



Evaluation of Higher Education: limits and possibilities of the Structuring Teaching Core

*Avaliação da Educação Superior: limites e possibilidades
do Núcleo Docente Estruturante*

*Evaluación de la Educación Superior: límites y posibilidades
del Núcleo Docente Estructurante*

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Abstract

The paper addresses public policies related to the evaluation of Higher Education and their relation to management quality, in particular regarding the Structuring Teaching Core (implemented by Resolution n. 1/2010 - CONAES), which has academic assignments of monitoring the course pedagogical project in its design, consolidation and update. The

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research aims to discuss how courses offered by one private university are perceived by the members of their respective Structuring Teaching Cores on this relationship. As specific objectives, the following topics are discussed and analyzed: a) the political ground that culminated in the mandatory creation of Structuring Teaching Cores in all undergraduate courses, b) how the members of the surveyed courses' STCs perceive the requirement of their implementation, the performance of the corresponding STC, and the limits and possibilities evidenced, and c) the relationship between STC performance and course coordination. The study is based on documents about policies on institutional management and assessment in Higher Education in Brazil. Theoretical support was sought in the work of Costa (2005), Gutierrez and Catani (2011), and Lück (2011), among others. The analysis of the data collected through questionnaires was approached qualitatively and followed the guidance of Bogdan and Biklen (1994) and André (2006). The results pointed to the importance of the STC role, as responsible for monitoring the process of design, consolidation and continuous update of the course pedagogical project, aiming to improve its quality.

Keywords: Structuring Teaching Core. National System of Higher Education Evaluation. Higher Education management.

Resumo

O artigo se insere nas políticas públicas relativas à avaliação da Educação Superior e sua relação com a qualidade da gestão, em especial no que se refere ao Núcleo Docente Estruturante (NDE), implantado pela Resolução n. 1/2010 — CONAES, o qual possui atribuições acadêmicas de acompanhamento do projeto pedagógico do curso no processo de sua concepção, consolidação e atualização. O objetivo da pesquisa é discutir a percepção dos integrantes do NDE de cursos ofertados por uma universidade privada a respeito dessa relação. Como objetivos específicos, são discutidos e analisados: a) os fundamentos políticos que culminaram com a obrigatoriedade da criação do NDE em todos os cursos de graduação; b) a percepção dos membros do NDE dos cursos pesquisados a respeito da exigência de sua implantação, da atuação do NDE do qual participa e de limites e possibilidades evidenciados; e c) a relação entre a atuação do NDE e a coordenação do curso. O estudo está fundamentado em documentos que tratam das políticas de gestão e avaliação institucional na Educação Superior no Brasil. Buscou-se apoio teórico nos trabalhos de Costa (2005), Gutierrez e Catani (2011) e Lück (2011), entre outros. De abordagem

qualitativa, a análise dos dados coletados por meio de questionários subsidiou-se nas orientações de Bogdan e Biklen (1994) e André (2006). Os resultados apontaram para a relevância da atuação do NDE, como responsável pelo acompanhamento no processo de concepção, consolidação e contínua atualização do projeto pedagógico de curso, com vistas à melhoria de sua qualidade.

Palavras-chave: Núcleo Docente Estruturante. Sistema Nacional de Avaliação da Educação Superior. Gestão da Educação Superior.

Resumen

El artículo forma parte de las políticas públicas relativas a la evaluación de la Educación Superior y su relación con la calidad de la gestión, especialmente en lo que se refiere al Núcleo Docente Estructurante (NDE), implantado por la Resolución n. 1/2010 - CONAES, que tiene atribuciones académicas de seguimiento del proyecto pedagógico del curso en el proceso de su diseño, consolidación y actualización. El objetivo de la investigación es analizar la percepción de los miembros del NDE de cursos ofrecidos por una universidad privada con respecto a esta relación. Como objetivos específicos se discuten y se analizan: a) los fundamentos políticos que culminaron en la exigencia de la creación del NDE en todos los cursos de pregrado; b) la percepción de los miembros del NDE de los cursos investigados con respecto a la exigencia de su implantación, de la actuación del NDE en el que participa y de los límites y posibilidades evidenciadas; c) la relación entre la actuación del NDE y la coordinación del curso. El estudio está basado en documentos que tratan sobre las políticas de gestión y evaluación institucional en la educación superior en Brasil. Se buscó apoyo teórico en la obra de Costa (2005), Gutierrez y Catani (2011) y Lück (2011), entre otros. De enfoque cualitativo, el análisis de los datos recogidos a través de cuestionarios se sustentó en las directrices de Bogdan y Biklen (1994) y André (2006). Los resultados apuntaron a la importancia de la actuación del NDE, como responsable del seguimiento del proceso de diseño, consolidación y actualización permanente del proyecto pedagógico del curso, con el fin de mejorar su calidad.

Palabras Clave: Núcleo Docente Estructurante. Sistema Nacional de Evaluación de la Educación Superior. Gestión de la Educación Superior.

Introduction

Social policies, among them, the educational policies, are not a neutral practice, since they are rooted in epistemological bases that translate the concepts of man, world and society existing in a particular historical moment, and condition the relations established between the subject and the object of knowledge. According to Santos (2011, p. 36), the analysis of these epistemological bases “assumes, and even demands, an analysis of the paradigms underlying the forms of social and political organization assumed by the current society”. The ideas and trends that take turns in power, therefore, are which shape social policies and, in particular, educational policies.

In Brazil, the transition from an authoritarian regime to a democratic one brought the need to be adopted democratic principles enshrined in the Federal Constitution of 1988 (BRASIL, 1988), and that reverberated in management of public educational policies in general. When adopting these principles, the Law n. 9,394, which deals with the Guidelines and Bases of National Education (BRASIL, 1996), the Law n. 10,861, which created the National System of Higher Education Evaluation — SINAES (BRASIL, 2004) and the additional regulations that followed them, were gradually giving a new direction to public policies, for them to meet the democratizing requirements.

These democratic principles, when materialized in management, which is not a neutral practice, find “limits and epistemological conditions, political and pedagogical, among other dimensions, proceeding of options of those in power and that interfere directly in achieving an education with social quality, but that can also be recreated in the context of practice” (SANTOS, 2011, p. 52).

In the democratic management of higher education, evaluation and quality are outstanding points. In this sense, the participation of collegiate bodies gained strength, enabling the faculty of the institutions the possibility to think and make decisions in broader historical and social contexts. The discussion of the Educational Project Course

and the performance of the Structuring Teacher Core [Núcleo Docente Estruturante – NDE] held by collective bodies, are representative of such participation.

This paper, following this reflection, in the context of public policies for the assessment of higher education in its relation to quality management, has as its object the Structuring Teacher Core, established by Resolution n. 1 of the National Commission for Higher Education Assessment [Comissão Nacional de Avaliação da Educação Superior – CONAES] (CONAES, 2010b), a collective body that has academic assignments of following the pedagogical project of the course in the process of designing, building and updating. The research is justified because, being the Structuring Teacher Core (NDE) a body recently created in evaluative policy of the Ministry of Education (MEC), is appropriate to investigate the perception that the NDE members of different undergraduate courses at an institution higher education have about the role, limits and possibilities, as well as the care that should be taken in its jurisdiction. Therefore, the paper has as general objective to discuss the perception of the members of the Structuring Teacher Core of undergraduate courses of the institution researched about its performance, limits and possibilities within their sphere of competence.

As specific objectives, the following topics are discussed and analyzed: a) the political foundations that led to the creation of compulsory Structuring Teacher Core in all undergraduate courses; b) the perception of NDE members of respondents courses regarding the requirement of its implementation, the action of NDE which is involved and the limits and possibilities evidenced; c) the relationship between the performance of the NDE and the course coordination.

The study is based on documents dealing with management policies and institutional assessment in higher education in Brazil. We searched for theoretical support in Costa's works (2005), Gutierrez and Catani (2011) and Lück (2011), among others.

From a methodological point of view, the research, of interdisciplinary character, is focused on the study case. Data were collected

through questionnaires given to NDE members of university courses studied, which were analyzed with the support of the guidelines of Bogdan and Biklen (1994) and André (2006).

The results pointed to the relevance of the NDE operations, as responsible for monitoring the design process, consolidation and continuous updating of pedagogical project of course, in order to improve its quality. They signaled, too, about its collaboration on the qualification of faculty and implementation of methodological innovations in the course.

Historic and tasks of the Structuring Teacher Core

In the pace of the management democratization and shared power, the Structuring Teacher Core, established by Ordinance of the Ministry of Education — MEC No 147/2007, in the assessment tool for authorization of undergraduate courses in Medicine (art. 2, section IV) and Law (art. 3, section II), that at the time was being handled at the Ministry of Education, as responsible for formulating the body, implementation and development of the pedagogical project of the course, also met a former Commission claim of Order of Legal Education of lawyers of Brazil. According to professor Maria Elba Dantas de Moura Pereira¹, Assessment Principal of Undergraduate courses of the National Institute of Educational Studies and Researches Anísio Teixeira [Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais Anísio Teixeira – INEP],

¹ Professor Maria Elba Dantas de Moura Pereira, of Federal University of Paraíba, asked about the origin of NDE, since the researchers did not find any similar body in the European and North American higher education institutions in e-mail sent on 18th February 2013, stated the following: “There was about NDE, one experience of ours, UFPB, of commissions, per course, who were gathering to prepare, monitor and/or assess the PPCs. Mrs. Iguatemy [Maria de Lucena Martins, Principal of the Department of Assessment of Higher Education INEP in 2008–2010] and I were coming from the PRG/UFPB at the time she was Pro-Rector and I was her publicist and president of CPA, effervesce with actions related to PPPs and evaluation. So, we reported the experiences of these commissions that, after much debugging, ended up turning into NDE. It was like that”.

in 2008–2010, the successful experience at the Federal University of Paraíba [Universidade Federal da Paraíba – UFPB], to assign a group of leader professors the task to leverage the undergraduate courses which exhibited a pattern of lower quality than expected, helped to consolidate that requirement in the assessment tools. This statement is supported by CONAES, in its Opinion No. 4 (CONAES, 2010a), stating that the idea came “from the fact that a good undergraduate degree has some members of the teaching staff who help shape the identity of course”. These professors exercise a leadership in the course that is beyond the established positions, becoming references for both the students and the academic community in general. Counting on its contribution in the design, consolidation and continuous upgrading of a course of pedagogical project would also bring as advantage a Pedagogical Project Course (PPC) which was not a mere documentary piece, but which involved and made people strongly linked to the course also responsible. Also according to the mentioned opinion, it can be said that this group of professors would be the “soul of the course” or, in other words, “a structuring teacher core” (CONAES, 2010a).

Pereira (2011, p. 39) adds:

The design of the Structuring Teacher Core (NDE) was due to the fact that the Education Programme Course should be object of collective creation by educators representing the expected profile of the project to be developed, highlighting the plural feature in the formation of the main activities of the course.

According to Normative Ruling MEC No. 40 (BRASIL, 2007), item 9.4 of the Annex, the NDE would consist of a:

[...] set of professors of the institution responsible for formulating the pedagogical project of the course, its implementation and development, consisting of professors with entitling at the level of post-graduate studies, engaged in work arrangements to ensure preferably full dedication to the course, and with teaching experience (BRASIL, 2007).

Thus, the requirements to be met by professors who integrate the NDE were: a) entitling level of strict sense graduate; b) hired in labor regime that preferentially assures full dedication to the course; and c) with teaching experience.

In 2008, the Graduate Course Assessment Instrument (Licentiate and Bachelor Degree) of the National Evaluation System of Higher Education [Sistema Nacional de Avaliação da Educação Superior – SIN-AES], approved by Ministerial Ordinance No. 1,081, of August 29th, 2008, in Dimension 2 (Faculty, Student and Technical-administrative), Indicator 2.2, has demanded the “characterization (time dedicated and uninterrupted stay), composition and entitling of the Structuring Teacher Core (NDE)”. In the Glossary which incorporated the already mentioned Ordinance, the NDE was characterized as “a set of professors, with high formation and degrees, employed on a full and part-time, responding more directly for the creation, implementation and consolidation of the Pedagogical Project of the Course” (BRASIL, 2008).

The NDE was also inserted as “legal requirement” in the assessment instrument, through a question for the evaluation commission of INEP to answer: “Does the course have NDE responsible for formulating the pedagogical project of the course, its implementation and development, with entitling level of strict post-graduation and employment contract to ensure preferably full dedication to the course and teaching experience?” (BRASIL, 2008). This requirement was questioned by different sectors of the academy since, although it was stated in legal requirement of courses assessment instruments, it was not supported by any standard issued by a competent official body.

From this requirement, the researched institution oriented undergraduate courses in the sense that their Structuring Teachers Core were made, with indication of its members by collegiate and communication of that decision by letter of the coordinator, to the Academic Dean. The composition of the NDE was performed for 30% of professors working in the course, graduates in *stricto sensu* graduate program and working

full or part time. At that time, there was not the possibility of specialist teachers come to integrate the NDE, which later came to be authorized by CONAES.

Disagreements about the legal aspect that hovered over the NDE were finally resolved by Resolution No. 1 of 17th June 2010, which dealt with the establishment and standardization of Structuring Teacher Core, considering it as a differentiating factor in the quality of course, regarding the interaction between the faculty and the Pedagogical Project of the Course.

According to the sole paragraph of art. 1 of Resolution No. 1 (CONAES, 2010b):

The NDE shall consist of members of the faculty of the course, exercising academic leadership within, perceived in the production of knowledge in the area, the development of teaching, and in other dimensions perceived as important by the institution, and acting on the course development.

In art. 2, the tasks of Structuring Teacher Core [Núcleo Docente Estruturante] are generally defined:

- I - contribute to the consolidation of the professional profile of graduates of the course;
- II - ensure the interdisciplinary curricular integration between the different educational activities present in the curriculum;
- III - indicate ways to encourage the development of lines of research and extension, arising from Graduation needs of the labor market requirements and in tune with public policies related to the area of knowledge of the course;
- IV - ensure compliance with the National Curriculum Guidelines for Undergraduate Courses (CONAES, 2010b).

The art. 3 of Resolution establishes the following minimum criteria to build the NDE:

- I - consist of a minimum of 5 professors from the faculty of the course;
- II - at least 60% of its members with academic degrees obtained in the strict sense of graduate programs;
- III - have all members in working regime of full or part time, at least 20% full-time;
- IV - to ensure partial replacement strategy of NDE members to ensure continuity in the course of the monitoring system (CONAES, 2010b).

Faced with this regulation, in the institution of the object of this study, the Structuring Teachers Core were organized by indication and approval of their members by the boards of graduate students, being necessary the communication of the decision to the Dean Academic that, from 2012, began to issue their ordinances designation, which was driven by requests made by the committees of Onsite Assessment for recognition of courses.

Another institutional measure, based on the NDE assignments generally mentioned in art. 2 of Resolution No. 1 (CONAES, 2010b) was the edition of the document *Conhecendo o Núcleo Docente Estruturante* [Knowing the Structuring Teacher Core] (VIEIRA; GUEBERT, 2011, p. 5), in which were defined the NDE functions in the institution.

With this document, in January and February of 2012 the formation of all NDE of members of the institution was carried out, aiming its alignment with institutional guidelines.

The NDE as a collective body in educational management

Opinion No. 4 (CONAES, 2010a) reminded us that, in almost all higher education courses, there was already a collegiate body that took care of current issues, including the Pedagogical Course Project, coordinated by the Course Coordinator, and so-called College Course (BRAZIL, 2010).

The role played by the Collegiate Course, however, is predominantly administrative, solving issues involving relevant aspects of the

course, but that “usually overlap the necessary reflection on the academic quality of the course” (CONAES, 2010a, p. 2). This way,

[...] although often the course coordinator is a professor who helps give identity to the course, other times the coordinator is a professor who carries out the important function of making the flows be not disrupted, even if he-she is not the one leading scholars in the sense placed above. And in this there is not any demerit (CONAES, 2010a, p. 2).

By rethinking the role of the university and the exercise of power within, the CONAES, establishing the Structure Teaching Core in all undergraduate courses, gave it a democratic nature, enabling the participation of a number of professors directly in the deployment processes, monitoring and development of pedagogical projects of the courses. Thus, the performance of the NDE is different from the work of the collegiate and its coordinator to be responsible for the design process, consolidation and continuous updating of the Pedagogical Project of the Course. The NDE works, in short, to the collective construction of the course.

The participation of professors as members of the NDE in undergraduate courses is an eminently educational act, providing them with the development of democratic skills that increasingly will make them competent to participate. Participation is inherent to democracy, besides being an opportunity for the professor to mobilize, learn to work in teams, delete individualistic behavior and overcome accommodation attitudes.

It is necessary to note, with Chauí (2000, p. 29), that:

The management of the school has a highly political dimension that needs to be given, being the leaders' responsibility to create the conditions for sharing of information, clearing all communication channels, exercising power in a reasoned collectively developed agreements, intersubjectively validated, forming a large mesh communication through constant negotiation practice, from the perspective of communicative action.

Being the Structuring Teacher Core composed of professors who can be considered the “soul of the course”, for their involvement and participation in the academic community, a first question that comes up is the character of a collective body in educational management.

In order to characterize the Structuring Teacher Core from the point of view of its operation as a collective body in educational management, it is necessary to clarify what is meant, for purposes of this work, by “educational management”, a term which was evident from the 1990s and gained acceptance in the educational context.

As Lück (2008, p. 53-54) explains the “use of the term management does not correspond to simple terminology replacement [term administration], based on semantic considerations”. The term involves “proposing a new understanding of educational organization and its processes and, in addition, the relations of the education with society and people within the education system and the school”. The educational management does not eliminate the perspective of administration, but exceeds, giving it a “new meaning, more significant and potentially transformative character, putting it at the service and as substrate of the management work”.

The management concept presupposes, thus, the idea of participation, according to which all who are directly or indirectly part of the educational process are involved in goal setting, problem solving, in proposing action plans, in its implementation, monitoring and evaluation, aiming the best results of the educational process (LÜCK et al., 2011).

The consolidation of a participatory management within an institution, however, is not an easy and spontaneous process. In a society like Brazil, still strongly vertically integrated in all its aspects, in which the relations occur between someone in control — at the top — and someone who obeys — the bottom — this new understanding of the educational organization and its processes, when reflected in educational practice and, consequently, in school management, demands permanent collective effort. It can be said, therefore, that the task of “(de)construct

both concepts as the managing practices of schools necessarily involves the unveiling of paradigmatic directions that are informing this model in schools, in general” (COSTA, 2005, p. 19).

In the positivist conception, which supports the traditional model and points to the technical-instrumental rationality, valuing the standardization and uniformity, there is no room for conflict, but also there is room for innovation, the divergence and diversity. Changes occur by importing ideas, processes and strategies that have worked in other organizations and that are imposed from the outside in and from top to bottom. The reality, considered stable and permanent, is predictable, free of crises, ambiguities and contradictions. This conception, influenced by the typical managerial bureaucratic model of classical and scientific theories of educational administration brings “to the school center requirements of efficiency, effectiveness and rationality, under the command of capitalist imperatives, dealing with school like enterprises” (COSTA, 2005, p. 21).

In participatory management, based on communicative action, which supports the work of Structuring Teacher Core in undergraduate courses, the participation adds to democracy and citizenship, redirecting the institutional ethical-political commitment. In it, crises, ambiguities and contradictions are seen as moments of learning and development that encourage organizations to reflect and seek their own solutions to their problems. There is, in it, a mobilizing power that drives so that the proposed objectives are achieved.

In education, autocratic management, hierarchical and formalistic of Taylorism refers to the past. The review of the assumptions made, albeit slowly, brought changes, and “contemporary values, such as flexibility, tolerance of differences, more egalitarian relationships, justice and citizenship” (GUTIERREZ; CATANI, 2011, p. 74), replaced taylorist guidelines.

Given these differences, it is necessary to understand, as explains Costa (2005), that:

[...]the (de) construction of these traditional ways of managing the school, sitting on the principles of technical and bureaucratic rationality, reinforcing of normative and regulatory procedures, will be given by means of the introduction of new epistemological bases, the introduction of a new rationality, communicative rationality (COSTA, 2005, p. 28).

The logic of management, therefore, in general,

is guided by democratic principles and is characterized by recognition of the importance of conscious and informed participation of people in decisions on the course, organization and planning of their work and articulation of various dimensions and the various ramifications of its implementation process (LÜCK, 2008, p. 36).

The management, in itself, brings the idea of participation and this implies the existence of dialogue, involving the work associated of people guided by a collective will.

In the implementation and development of the pedagogical project of the course, the participation in management by the NDE:

[...] requires in-depth understanding of the problems posed by the pedagogical practice. It aims to break the division between conception and execution, between thinking and doing, between theory and practice. It attempts to revive the process control and product of work by educators (VEIGA, 1997, p. 18).

What is this participation? Lück (2011, p. 35), identifies different forms of participation: “a) participation as presence, b) participation as verbal expression and discussion, c) participation as political representation, d) participation as decision making, and e) participation as engagement”. These forms have different intensities of involvement and commitment, “ranging from only formal commitment and distanced from the full involvement and engaged”. In the Structuring Teacher Core, it is possible that, according to the more or less democratic experience of

its members, that all these forms are expressed. Other factors, however, may interfere with this participation, since the lack of experience of professors in dealing with confrontation and the proposition of innovations to the “authoritarianism as a mark of the educational ethos”, as it adds Silva (2005, p. 37). This participatory process, however, can be improved through professional training and development of teaching experience characterized by action-reflection-action. It is necessary for teachers to think about what they do, while they do, so that they are aware of the type of participation they develop.

Thus, “it is essential to provide a pedagogical school management feature, [...] that should be the reason for the act of running the school” (COSTA, 2005, p. 28). If you want to change the successful school, this change, which is also a learning process, must come from within, not from the outside in. This learning can be triggered by the adoption of participatory planning, which is inserted between the duties of NDEs.

The participation of members of Structural Teachers Core occurs in three dimensions: political, educational and technical interdependently. The political dimension, the participating professors collaborate in the construction of personal history and the history of the institution, seeking to make them more meaningful; the pedagogical dimension in the discussion of issues and problems related to the course to which they belong, collaborate with their knowledge, skills and expertise to improve the quality of the course; the technical dimension, enable the achievement of desired results for the other two dimensions.

In this context, to the course coordinator needs to create a motivating environment, a participatory culture, so that the Structuring Teacher Core can effectively develop its work in an enriching and competently way. Regarding the autonomy of course, even if participatory management, it is always relative, since it is subject to an educational policy and therefore conditioned by the regiments that make up this policy. Indeed, the pedagogical actions are subjugated to what is said in this legislation on education policy.

In this research answers were sought that will allow a performance analysis of Structuring Teacher Core in the complexity of the courses to which they belong, together with the perception of its members about their limits and possibilities in terms of educational management.

Methodology

From a methodological point of view, the research is characterized as a case study, therefore, to study “a unique case set in contemporary real life, well-defined and contextualized in time and place to conduct a thorough search for information” (CHIZZOTTI, 2006, p. 138).

In this work, the professors’ perceptions who participate in the Structuring Teacher Core of the research institution in undergraduate courses is the case studied. “It is a study that does not seek generalizations but can reveal universal realities, because the peculiarities saved, no case is an isolated incident, regardless of social relations in which it occurs” (CHIZZOTTI, 2006, p. 138).

The case study in question is also qualitative, characterized, according to Merriam (1988 apud ANDRÉ, 2005, p. 17), by the following features: particularity, description, heuristic and induction. The aim is to deepen the study of a unique educational phenomenon, in order to explain it.

It is important to identify the meaning that the members of the Structuring Teacher Core of Higher Education Institutions researched attach to reality in which they participate. The definition of categories occurred after thorough reading of the responses to the questionnaire, to get to that Michelat (1980 apud ANDRÉ, 2006, p. 44), called “impregnation” of its content. After successive readings, the most obvious dimensions are appearing, the categories will outcrop to the perception of the researcher.

It is worth to remember, the case study “does not mean a single reading of reality, assumes that there may be diversity of perceptions” (CHIZZOTTI, 2006, p. 141).

Defined the categories, we proceeded to the analysis and interpretation of the answers, which will come in subsequent topics. From these results, it was possible to have a deeper insight, broad and integrated of what the Structuring Teacher Cores consist and the perception that they have on their members.

The field research

The survey was conducted at a private university, large, which has five campuses located in the same state, identified as A, B, C, D and E, and about thirty thousand students enrolled in undergraduate and graduate courses.

Of the 486 professors members of NDEs of the Higher Education Institutions, 272 responded to the questionnaire: 223 members of 62 courses of campus A; 8 NDE members of 9 courses on campus B; 21 NDE members of 10 courses of campus C; 11 professors from 8 courses of campus D; and 9 members of four courses of campus E.

Considering the large number of members of the Structuring Teacher Core of the courses in the survey, the results can be considered significant. At the mention of the responses, it was indicated the campus by alphabet capital letter followed by the number assigned to the participant's questionnaire.

In a matter that concerned the perception of professors on the requirement of Structuring Teacher Core in undergraduate courses of higher education, analyzed the responses, it was possible to identify two main categories, which could be categorized as related to the pedagogical project of the course and to the management.

Considering the category referring to the pedagogical project of the course, 55 respondents (20.52%) demonstrated in the sense that the NDE is of fundamental importance to the proper functioning of the course. Of these, 49 have pointed out that this importance is because of the possibility to (re) think the course, with the discussion of relevant

political and pedagogical issues, ensuring professor's space of participation and developing awareness of the course. Here are some of the collected answers:

A40 – The NDE allows strategic and important points of the didactic-pedagogical organization of the course to be discussed and matured in the group, creating a democratic and collaborative space for issues such as PPC.

A49 – It is necessary to exercise the 'thinking' about the course, the didactic and pedagogical aspects, research, infrastructure and personnel.

D1 – The NDE is central to the discussion, analysis and restructuring of PPCs.

Of participating professors, 42 (15.67%) mentioned that the NDE allows prepare, organize and adapt the PPC to the National Curriculum Guidelines, to the Institutional Development Plan, the Institutional Education Program, to world changes and to the market.

As for the pedagogical project, 36 (13.43%) of the members of Structuring Teacher Core who participated in the survey highlighted that it contributes to the excellence, improvement and quality of the course, as can be seen from the answers:

A87 – It is a group of excellence which thinks, checks, questions the pedagogical structure of the course and its improvement.

A118 – It is an extremely important strategy to qualify the structure and management of the course, a space for reflection and proposal on limits and potential, evaluation, review and (again) qualification of all sizes of the pedagogical process.

E5 – The importance of the NDE can be glimpsed especially with regard to the support and development of the course in the aspects of consolidation and gradual course monitoring.

With respect to the course management category, respondents felt that the NDE constitutes support for the coordination of the

course and the collegiate, being an important tool for the management (24 respondents).

It was also mentioned that the NDE did not have duties defined in the institution: “Its role is critical to the implementation of ongoing projects; however, we see that we still see the NDE with quite undefined functions” (C105).

The contribution to the overhead of professors’ activities was quoted: “Important, but I get the impression sometimes of an overload of activities, considering other functions that I perform at the university” (C198).

Another question inquired about the limits and possibilities of action of the NDE in the course, from the perspective of its members. The vast majority, the five campuses surveyed mentioned that the most perceived limits were the lack of time dedicated to the work of the NDE (66 professors), followed by decisions made by higher bodies, collegiate and other bodies (40). Teachers mentioned as a limit, too, the lack of autonomy of the NDE (15) and a work routine, with schedule (5).

In a lower number, respondents considered as limits on the performance of the Structuring Teacher Core, the bureaucratic structure of the university, the faculty resistance to change, the limitations of the sector itself, the requirement of mirrored arrays and similarity in the work plans, excessive demands on the preparation of educational projects courses, fair deadlines for these demands, the lack of clarity about the tasks of the NDE and other collegiate bodies, the unawareness of legislation by the members, the difficulty that teachers have to work in groups, the lack of integration with the course faculty.

Regarding the possibilities, there was a significant manifestation for the improvements to the course, aimed at raising the quality level, through discussion among peers (47). Were also identified by teachers as possibilities: the opportunity to learn to work together, to approximate the course to the demands of the institution, to mediate important issues, to consolidate actions related to PPC, to promote greater involvement with the course professors, to integrate the faculty and student

bodies, to support the coordination of the course, to effectively manage the ongoing strengthening the teaching relationship/research/extension, to bring innovations to the course, and to unite these possibilities in a single word — huge.

Finally, it was questioned about the relationship between Structuring Teacher Core and the course coordination. In general, this relationship was perceived as excellent, participatory, positive, collaborative, friendly, collegial and productive at all campuses.

Analysis and data interpretation

It can be inferred from the answers to the questions asked, that the duties of the NDE, generally defined by art. 2 of Resolution n. 1 (CONAES, 2010b) are present among the teachers who are part of the core, in particular those set out in section I, II and IV, which relate to the quality of the pedagogical project of the course, there included the consolidation of the professional profile of graduates, interdisciplinary curriculum integration between the different course activities and compliance with the National Curriculum Guidelines. The same cannot be said of contained in section III, which refers to “ways to encourage the development of lines of research and extension, arising from under graduation, needs of the labor market demands and attuned to public policies related to the knowledge area of the course”, which was not mentioned by respondents.

The perception of the importance of the Structuring Teacher Core as a promoter of the excellence of the education program of the course was evident unquestionably. The fact that few professors bother to highlight the experience in a democratic management process may raise some reflections. A first hypothesis is that, as a private institution of higher education they are the exception, professors have not realized in its fullness. Indeed, for some of them, NDE appears as “an obligation imposed by MEC”, in which they do not perceive the beginnings of a process of democratization. Another hypothesis is that professors’

participation has not yet reached the stages identified by Lück (2011) as decision-making and engagement, and still exercised with presence, verbal expression and discussion, which are initial steps of the participatory process. In this case, creating a participatory environment, which professors are part, aware of the importance of their function, should be a goal to be built and conquered.

It can be argued that the relative lack of autonomy of NDEs is part of their nature, since the drafting process, monitoring and evaluation of pedagogical projects of the courses should be monitored and evaluated by collegiate and, ultimately, by the whole community school. In this monitoring, compliance is issued by the decisions of governing bodies of the institution, compliance with the National Curriculum Guidelines and the entire legislative apparatus that directs higher education in the country.

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Regarding the perceived possibilities, the references of the members of NDEs allow us to interpret them in an optimistic vision in terms that can effectively collaborate with ongoing improvements, either through group discussions on relevant educational topics, meetings for reflection, in playing a strategic role in terms of a think-talk for the course, in constant dialogue with peers to the realignment of the shares in the course, among other actions.

The relations of the Structuring Teachers Core with the respective coordinations seem to be auspicious. Participants cited a close relationship, harmony, integration, warmth, supportive, integrated, finally, with adjectives denoting an easy and fruitful coexistence with synergy, partnership, focused on the improvement of the course.

Final considerations

The Structuring Teacher Core — NDE, a member of the public educational policies, are in their first years of implementation and can become a democratic management tool to provide better quality of education. Its simple institution, however, will not promote the democratization of the management process. This research, thus, aimed to summarize the political foundations and the rules that established the obligation of the NDE in all undergraduate courses, investigate the professors' perception of NDE members of respondents courses regarding the requirement of the implementation, the limits and possibilities in its operations and the relationship with the course coordinator, in order to encourage improvements in the quality of higher education offered.

The data collected showed the importance of having a Structuring Teacher Core to think the course, having been appointed several advantages in relation to this participation. It is important that the NDE is composed in accordance with the provisions of CONAES, both in membership and in relation to working hours and entitling of teachers, which did not occur in the institution researched until the information was provided.

Indeed, the NDE is not a bureaucratic sector of the institution, but a collegiate body, regulated, constant in the statute or the institution's regiment, with functions defined by CONAES. It is notable that the emphasis on the involvement of teachers in school management is a global trend for education. However, there are no pre-determined share models. So while in some courses this work is more structured and defined, in others it is only in its infancy. Each course has the challenge of building their own way, according to the visions of mankind, world, society and history leading human actions. This path will oscillate between the option for democratic principles or the technical and scientific strategies. The group of teachers who make up the NDE must be effectively and continuously committed to the design, development and consolidation of the education program of the course to which it belongs.

Autonomy does not mean independence. It needs to be built every day, step by step, to build and guarantee the realization of democratic processes.

For being a relatively new body in the structure of the course, hang some doubts and expectations about its performance. For many professors there is still a lack of clarity about the work to be done. Others would like it, beyond the application of Resolution No. 1 (CONAES, 2010b) also the establishment of operating limits. The performance in the NDE should gradually work together to address those concerns.

From the data collected, it was revealed that large areas of NDE interference are the educational part and the management of the course. With all the limits that reality in its complexity, imposes, the NDE has enabled the involvement of professors in the development of the education program and course management.

From a pedagogical point of view, the most significant contribution is the ability to analyze, discuss, contributing to the improvement of quality of the course. Regarding the course management, the actuation as a consultative body coordination and collegiality is set, although some argue that the duties performed possibly would not extrapolate the execution of the activities range.

The question about the limits and possibilities of action of the NDE in the course brings the concern with the need to meet the standards of MEC and the institution, which would interfere with the body's autonomy. The possibilities on the other hand, point to a stimulus work to interdisciplinarity, to update the pedagogical project of the course and the continuous improvement of the graduate's profile. In particular, care is recommended so that the NDE does not become just a bureaucratic space, emptied of its political function, but an instance of analysis and discussions aimed at improving the quality of higher education offered.

Regarding the relation with the course coordination, in the research institution it is very close, allowing participation and collective decision in a learning being held by respondents of NDEs. However, the coordinator's participation at NDE, on the one hand, allows better relationship,

on the other can inhibit discussions that are not aligned with the coordination vision, interfering, indirectly, in the course improvement.

Admittedly, the coordinator, as leader of the democratic management process finds in NDE skills that help her/him to conduct the course, in line with institutional guidelines. With the participation of the NDE, the manager will not feel alone in her/his course driving task. The creation of conditions that best carry out such participation, however, is under her/his responsibility. It is necessary to try to find a way of (de) construction of management as it is being held so that NDE becomes more involved in the decisions, increasing the spaces of exercise of power. The modernization of pedagogical practices inspired by the positivist model is not sufficient for them to be open spaces for participation, questioning, and critical analysis of social reality and generation of innovative practices. I would add that the NDE is not intended to remove the power of the coordinator, but redefining it.

Citing Gutierrez and Catani (2011, p. 91), the pursuit of communicative construction of consensus through dialogue should be conducted with “all concerned, not just with those who think like us”.

Finally, it should be mentioned that the collected data contain a wealth of information that goes beyond the limits of this work. Thus, the ongoing analysis of the manifestations of professors enable developing issues as the definition of advisory of NDE, the concepts underlying the ideas put forward in the most appropriate form of action the identified limits and other topics that will stimulate new research on the subject.

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