



Postgraduate training in Social Work in the pandemic context: challenges of Emergency Remote Teaching

*Formação pós-graduada em Serviço Social no contexto pandêmico:
desafios do Ensino Remoto Emergencial*

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Abstract: This article deals with the postgraduate training process in Social Work in Brazil in the context of Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT), in the face of the covid-19 pandemic, whose scenario was a catalyst for the counter-reforms of education in the country that, under the aegis of the neoliberalism, finds in the Bolsonaro government the stage that sharpens and exposes the lack of commitment to public education. The reflections presented here, based on bibliographic research and data analysis, are derived from the information obtained through the mappings (2021 and 2022) of the impacts of the ERT in the area of Social Work, carried out by the Association for Teaching and Brazilian Research in Social Work (Brazilian Association for Teaching and Research in Social Work —ABEPSS). The data make evident the challenges experienced in this context of exceptionality in the face of adherence to the ERT and point out the elements that need to be faced in the present time so that the damages of this teaching method do not remain as a deleterious legacy in the critical training process of the profession.

Keywords: Social Work. Postgraduate studies. Emergency Remote Teaching. Pandemic.

Resumo: Este artigo trata do processo de formação pós-graduada em Serviço Social no Brasil em contexto do Ensino Remoto Emergencial (ERE), face à pandemia da covid-19, cujo cenário foi um catalisador das contrarreformas da educação no país que, sob a égide do neoliberalismo, encontra no governo Bolsonaro o palco que agudiza e escancara o descompromisso com o ensino público. As reflexões aqui apresentadas, a partir de pesquisa

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bibliográfica e análise de dados, são oriundas das informações obtidas através dos mapeamentos (2021 e 2022) dos impactos do ERE na área de Serviço Social, realizados pela Associação Brasileira de Ensino e Pesquisa em Serviço Social (ABEPSS). Os dados evidenciam os desafios vivenciados nesse contexto de excepcionalidade frente a adesão do ERE e apontam os elementos que demandam enfrentamento no tempo presente para que os prejuízos dessa modalidade de ensino não permaneçam como herança deletéria no processo formativo crítico da profissão.

Palavras-chave: Serviço Social. Pós-graduação. Ensino Remoto Emergencial. Pandemia.

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Introduction

The themes related to the pandemic, remote/on-site education and postgraduate training in Social Work invoke the scenario in which we find ourselves in Brazil, the capitalist crisis, the social, political and health crisis, marked by an unprecedented social regression which has been taking place at least since 2015/2016 and is deepened by the global geopolitical scenario.

In relation to the covid-19 pandemic, more than 6.59 million deaths have already been recorded in the world. In Brazil, by September 2022, the Ministry of Health had counted 686.000 deaths, among which we highlight the deaths of social workers during their professional practice, recorded in the Memorial “Our grief, our struggle” (CFESS; ABEPSS, s/d), organized by the Federal Council of Social Work and by the Brazilian Association of Teaching and Research in Social Work.

In addition to the pandemic, the imperialist war between Russia and Ukraine and the global expansion of poverty, mediated by national and international political setbacks, determined the resurgence of social inequalities, as revealed by the Oxfam-Brasil Report (2022), released on 23 May 2022 during the Davos capitalist conclave.

In this context, we experience a structural crisis of capital that grows in its ultra-neoliberal, ultraconservative and predatory character, in which rights are lost and the lack of protections looms large, with the threats to life remaining, represented by the coronavirus, which only opened wide the shameful abyss of the Brazilian society, further explaining the contradictions of a capitalism in the process of productive restructuring and subject to the logic of finance.

In reality, the country was already experiencing an escalation of its deepest contradictions resulting from the crisis of capital aggravated by the advance to the extreme right in the political sphere, whose most eminent objectification was the election of Jair Messias Bolsonaro to the federal government in 2018. Although the advance of extreme right-wing neo-fascist groups is a worldwide phenomenon, it is worth analyzing the Brazilian particularities that support the so-called neoconservatism and how this is mixed with a process of radicalization of neoliberalism in the economic sphere.

Mészáros (2002) had explained that contemporary capitalism is globalizing and its socio metabolism highlights the most barbaric forms of production and social reproduction, so well evidenced in this context of capital crisis and associated with the covid-19 pandemic, when the intensification of work stands out deepened with the overexploitation in capitalism, intensifying the expressions of the social question, ethnic-racial and gender /sexuality inequali-

ties , with the growth of unemployment, of informalization, the precariousness of work and regressive measures of rights.

In early 2020, the pandemic found the country amid a deep crisis, moving towards a return to the hunger map, with frozen public budget and, consequently, more precariousness of social policies and privatization of services, with the approval of a reform of Social Security that annihilates labor rights. The denial of the disease by the federal government was part of a strategy whose explicit purpose was the genocide of the most impoverished ones.¹

Discussing the pandemic regarding the relationship between education and graduate training in Social Work reveals the perverse logic of the government that reproduces the interests of capital, the precariousness of training and the teaching work conditions, and reveals how it remains strengthened, while suffering and helplessness increase in the face of lack of protection.

Aiming to problematize, therefore, this situation and postgraduate training in Social Work in Brazil, which is sorely crossed by this logic of dismantling, this essay presents reflections and data analysis from two large mappings held by ABEPSS, in 2021 and 2022, whose objectives were to build an overview of Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) in the scope of postgraduate studies, as well as to follow up and monitor the impacts of this modality along with postgraduate programs in the area, pointing out the challenges present in the current historical period, which demand a collective confrontation of the entire category that believes and defends the critical project of the profession, so that the damage and threats of the present time do not remain as a deleterious legacy to the entire historical construction around the direction of the professional Ethical-Political Project.

The Bolsonaro government and the setbacks in education policy

Starting from the presupposition of the centrality of work as a founding element of sociability and with a contribution to the understanding of postgraduate studies as a strategic space that fulfills the task of qualifying for work, this article is part of the critical debate about this theme anchored in the present Brazilian reality , marked by a scenario of profound neglect, dismantling and misinformation, whose corollaries, not by chance, directly affect the education policy.

In the wake of successive changes in the position of Minister of Education, along the four years of the Bolsonaro government, with names involved in scandals ranging from one investigated by the Supreme Court who fled to the US, to another arrested by the Federal Police for corruption and influence peddling in the well-known *Bolsolão do MEC* ², the education port-

¹ In a society marked by profound class, race/ethnicity and gender/sexuality disparities, it is clear that this crisis will not affect everyone in the same way. Again, the most impoverished segments of the working class, especially black people, indigenous people, LGBTQIA+, will be those who will pay the dearest price. For many, it cost their own lives or those of their families, killed by covid-19, hunger or the violence resulting from this chaotic social situation.

² The *Bolsolão do MEC* became known as yet another major corruption scandal of the Bolsonaro government marked by a series of irregularities in the allocation of resources from the Ministry of Education. As part of the investigation, the Presbyterian pastor and former Minister of Education, Milton Ribeiro, was preventively arrested, suspected of acting in a broad scheme of bribes related to the release of funds from the National

folio proved to be, without a doubt, largely distant from the center of the governmental priorities of those who were in charge of the country.

In this sense, when thinking about the education agenda under the aforementioned government, it is important to recognize that it is aimed at its own destruction, a fact that is present not only in an express speech,³ but likewise in concrete data, whose successive cuts in resources corroborate the unsustainability of public policy itself. As punctuated by Mattos (2020, p. 213), “[...] the obscurantist attitude towards education and science had materially concrete repercussions, with the intensification of budget cuts to higher education institutions and agencies that support scientific production and post-graduate programs”.

This deliberate dismantling impacts since basic to higher education, whose setbacks are evidenced, for example, by the bill that amends the Law Guidelines and Basis of the National Education and the Child and Adolescent Statute, instituting *homeschooling* (Brasil, 2022b),⁴ a profoundly exclusionary proposal that denies basic rights to children and adolescents, such as fundamental socialization and contact with the plurality of ideas; as well as by the Future-se proposal which, given the budgetary bottlenecks for higher education, was presented as a way out of the spurious framework created by the government itself, with the aim “[...] that institutions [were] re-functionalized as service organizations so that they can start its self-financing, releasing the federal State from funding the public institutions under its responsibility” (Leher, 2019, p. 31).

This whole chaotic picture also advances and finds an echo in funding agencies, such as CAPES and CNPq, which are facing an acute disruption as a Brazilian heritage, either due to the lack of allocation of resources that make their full operation possible, with the purpose they bear, or because of the discontinuation of work and the wide turnover in the federal executive branch that also plagues them. Having a President of the Republic who goes public and says that students at Brazilian universities “[...] do everything but study [...]” (cf. Aluno..., 2019) categorically confirms the understanding that the Head of State has about the relevance and place of the production of knowledge in that country and, consequently, the attention they devote to the demands linked to it.

It is, therefore, a political-institutional project of dismantling Brazilian public education, which reveals the forces that operate at the core of national politics based on negationism and anti-scientificism. The setbacks are countless, aimed at weakening and/or delegitimizing the university space as a producer of knowledge and a diffuser of critical thinking. In this sense, the deleterious effects of this regrettable mismanagement are felt in the overthrow of rights hardly won by the working class.

Fund for Education Development (Fundeb) to municipal governments. Among the accusations, Milton Ribeiro is investigated for the crimes of passive corruption and prevarication, among others.

³ Among the examples of such positions, we have: Abraham Weintraub, former Minister of Education, who stated that federal universities are spaces of “[...] shambles [...]” (cf. Abraham [...], 2019); and Milton Ribeiro, also a former minister of the portfolio, who, in an interview with the show *Sem Censura*, on TV Brasil, stated that “universities, in fact, should be for a few people” (cf. Ribeiro, 2021).

⁴ Bill No. 1.338, of 2022 (Brasil, 2022b), already approved by the House of Representatives in May 2022 and which is going to be voted by the Federal Senate.

In this list, it is worth mentioning the implementation of Reuni Digital⁵, a program already on going,⁶ aimed at expanding distance education in Public Federal Universities which, under the argument of expanding access to higher education and achieving the goals of the National Education Plan, directly addresses against the inseparability between teaching, research and extension, as well as it exacerbates the precariousness of teaching, in addition to directly oppose the university perspective that we have historically defended, largely distant from the marketing logic imposed by the aforementioned *pilot program*.

It is important to highlight that, at the end of the Bolsonaro government, CAPES's Ordinance No. 315 was approved on December 30, 2022, published on the Federal Official Gazette on January 02, 2023, which authorizes the hybrid process of teaching and learning by *stricto sensu* graduate programs in Brazil (Brasil, 2023). It is a concept of education as a branch from the ERT, which makes the hybrid modality of training official, in search of new paths for the flexible reorganization of postgraduate teaching.

In a context of ERT, hybrid learning, scholarships cuts, contraction of student permanence policies and freezing of investments in education policy, it seems evident to us the intention of not only to confront the quality socially associated with public universities, but also, making use of this remaining recognition, to guarantee, through low funding, the massification of certifications and the creation of a margin to allow private capital to largely enter this structure.

In addition to the above, there is also, in progress, the bill 206/2019 (Brasil, 2019), authored by federal representative General Peternelli (União Brasil-SP), which, by confronting the gratuity of education, the outcome of hard and massive historical mobilizations, proposes the collection of monthly fees from students at public universities, in order to generate funds for their own costs.

The sociopolitical drama we are experiencing also extends to other spheres within the scope of education, whose Quota Law is a categorical example. Sanctioned in August 2012, it should, after 10 years, have been revised, which did not occur during the course of the Bolsonaro government, whose president, already in 2018, expressed his understanding regarding the affirmative actions as a “[...] misguided [...]” policy and “[...] victimhood [...]” (Bolsonaro [...], 2018, not paginated), which shows his lack of commitment and lack of seriousness in the face of a theme that is perennially dear to us in Brazilian socio-historical formation: racism (and the need to confront it) as a structural element of social relations established here.

The problem presented here takes on even more perverse contours when associated with the chronic lack of funding for education policies, which fulfills the task of increasing the already limited survival conditions of Brazilian public universities, which remain under dramatic conditions. The 2022 budget⁷ highlights this scenario whose cuts, small in relation to the Ministry of Economy (veto of only R\$ 85.9 thousand), are largely expressive when referring to

⁵ It is a program, coordinated by the Ministry of Education (MEC) and launched on June 20, 2022, which, under the formal justification, aims to increase enrollment in Brazilian public higher education through the expansion of the distance modality at federal universities.

⁶ So far, 10 universities have already joined the pilot project, namely: UFAM, UFMS, UFMT, UFCA, UFPI, UFRA, UFRRJ, UNIFAL, UNIFEI and UNILAB.

⁷ Approved in December 2021 and sanctioned on January 24, 2022.

the Ministry of Education, a department that suffered a cut of R\$ 739, 8 million (Motoryn, 2022), being, therefore, the second most affected area, behind only the Ministry of Labor and Social Security, which suffered a cut of 1 billion reais. Regarding the promotion of undergraduate, graduate, teaching, research and extension actions, it is important to highlight the loss of R\$ 4.2 million.

With a budget forecast already compromised, the course of 2022 brought new aggravating factors to the scene, when the federal government determined, in May, the cut of BRL 3.23 billion from MEC's budget, of which BRL 1 billion directly affects the institutes and federal universities — a fact that mobilized the academic community and university leaders around the agenda taken up for debate in a public hearing, held on June 15, 2022, at the Education Commission of the House of Representatives (ANDES, 2022). A new attack⁸ on education came under the spotlight in October of the same year, in the form of a blockade of over R\$2.4 billion by the Ministry of Education, a measure that took students to the streets and moved social networks against the cuts in education, aimed at the suffocation of Brazilian higher education, and resulted in a retreat by the federal government.

It is on this torn ground, of regression and attack on education and social rights, that Social Working faced the developments and challenges arising from Emergency Remote Teaching⁹, established in the country as a temporary alternative, therefore exceptional, due to the pandemic context, focused on the preservation of lives.

Impacts of the pandemic on postgraduate studies in the area of Social Work

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, in March 2020, ABEPSS has firmly positioned itself against the processes of precarious training, within the scope of undergraduate and postgraduate courses, in defense of the quality of training and democracy in institutions that promote research, thus placing itself contrary to Emergency Remote Teaching (ERE), since this is placed as yet another onslaught of capital, in the midst of education counter-reform processes, which attempt to cause precariousness, reduction, and privatize education training. As Farage (2021) points out:

Emergency remote teaching must be understood as one of the elements of the ongoing education counter-reform process in Brazil and throughout Latin America. Not only because it drives a new model of education, which cannot even be considered distance education, as regulated in Decree No. 9.057, May 25, 2017, but also because it is the outcome of a teaching work modality suitable to the process of productive restructure and precariousness of the working sphere that empties the sense of professional work of university professors (Farage, 2021, p. 55).*

⁸ **Decree No. 11.216**, of September 30, 2022, which amends **Decree No. 10.961**, of February 11, 2022, which provides for the budget and financial programming and establishes the monthly schedule for disbursements by the Federal Executive Branch for the exercise of 2022 (Brasil, 2022a).

⁹ Emergency Remote Teaching was instituted and standardized by a set of MEC ordinances, including: MEC ordinance No. 343, of March 17, 2020 (Brasil, 2020c); MEC Ordinance No. 345, of March 19, 2020 (Brasil, 2020d); MEC Ordinance No. 395, of April 15, 2020 (Brasil, 2020e); MEC Ordinance No. 473, of May 12, 2020 (Brasil, 2020f); MEC Ordinance No. 544, of June 16, 2020 (Brasil, 2020g); MEC Ordinance No. 1.038, of December 7, 2020 (Brasil, 2020h); etc.

* T.N.: All the excerpts and quotes in this article were translated from Portuguese to English by the translator.

In this sense, it is essential to understand the ERT as one of the pillars of the counter-reform of education underway in Brazil and in Latin American countries, and, above all, to understand the nefarious damages of this modality to the training project built by the Brazilian Social Work in recent decades. It is worth mentioning that the management “We breathe struggle here!” (2021 - 2022), released several notes and positions contrary to the ERT, and ABEPSS began facing the tensions and challenges of this modality, pointing out political-academic guidelines for the courses and programs in the area, aiming to preserve the social direction of the training project defended by the entity.

Considering this scenario, the aforementioned management listed as a priority action in its national planning the need to continue and deepen research on the ERT Mapping, started in the previous management, referring to the implementation and evaluation of Emergency Remote Teaching in undergraduate and postgraduate courses, scoring data referring to the pandemic, the profile of the post-graduation programs, the damages to training and the problematizations present in this debate.

In the meantime, the management of ABEPSS “We breathe struggle here!” carried out two mappings on the ERT, and, within the scope of postgraduate studies, the first¹⁰, carried out in 2021, was intended to establish a general overview of the ERT in the area of Social Work, and the second one¹¹, carried out in 2022, aimed to continue with the previous mapping, in order to accompany, monitor and apprehend the challenges posed to face-to-face and/or hybrid return in this new context, given the need to understand the reality of postgraduate programs in the area of Social Work to support actions and entity positioning.

It is essential to highlight that, during these mappings, ABEPSS mobilized dozens of undergraduate courses in Social Work, from all regions of the country, and that, in the scope of graduate studies, the first survey had the participation of all 36 programs (postgraduation) in the area, while 35 participated in the second one. With regard to methodology, both surveys were carried out via a questionnaire on *Google Forms*, based on a form consisting of open and closed questions, which was sent by e-mail to the coordinators of the 36 post-graduation programs in the Area.

For the reflections in this text, we list below some axes with the main data obtained in the 2021 and 2022 mappings, namely:

Access and permanence in postgraduate studies during the COVID-19 pandemic

The issue of access and permanence in graduate school during the period of the new coronavirus pandemic also includes admission, adherence and challenges experienced by students in the context of the ERT, as well as the situation of scholarships. This is a crucial debate that deserves our attention. The data collected in the first survey (2021) showed that, given this

¹⁰ The document “Training in Social Work and Emergency Remote Teaching” prepared by the entity is available at: https://www.abepss.org.br/arquivos/anexos/20210611_formacao-em-servico-social-e-o-ensino-remoto-emergencial-202106141344485082480.pdf. Accessed on: 8 Oct. 2022.

¹¹ Data from the second “Undergraduate and Graduate Monitoring: Training in Social Work and Emergency Remote Teaching” are available at: <https://www.abepss.org.br/arquivos/anexos/abepss-monitoramento-ere-graduacao-e-posgraduacao-202212021724546285500.pdf>. Accessed on: 29 Nov. 2022.

reality, post-graduation programs needed to build new strategies to enable the entry of new students in this challenging situation.

Such data indicated that 33 (91.7%) programs maintained the selection processes and carried them out remotely. In this scenario of exceptionality, it was also possible to observe an increase in the search for vacancies in the post-graduation programs, once 10 (27.8%) programs highlighted that there was an increase in the search for admission to the graduate program. As indicated by ABEPSS (2021), this data calls us to reflection in order to decipher what this reality has to tell us, that is, we need to understand why, during the pandemic context, in which post-graduation programs carried out selection processes mostly online, there was a significant increase in demand for postgraduate studies in the area.

It is important that we do not disconnect this analysis from the set of counter-reforms of the State in the educational field, from the impositions of international organizations that bet on the mediation of technology as a way of accessing higher education, as Farage (2021) warns, since it is essential to understand the ERT as one of the pillars of the counter-reform of education in progress, in Brazil and in the countries of Latin America, and, above all, we understand the unfortunate damage that this modality has for the training project built by the Brazilian Social Work in recent decades, as already mentioned.

It is also necessary that we carry out a concrete analysis of the concrete situation, as the Leninist maxim teaches us, in order to apprehend the objective conditions that cross these subjects who sought to enter graduate school in this period of exceptionality. Thus, we agree that:

[...] this analysis must obviously take into consideration the concrete condition of class and, consequently, the material and objective limitations not only of permanence in graduate school, but also of admission. That is, what we draw attention to regards the profile of students who are increasingly reaching postgraduate courses (Associação Brasileira de Ensino e Pesquisa em Serviço Social, 2021, p. 64).

We highlight, therefore, the research on the profile of graduate students (Ferreira *et al.*, [2018]), carried out by ABEPSS during the 2017-2018 biennium, which reveals that graduate students in the area of Social Work are mostly women (83%), among them brown-skinned (32.5%), black or *quilombola* (19.4%) and indigenous (0.2%), 1/3 with family income of up to 3 minimum wages and the majority (69%) need to carry out some work activity during graduate school to supplement their income. For this reason, we cannot lose sight of the profile of students who are increasingly joining postgraduate courses in the area, since their objective condition is linked not only to the real and concrete possibilities for entry, as it directly impacts student permanence in graduate school.

It is crucial to emphasize that, in the context of the pandemic and accession to the ERT, the biggest challenges identified during this period relate to the lack of equipment, infrastructure and internet access, as well as the fact that a portion of students residing in rural areas and/or attending classes on their cell phones, as they need to share the only computer with other people in the family, whose reality significantly impaired student participation in remote teaching activities, as evidenced by the ABEPSS survey (2021).

Additionally, the second survey also pointed out that, in this pandemic period, more than half of the programs, 20, identified a significant increase in enrollment withdrawals, the

highest incidence of which occurred in federal public institutions, especially in the year 2020, in the rising period of the COVID-19 pandemic in Brazil. The data also showed that 13 (37.1%) post-graduation programs observed high dropout rates in the last period, thus constituting an important agenda for problematization and confrontation (Brazilian Association of Teaching and Research on Social Work, 2022b).

Concerning the context of scholarships, the first survey (2021) showed that 12 (33.3%) programs had cuts in supply and 1 PPG indicated that it had lost all scholarships due to the cut in resources in 2020 — a reality that reflects the set of counter-reforms and dismantling of Brazilian education, exacerbated in the Bolsonaro government, such as Ordinance No. 1,122, of 2020 (Brasil, 2020a), of the Ministry of Science, Technology, Innovations and Communications which prioritizes investments in technological areas to the detriment of the area of Human Sciences; as well as CAPES' Ordinance nº 34/2020 (Brasil, 2020b), which prioritizes the release of scholarships for programs with higher grades, relegating support to programs with lower grades, which obviously weakens and undermines the conditions for sustaining new programs and/or regions that historically have experienced challenges to maintain themselves (Brazilian Association of Teaching and Research on Social Work, 2022b).

This scenario of intense challenges has also exposed the absence and/or fragility of policies for permanence and student assistance in the field of postgraduate studies, which is a struggle that urgently needs to be waged by the group of entities and collective subjects that are committed to Brazilian postgraduate studies. The ABEPSS survey (2022b) pointed out that 19 (54.5%) post-graduation programs mentioned offering internet; 12 (34.2%) electronic devices; 8 (22.8%) food; 5 (14.2%), housing and only 1 (0.2%), day care. On the other hand, 11 (31.4%) post-graduation programs do not offer any type of assistance to graduate students.

The data show a precarious situation of actions and initiatives for student assistance, particularly regarding basic services that greatly contribute to the democratization of access to higher education and specifically to postgraduate studies. If we think that 11 (31.4%) do not offer any type of assistance and that 27 (77.1%) of the surveyed institutions do not offer food, we understand that student assistance is characterized by precariousness and faces major challenges for student permanence (Associação Brasileira de Ensino e Pesquisa em Serviço Social, 2022b, p. 58).

Thus, this reality calls us to the fight for the construction of assistance policies and student permanence in graduate school, which must be in the order of the day, linked to the historical struggles for the defense of racial quotas in undergraduate and postgraduate courses, the expansion of the number of scholarships offered and also the readjustment of the value, considering that in March 2023 will complete 10 years without readjustment, with the current value of the master's and doctoral scholarships being too outdated and insufficient to meet the minimum needs of permanence in the postgraduate studies, according to the analysis of the National Association of Graduate Students (ANPG)¹² and the president of the Brazilian Society for the Progress of Science (SBPC).¹³

¹² It is worth highlighting the ongoing national campaign, organized by ANPG, to readjust scholarships (Campanha [...], 2022).

¹³ The president of the SBPC, Renato Janine Ribeiro, assesses that the current values of master's and doctoral scholarships are insufficient to enable students to remain in graduate school (Borges, 2022).

ERT losses for postgraduate training in Social Work

Regarding the losses of the ERT for training, both at the undergraduate and graduate levels, both surveys carried out by ABEPSS (2021 and 2022) show how disastrous this modality is for the training project hegemonically defended by the Service Social renewed. Therefore, we agree that:

[...] it is precisely this “laboratory of experimentation”, which is becoming the ERT, which must be questioned by all who consider public education a heritage conquered by the working class and defend that it be free, secular, of quality, anti-patriarchal, anti-sexist, anti-ableist, anti-LGBTphobic and universal. Therefore, it is essential to analyze the elements of the ERT and the threats posed by the administrative counter-reform for public higher education and its impacts on the professional training of Social Work (Farage, 2021, p. 55).

In the first survey, 34 (94.4%) programs reported that the ERT brought harm to the training of researchers in the area, pointing out that “[...] this perception concerns, especially, the impediment, given the current situation, of carrying out the face-to-face research with the need to resize and/or interrupt ongoing field research” (Associação Brasileira de Ensino e Pesquisa em Serviço Social, 2021, p. 77).

These data were confirmed in the following survey (2022), in which 34 of the 35 PPG respondents reaffirmed that this exceptional modality of teaching caused damage to the training project defended by ABEPSS, with 31 (93.9%) programs indicating that they carried out or will carry out actions and activities to minimize such effects.

Immersed in a context of severe dismantling with profound and direct implications for workers, such data only confirm how necessary and urgent it is to defend a face-to-face training project, anchored in criticality, aimed at the dimension of collective life in society and the rigor of the ethical-political principles that sustain the Social Work profession and its area of knowledge. Indispensable defense, especially in this context where the damage to training, already existing in previous contexts, is deepened either by the pandemic or by the logic of full-throttle setbacks by the Bolsonaro government (Associação Brasileira de Ensino e Pesquisa em Serviço Social, 2022, p. 60).

A fact that deserves reflection is that, during these almost two years of ERT, we will have a generation of graduate students, at least at the master's level, trained exclusively in this modality. Furthermore, in 2021, 14 (38.9%) post-graduation programs indicated that the ERT widened the distance between undergraduate and graduate courses — which is an affront to the training project defended by ABEPSS, which values the inseparability between undergraduate and graduate courses —, given the existence of different calendars and the difficulty of reconciling the dynamics of remote activities.

The teaching internship was also hampered in this context, since 15 (41.7%) post-graduation programs stated that they had not carried out the activity in 2021, and the 21 (58.3%) who maintained their performance, did it completely remotely, from the preparation and planning of the discipline to the execution and evaluation of activities (Associação Brasileira de Ensino e Pesquisa em Serviço Social, 2021).

In addition, the dynamics of the research groups/nuclei were also impacted, making it necessary to create other strategies in this process. The first survey showed that in 15 (41.7%) post-graduation programs a joint position was decided to maintain activities in the remote modality; another 15 (41.7%) indicated that the decision to maintain or suspend activities was up to each professor; and, among the other responses, a broad recommendation for the maintenance of activities by research centers/groups was pointed out as a trend (Associação Brasileira de Ensino e Pesquisa em Serviço Social, 2021). In the most recent survey (2022), a tendency was observed for carrying out activities of the groups/research centers in a hybrid way.

It is important to emphasize that the second survey (2022) also showed that, of the 35 post-graduation programs, 28 (80%) were already carrying out face-to-face activities, 12 (34.3%) in the hybrid mode and 7 (20%) were still in remote mode.¹⁴ It is noteworthy that, at the same time that some post-graduation programs still maintained discipline activities remotely, as they are in the process of transitioning to face-to-face attendance, the hybrid modality still shows itself as a growing trend, as a result of the experiment of remote activities during the validity period of the ERT (Associação Brasileira de Ensino e Pesquisa em Serviço Social, 2022b).

Faced with this radically adverse context, which frontally attacks public education, post-graduation and the training project defended by ABEPSS, it is imperative that we do not lose sight of the legacy built historically by the profession, as well as the need to place ourselves uncompromisingly in the trenches of struggle for its strengthening. Even because,

[...] in view of the objective conditions given by the development of research and postgraduate studies and under the influence of the Professional Ethical-Political Project, Social Work expanded its intellectual function, building a critical mass of knowledge, dependent on the formation of a culture that opposes the dominant hegemony, played by the Marxist left in Brazil, and does so without losing the unity of the relationship with professional practice, but exposing a distinction between the meaning of Social Work as an area of knowledge and a profession focused on intervention direct in reality (Mota, 2013, p. 24).

In this way, the paths trodden by the professional category in recent decades, as well as the theoretical and ethical-political choices in this process, attested to the profession not only the commitment to human emancipation and the construction of a radically free sociability, but a maturity and academic legitimacy, based on the solidification of an important critical intellectual collection in the field of social sciences, not limited only to an intervening profession, but to an important area of knowledge production, which opposes the dominant ideology, as evidenced by Mota (2013).

Mental health and teaching work conditions

Regarding the mental and/or physical health condition of students and teachers in this ERT process, the first survey (2021) showed that 35 (97.2%) post-graduation programs identified illness processes among students and/or teachers during the new coronavirus pandemic and, in the second (2022), 14 (40%) post-graduation programs pointed to a process of physical

¹⁴ It is important to point out that the numerical totality of these data exceeds the number of respondent programs (35), due to the fact that within the same PPG, the coexistence of more than one teaching modality was signaled.

and/or mental illness of students, while 33 (94.3%) programs had teachers affected by COVID-19. This reality cannot be understood apart from the process of deepening the structural crisis of capital, the precariousness and intensification of work, as well as the degradation and trivialization of life, especially in this pandemic context (Brazilian Association of Teaching and Research on Social Work, 2022b).

Still in this area, the second survey also showed that 22 (62.8%) of the 35 respondent programs signaled lack of motivation on the part of the postgraduate student body, related to conditions in the home environment, mental and physical health issues and challenges access to technologies. Another equally important situation, pointed out by 15 (42.8%) post-graduation programs, is in relation to the freezing of scholarships and, therefore, the challenges of staying in graduate school (Brazilian Association of Teaching and Research on Social Work, 2022).

It is important to mention that the answers also indicated the difficulty of reconciling work, academic, family and domestic life - which reaffirms that the challenges for entering and remaining students in the scope of the graduate program in Social Work are fundamentally related to the concrete conditions of class, gender, race/ethnicity, sexuality and territory, considering the profile of these students, as previously mentioned.

The 2022 survey also presented data on the context of teaching work, which deserves attention, since 34 (97.2%) post-graduation programs showed a profound process of intensification of teaching work in this pandemic scenario, a fact that denotes not only an intrinsic characteristic to the capitalist mode of production, but especially the possibility of its aggravation through remote teaching (Brazilian Association of Teaching and Research on Social Work, 2022). Therefore, we understand that:

[...] postgraduate training has been directly affected in the context of the capital crisis associated with economic, social, political, health crises and the denial of science that devastates scientific-academic relations in teaching-learning methodologies (use of technologies), research, production of knowledge and others that produced significant impacts on the formation and management of Graduate Programs in Social Work (Brazilian Association of Teaching and Research on Social Work, 2021, p. 80).

This disastrous scenario leaves us with no choice but to resist collectively in the fight against all the precariousness of education and training in Social Work, reaffirming the historical defense of professional entities for an education that is public, free, secular, critical, quality, socially referenced and committed to emancipatory values. It is in this trench that, as a guardian of the training project hegemonically defended by the category, ABEPSS places itself!

Final considerations

Based on the data from the last Census of Higher Education by the National Institute of Educational Studies and Research Anísio Teixeira (2022), in the period from 2011 to 2020, there was a colossal growth in distance learning courses, which in a short period of time assumed the following percentages: technological (863.3%), bachelor's degree (829.1%) and teaching degree (170.5%). Of the 19,626,441 vacancies offered in 2020, 68.9% were in the distance modality and only 31.1% in the face-to-face, a fact that leads us to another data: 95.6% of this to-

tal of vacancies were offered by private institutions, while only 4.4% were offered by public institutions.

The synthesis of this information brings us to the center of the reflection proposed here: if distance learning in undergraduate education reached titanic proportions over the course of 10 years, bringing with it a profound precariousness in Brazilian higher education, the ERT, both in undergraduate and graduate courses, due to its time, must be seen in the character of exceptionality that belongs to it, aiming not to become yet another endorsement of the perspective of, in the name of democratizing access to education, acting in the direction of training reduction, the commodification of education, the precariousness of work and the scrapping of higher education — given that it is an instrument that reinforces the country's social, regional, ethnic-racial and gender inequalities, while reserving fragile and accelerated training for the most impoverished segments.

In the carried-out mappings, a decline in the quality of postgraduate training was identified and the losses caused by training in the ERT modality that have affected postgraduate programs in Social Work. Although the return to face-to-face teaching is mostly observed, we are concerned about the hybridization trend in postgraduate studies, in the sense that the exceptional moment of the ERT and the toning of the hybrid modality, may become perennial and endorse the privatist and market perspective starting from the mixture of teaching activities, research, defense of dissertations and theses, study groups/centers and others with the use of digital resources via information and communication technologies (ICTs) to complete the workload of pedagogical activities .

Apart from that, considering Ordinance No. 315/2022 of CAPES (Brasil, 2023), recently published, which makes official and provides guidelines for blended teaching for postgraduate students, we are concerned with structuring this modality to strengthen the distance learning, at the same time that the digital educational apparatus presents itself as a tendency to convert the face-to-face perspective into a hybrid one, signaling to a paving in the direction of the hybridization of graduate studies. These are challenges and concerns that echo and are also directly associated with the precariousness and lightening that put the quality of postgraduate training at risk.

As signaled throughout the text, the current historical period is crossed by constant challenges, which were deepened in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, in particular by the imposition of the ERT. Throughout this process, ABEPSS remained coherent, firm and fierce in the fight for the qualification of graduate and postgraduate training, reaffirming the defense of face-to-face teaching and the socio-political direction historically constructed by the renewed Social Work. In addition, ABEPSS produced numerous debates, documents, live transmissions, publications, subsidies and political-academic guidelines, available on the entity's pages and website, directing and strengthening graduate programs and undergraduate courses across the country to endorse the fights in the uncompromising defense of the critical legacy and the training project built historically by the profession.

It is in this direction, with the clearness of our side in the class struggle, of the profession and training project that we defend, as well as the magnitude of the challenges of the present time, that we need to continue in defense of the legacy built by renewed Social Work, elaborating answers for training and professional work, in view of the old and new demands that

have been placed on the profession in this profoundly chaotic scenario. We end, therefore, with the powerful reflections of Marilda Iamamoto (2015) when she reminds us that:

The moment we live in is a moment full of challenges. More than ever, courage is needed, hope is needed to face the present. You have to resist and dream. It is necessary to nurture dreams and make them come true on a daily basis in the horizon of new times that are more humane, fairer, more supportive (Iamamoto, 2015, p. 17).

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