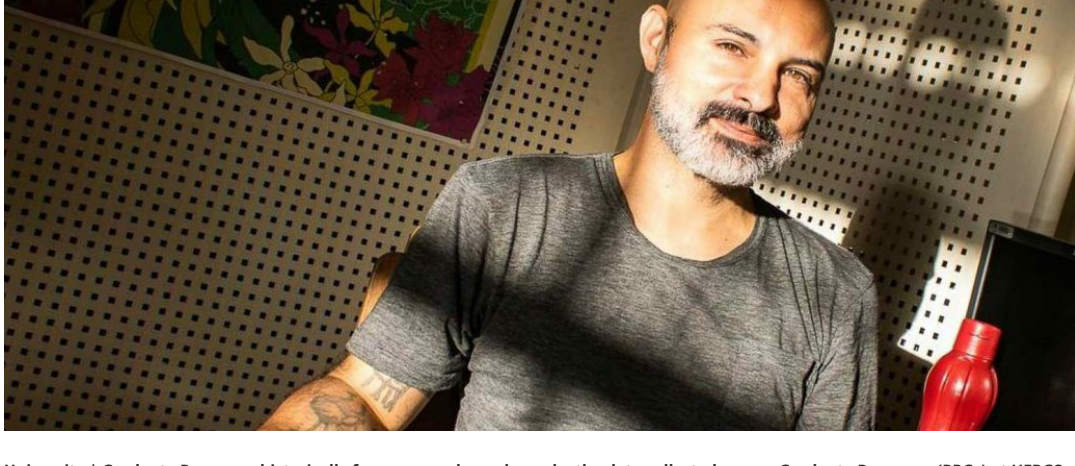


Projects seek ways to improve graduate teaching training

Stéfani Fontanive / 7 de dezembro de 2023 / In English



University | Graduate Programs historically favor research, as shown by the data collected among Graduate Programs (PPGs) at UFRGS, but teacher training is considered relevant due to its social impact and the qualification of graduates to pursue a career in higher education

*By Stéfani Fontanive

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*Photo: Ana Terra Firmino/JU - Studying for a Doctorate in the Graduate Program in Visual Arts (PPGAV), Leonardo Coobelli taught, throughout this semester, classes in the course Photographic Laboratory II, for the Undergraduate Program in Arts, as part of his activities in Teaching Internship

In 2022, 2,196 students received a master's or a PhD degree from UFRGS. That same year, another 2,850 got admitted to one of the University's 89 graduate programs. Teaching is the path many alumni choose, but the two, four, or six years spent in academia do not prepare future teachers for the teaching track.

During the years dedicated to research, only scholarship holders from the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (Capes) have a teaching internship as an obligatory requirement. The report of these few graduate students, however, is often not positive. Trauma in the classroom, dropping out of research, and complaints about the [lack of] connection between teaching and research are topics which emerge from conversations with grad students. The University, in this scenario, is a favorable environment for debate, and initiatives already suggest possible remedies.

Tripod model

The union between research and teaching was formalized in the University Reform of 1968. Law No. 5,540, of November 28 of that year, is responsible for setting "norms for the organization and operation of higher education and its articulation with secondary school, and other measures," as stated in the document.

"In this reform, the university tripod model was adopted: research, teaching, and community outreach," explains Flávia Maria Teixeira dos Santos, professor at the Faculty of Education, with expertise in teacher training. The researcher states that during the reform and reorganization of institutions, research had always been privileged to the detriment of the other two areas.

Law No. 5,540 was repealed by Law No. 9,192 of 1996, enacted by Fernando Henrique Cardoso (FHC), but the tripod university – and its focus on research – continued. Still in FHC's government, the teaching internship became mandatory for all federal scholarship holders through circular letter n.º 28/99/PR/CAPE. In 2010, a new reform established that, from that year on, if the program has a master's and a doctorate, only doctoral students with scholarships are required to carry out the teaching internship.

For Capes, the practice is "an integral part of the training of graduate students, aiming at preparing them for teaching and qualifying undergraduate teaching". In practice, the teaching internship consists of the commitment of the student to follow and teach an undergraduate course for a semester, preferably from his supervisor. If the professor does not teach undergraduate courses or the course is not related to the advisee's research, the latter can do the internship with another professor at the same institution.

"There is no institutional orientation aimed at teaching internships," points out Flávia. The internship, which should be a time to prepare the student for teaching, ends up losing its meaning. "We know that, many times, professors use teaching interns to 'cover' classes that they cannot teach," says Julio Barcellos, Executive Vice-President for Research at UFRGS. Flávia agrees and points out that it is a common practice. There are few programs that create opportunities for their students to get in touch with teaching methodologies.

The teaching internship at UFRGS

At the University, each PPG organizes the functioning and the requirements of its teaching internship. To map the situation, the 89 existing graduate programs were contacted. Among these, 36 answered three questions: how is the teaching internship at the PPG?; how does the enrollment in the internship work?; and are there any theoretical classes in the program about teaching methodologies related to the teaching internship?

In the Botany program, for example, all students are required to carry out the practice, while in Visual Arts only doctoral students with a Capes scholarship – as per federal guidelines. In Social Psychology, teaching internship is mandatory for master's students who hold scholarships and for all doctoral students. The PPG in Food of Animal Origin, which offers a master's program in the professional modality, does not require students to have a teaching internship.

Click and check the mandatory teaching internship according to each PPG, according to the responses received:

Master's/Doctorate/Master's and Doctorate

• Psychoanalysis (Capes scholarship holders only)

• Visual Arts (Capes and CNPq)

• Pharmaceutical Assistance (Capes scholarship holders only)

• Materials Science (Capes and CNPq)

• Political Science (Capes scholarship holders only)

• Education (Capes and CNPq)

• Pharmacology and Therapeutics (Capes scholarship holders only)

• Physics (Capes scholarship holders only)

• History (Capes scholarship holders only)

• Letters (Capes and CNPq)

• Child and Adolescent Health (Capes scholarship holders only)

• Administration (scholars)

• Social Anthropology (Capes scholarship holders only)

• Biochemistry (Capes scholarship holders only)

• Botany (all students)

• Human Movement Sciences (Capes and CNPq)

• Pneumological Sciences (all students)

• Soil Sciences (all students)

• Veterinary Sciences (all students)

• Communication (Capes and CNPq)

• Design (Capes and CNPq)

• Law (Capes and CNPq)

• Science Education (Capes and CNPq)

• Production Engineering (all students)

• Electrical Engineering (Capes and CNPq)

• Teaching in Mathematics (Capes and CNPq)

• Statistics (Capes and CNPq)

• Philosophy (all students)

• Physiology (all students in the master's degree, only Capes scholarship holders in the doctorate)

• Genetics and Molecular Biology (all students)

• Neurosciences (Capes scholarship holders only)

• Public Policies (Capes and CNPq scholarship holders)

• Social Psychology (only Capes)

• scholarship holders in the master's degree, all students in the doctorate)

• Water Resources (Capes and CNPq)

• Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences (Capes and CNPq)

Student enrollment follows a pattern. It is done through the student portal or the secretariat of each PPG, with authorization from the professor of the discipline and the advisor of the graduate student. In this way, different programs can offer the teaching internship in the same undergraduate course, while the same program is eligible to carry out the teaching internship in more than one course. The Graduate Program in Mathematics and Graduate Program in Teaching Mathematics, for example, carry out the internship for teaching practice in the same undergraduate program, while the Graduate Program in Visual Arts can count with the Undergraduate Program in Visual Arts, *Licenciatura* (teaching track) or *Bacharelado* (Baccalaureate) and the Undergraduate Program in Art History.

In addition to the mandatory teaching internship, another detail that differentiates the organization of the programs is the existence of courses devoted to teaching methodologies. Out of the 34 graduate programs which have responded to the questionnaire, only 6 offer courses on teaching methodologies.

The PPG in Psychoanalysis, for example, offers the discipline in the same semester in which the teaching internship takes place. "This discipline aims to discuss the teaching and, more specifically, the teaching of Psychoanalysis at the University. It is a follow-up discipline, a space for discussing the issues that the interns may have from their experience in the classroom," answered the PPG.

The Graduate Programs in Botany, Pneumological Sciences, Physiology, Genetics and Molecular Biology, and Neurosciences offer a discipline focused on teaching methodologies, usually called Teaching Practices. "This discipline is a prerequisite for the internship courses (Internship 1, master's program; Internship 2, doctorate). In the course "Teaching Practices", they will have pedagogical guidance and careful evaluation by PPG professors and peer-graduate students, in a kind of "physiology class laboratory," explains the secretariat of the PPG in Physiology.

In other programs, a recurring answer: there are no courses on teaching methodologies. Teaching regarding methodologies is the responsibility of the professor responsible for the discipline, who accompanies the teaching intern. During contact with postgraduate programs, some admitted that the teaching internship agenda is extremely important. "I see this as an important point in which the PPGCV could advance, creating a course on teaching methodologies that could bring theoretical and didactic preparation to students in teaching internship and that would help them with their teaching practices in the future, if they choose teaching track", says Professor Alan Gomes Pöppel, from the Graduate Program in Veterinary Sciences.

The students' view

At a meeting of the Graduate Association (APG) of UFRGS, the agenda of the teaching internship entered the circle, taken by the report data disclosure. As an association, the students stated that they had never thought about the topic. "We are a political institution, with many issues, and they are on the agenda according to the request of the students," explains Lucas Beraldo, representative of the entity.

Bruna da Rocha, a master's student at the PPG in Rural Development, is currently in her teaching internship. The student reported that, in this process, she can choose two classes to teach, following the model and instructions available by the professor responsible for the discipline. In her report, she says she does not take a methodology class and does not feel free to build a class in a different format. "The necessary methodological support is not available. Graduate formative experience is also teacher training, but we don't have that kind of support."

Cauã Roca Antunes explains that in the Graduate Program in Computing, the internship – and its quality – vary according to the professor responsible for the discipline. "I didn't have a clear idea of what to do," comments the student when describing his experience in the internship and concludes that there was no didactics preparation before entering the classroom to teach.

For Lucas Beraldo, from the PPG in Human Movement Sciences, the internship experience also varies according to the professor. Before starting his doctorate, he had already been a professor and has additional complaints to heat the debate about the teaching internship: "The student is exploited by the teacher, and without being paid."

Fernando Lopes has already had two teaching internships, once on a mandatory basis and once as a volunteer. He explains that, in the PPG in Psychoanalysis, the teaching training course occurs simultaneously with the teaching internship. For him, the internship period brought anguish and anxiety. "Some things are missing from the teaching internship," he says. Among them, the preparation to deal with students.

And dealing with undergraduate students is one of the points that many master's and doctoral students bring. Even if the age proximity can allow a greater connection between student and teaching intern, it can also bring discredit to their capabilities. Flávia comments that theoretically knowing the methodologies and how to prepare a class would help, but the relationship with students is mastered only in practice. "The hardest part is that the objects are there, interacting with you," she explains. Fernando agrees, pointing out that this is the most difficult part of the internship: "Being prepared for impossibilities".

Among the 89 programs, only 6 claim to have courses on teaching methodology. The most frequent answer to the question "Is there any theoretical instruction in the program about teaching methodologies for the teaching internship?" is that there is none and the activities are developed together with the teacher responsible for the subject in which the intern will work.

"The teaching internship makes it clear that we are studying, but it ends up not having the formative character," points out Lucas, who says that this issue is not just for APG, but also for the whole Institution, and an urgent agenda to be debated. Unanimously, the students stated that the internship does not prepare the student for teaching.

What does the Institution say?

The University's Vice-President for Research is aware of the problems. "The Division of Research is already working, together with the coordinators to the graduate programs, to improve the teaching internship," says Julio Barcellos. The Vice-President for Research reiterates the importance of the teaching internship for the training of students and the need to improve pedagogical training and student supervision.

"The teaching internship is a laboratory for graduate students to interact with undergraduate students to use pedagogical practices," he explains. However, there aren't any courses on pedagogical practices in several of our programs. When asked if such courses could be integrated into the curriculum, Julio stated that it would be very difficult, considering that not all professors have methodological mastery or are qualified to teach a discipline of this type. The solution, for him, would be to improve the shared knowledge between programs.

"Graduate students need to know that, when enrolled in a program, they can take any of the more than 300 courses available," he explains. He states that there is a program dedicated to pedagogy and methodology and over 40 Undergraduate Programs aimed at the teaching track, and that master's and doctoral students can enroll in any of these courses and, if they show interest in pursuing a teaching career, they should be encouraged to enroll.

Flávia, however, recalls that in the research, teaching and community outreach tripod, research is always prioritized. For the researcher, the most efficient teaching internship model is tutoring. With classes focused on methodology, the student needs to have the complete experience of preparing a teaching plan and designing assessment instruments, always under supervision. "The experienced teacher accompanies the novice teacher who is being trained."

During the graduate years, the idea that one needs to finish the master's thesis or the doctoral dissertation with a top ranking score prevails. If the student is a scholarship holder, in addition to the teaching internship, there are other requirements that he/she is expected to meet, including publication requirements. With a series of prerequisites to be fulfilled and guided by the logic of academic productivity, it is not clear whether the student will be available to fully dedicate to one more subject, focused on methodology, instead of other courses that may help him in the conclusion of his research.

Other projects

At UFRGS there are different projects aimed at teaching that demonstrate that there is the possibility of having different ways of exercising teaching during the graduate years, among them, in the Rural Development Program (PGDR) and in Production Engineering.

The PGDR maintains a partnership with different institutions – federal and state – so that graduate students can practice teaching. The project started in 2016, when the program started to participate in the Nucleus of Community Outreach and Rural Development of the National Program for Sustainable Development of Rural Territories (PRONAT), in which universities advise workers from inland territories in the mountains and on the coast, explains Gabriela Coelho, the professor responsible for the project.

Cities like São Francisco de Paula and Santo Antônio da Patrulha already had a university – UERGS, the State University of Rio Grande do Sul. By offering consultancy, UFRGS and UERGS now have a partnership. UFRGS Professors and grad students participating in the program began to teach at the UERGS. Over time, the project evolved into Federal Institutes, such as the one placed in Restinga (a district in Porto Alegre). Bruna da Rocha, a master's grad student at the PGDR, comments that the community outreach program does not count as a teaching internship. "It works like a selection process, and only doctoral students can teach classes," she explains.

The process has two stages, explains Gabriela. In the first, a theoretical one, students learn how to prepare a teaching plan, including methodology and forms of assessment. The second stage is teaching in the classroom. Those who had the opportunity to be part of the project have nothing but praise for it. Jéidi Galeano, who holds a PhD from the program, participated in the project and is now a professor at the IFRS Restinga Campus. "Participating in the project was very important for my preparation to teach," she says.

In the PPG in Production Engineering (PPGEP), students participate in the Capes/Fulbright Modernization of Undergraduate Education Program. The PPGEP was one of the eight engineering programs in the country admitted. "Both graduate students and faculty members are trained in new teaching techniques," explains the coordinator of PPGEP.

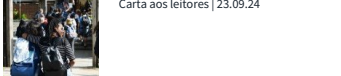
Students also have opportunities to participate in exchange programs for training at US universities, which are reference in teaching practice. To participate, the student needs to apply – and can participate in the project for one year. "This allows you to have a comprehensive training in new teaching practices, in addition to being able to work seamlessly between graduate and undergraduate courses."

Translated into English by **Luana Santos**, undergraduate student enrolled in the course "Supervised Translation Training I (English)" of the Undergraduate Program in Language and Literature, under the supervision and translation revision of Professor Elizamari R. Becker (P.h.D.) – IL/UFRGS.

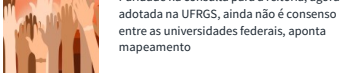
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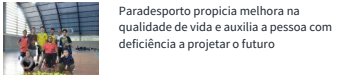
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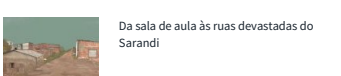
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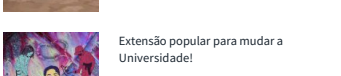
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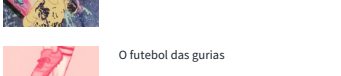
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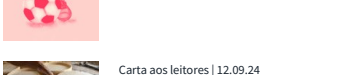
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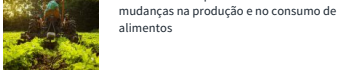
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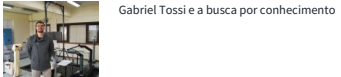
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