense that they understand higher education as a market. This brings forth insecurities not only with regard to their professional future, but also their role as knowledge builders and subject formers. The following assertions highlight these issues:

With the actual market rhythm, we will soon be replaced. Because it did not show any results, it is a problem, the unsatisfied student, an institutional evaluation ... the teacher can see a whole career 'end in being sacked'. My concern is what profession do we have? (P3)

I see a decrease in bargaining power for better working conditions, better salaries, more comprehensive and attractive career plans, because we will have in three or four years more than a hundred masters and doctorates [...] who will be at the disposal of the marketplace. (P6)

Because it has all the marketing that institutions do. Marketing of a product – education as a product. That we have to maintain a standard, so it ends up being placed as a psychological burden on the teacher and a workload that is not only up to him. (P2)

It is important to emphasise that the interviewees provide important evidence for understanding changes in the concept of the teaching career and their implication for satisfaction with teaching work. The perspective of the EFs, which is to profit from education, requires a strategic dialogue with the teacher, so that interpretations of the context and perspective of their work can be resignified in a positive direction. Finally, communication between institutions and their teaching staff needs to be aligned, and individual and organisational expectations need to be renegotiated in order to avoid increased distress and psychic illness. These not only damage teaching staff, but also compromise the organisation.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

To contribute to the conclusions of the study, five interrelated points were defined. First, the transposition of business management models without adaptation to the educational context may be at the root of dissatisfaction with teaching work since 'being a teacher' is linked to recognition and an organisation that is distinct from other professions. Due to the institutional oscillations of the EFs, most interviewees maintain employment links other than teaching to ensure income. This is an indicator of precarious and fragile linkage. Secondly, higher education professionals feel uncomfortable and out of alignment with the business ideals of the EF, which offers no prospect of developing projects for income growth or even stability. Thirdly, the teaching staff do not see teaching as a product or as a commercial tool that encourages it. Next, the higher education professional's conception of teaching is that he or she acts in the teaching-learning sphere and perceives involvement with management or even with institutional strategies as somewhat disconnected from their operational field. Finally, even with the search for academic qualifications and the development of skills, attitudes and competencies to act in this new context, there seems to be no effective communication between EF strategies and teaching expectations.

These findings, detected in the teachers' reflections, help to illustrate the challenges for the teaching career in EFs, which offer neither a protean career nor the space for career development in the traditional manner. Within this organisational format and the economic context in which such institutions are located, labour contracts are very similar to those of commercial enterprises. In this scenario, teachers construct their work practices according to the institutional reality, losing the professional identity that the majority judge as motivating the continuation of a teaching career.

As for psychic distress, the interviewees' responses confirmed their occurrence in the work environment. Distress occurs as a result of the precariousness of teaching work where professionals are treated as dispensable by institutions, where they need to compete for hours, where they take much of the work home and where they try to develop research and feel discouraged by the lack of incentive for qualifications and by EF pressure for results.

In summary, EFs appear to demand that individuals align their personal career expectations with the organisation's strategies even if the market swings do not allow the development of medium or long-term projects. As a result, higher education professionals orient their careers in a traditional way but see no guarantees for effectiveness from the institution. This environment leads to dissatisfaction and negative experiences with work, especially with regard to organisational structure.

The interviewees highlighted their career dilemmas and efforts to find job satisfaction, which take place without the intervention of the institutions to which they are connected. They find

satisfaction by retaining their values and beliefs that their profession goes beyond the teaching role, believing that their role is important for the construction and dissemination of knowledge and for the formation of the individual. They seek ways to be motivated in interpersonal relationships with their professional colleagues and their students.

Therefore, EF teaching staff perceive their careers as being exceptionally important to society and to meet that human requirement which is education. At the same time, they feel hindered in the development of their teaching practices, forced into internal conflict because their professional ideals must coexist with the commercial logic imposed by the nature of these institutions. This generates psychic distress and directly implies dissatisfaction with work. Future studies could follow the path of recognition proposed by psychodynamics in relation to judgments of utility and beauty. For example, it would be useful to analyse the perception of organisational support and other relational elements with immediate superiors and with the organisational bureaucracy, as well as to explore in more depth the structure of relations with colleagues and students to create a greater understanding of work at these particular organisations.

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