


CHALLENGES OF THE UNIVERSITY TRAJECTORY IN BRAZIL: REPORTS OF THE FIRST GRADUATES OF THE FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF AGRESTE DE PERNAMBUCO (UFAPE)

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Catarina da Silva Souza¹

ABSTRACT

The article discusses the university trajectories of the first graduates of the Federal University of Agreste de Pernambuco (UFAPE). The institution, created in 2005 as an Academic Unit of the Federal Rural University of Pernambuco, in the context of REUNI, played an important role in the democratization of higher education, offering access to quality public education in the interior of the state of Pernambuco. To understand the experiences of these students, the study analyzes elements such as academic daily life, teachers, classes, projects, challenges, and contributions of the university to professional and citizenship training. The research used a qualitative approach and the methodology of Oral History, adopting a case study to investigate the trajectories of the first graduates of the Federal University of Agreste de Pernambuco (UFAPE). With a focus on understanding lived experiences, data collection was carried out through interviews with open questions, and analyzed based on the content analysis methodology, which allowed for categorizing and organizing the significant elements (Bardin, 2011). The interviewees' testimonies highlighted moments of overcoming and coping with difficulties. They reported that the institution, through its organization, professors, employees, institutional programs, and policies, played an essential role in stimulating the training, permanence, and completion of the courses, evidencing the relevance of these elements in the university environment. The survey demonstrated how access to higher education was a significant milestone in the lives of the interviewees, especially for those from lower classes. The reports showed that factors such as social relationships, participation in academic activities, and the support of professors were essential for the trajectory and completion of the courses. The research reinforces education as a crucial tool for building a more just and egalitarian society.

Keywords: Trajectory. University. Graduates.

¹ Doctor in Education

Federal University of Agreste de Pernambuco

E-mail: catarina.souza@ufape.edu.br

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0095-4229>

LATTES: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/1512422081907295>

INTRODUCTION

This article is part of the research carried out in the doctoral course, in the Graduate Program in Education of the Federal University of Pernambuco (UFPE), in the Center for Identities and Memories, and proposes to discuss aspects present in the university trajectory of students in our country, considering the context of democratization that occurred through the Support Program for Restructuring and Expansion Plans of Federal Universities (REUNI).

Given this, we have as a general objective, to understand the university trajectory of the first graduates of the Federal University of Agreste de Pernambuco (UFAPE), and as specific objectives, to identify elements that permeated their experiences in the institution, to analyze important aspects of the academic day-to-day, the professors, the classes, the projects, the colleagues, the facilities and the difficulties faced and to reflect on the relevance of these factors in the university environment.

UFAPE is characterized by being the first Federal University in Brazil installed through REUNI, in the city of Garanhuns (PE), in 2005, initially as an Academic Unit of the Federal Rural University of Pernambuco (UAG/UFRPE), through Resolution No. 44 of April 26, 2005, of the University Council (CONSU/UFRPE), to democratize the access and permanence of students in a federal public university, free and quality, also contributing to the strengthening of the region as an educational hub.

Thus, on September 5, 2005, the first Academic Unit of the Country's Expansion Process was inaugurated, and its inaugural class was celebrated on the same date. However, as the university had not yet built its headquarters, it was necessary to rent a building belonging to the Presbyterian College Quinze de Novembro, in the city of Garanhuns, to start academic activities (Cordeiro, 2018).

Only in the first semester of 2007, did the academic unit begin to operate in its headquarters in two buildings, called Building I and Building II, where administrative activities and classrooms operated.

Subsequently, the unit increased its physical facilities with the construction of more classroom buildings and teachers' rooms, laboratories, a veterinary hospital, a farm, a library, a university residence, a sports court, canteen, among others. With this, it doubled its physical space and also increased its human assets through the staff of servers and teachers. Considering this trajectory, we also observe as proof of its growth the number of vacancies offered in undergraduate courses, which went from 120 to 560 per year, a fact

that consolidates its relevance in the city and the lives of the population.

Given this scenario, from 2016 onwards, discussions began about the process of emancipation of the academic unit. The Institution had its emancipation through Law No. 13,651 of April 11, 2018 (Brasil, 2018), published in the Official Gazette of the Union (D.O.U.) on 04/12/2018, changing its name to the Federal University of Agreste de Pernambuco.

The transformation of UAG/UFRPE into UFAPE was built based on justifications that went through territorial insertion, socioeconomic aspects, adaptation to the National Education Plan (PNE), Undergraduate and Graduate Education, research, and extension.

Studies carried out on the impacts of UFAPE on social and economic development, mainly in the municipalities of Garanhuns and Agreste Meridional, were carried out and demonstrated several transformations that occurred from the expansion policy (Gewehr, 2021; Souza, 2019; Cordeiro, 2018).

Thus, the trajectory of the respective students in the institution went through the period from 2005 to 2010, depending on the curricular matrix of each course. In this aspect, we reflect on the trajectory of the institution's participants, addressing aspects such as daily life, teachers, classes, projects, and friends, in short, elements that permeated their experiences in this context.

Thus, the implementation of a federal university in the interior of Pernambuco enabled the researched group to access a level of professional and citizenship training that until then was only available in the capital Recife. According to the interviews, we were able to visualize the importance of the expansion and democratization of higher education in the country in the lives of each of the interviewees.

METHODOLOGY

We developed the research using the qualitative approach, through a case study, since it proved to be the most appropriate for the investigation of our object, as it enabled its analysis within its real context in an in-depth and detailed study (Creswell, 2010).

Thus, we used the methodology of Oral History to establish and order our procedures and the collection of qualitative data, using a script of open questions, because through it it is possible to understand how the past was interpreted, to enable the documentation of a vision of what was experienced, seeking to understand it through the narrative of the individuals who experienced it. This means that, regardless of "failures",

"distortions" or "forgetfulness" that may occur, it is important to analyze these aspects taking into account the meaning of these variations, because what we are looking for are the experiences lived (Meihy, 2005; Alberti, 2013; Ferreira and Amado, 2006; and Thompson, 1998).

The interpretation and analysis phase of the interviews took place through content analysis. The use of this analysis methodology allowed the creation of categories through classification criteria, favoring the organization of the elements of analysis and, in addition, the establishment of relationships between them, that is, "it is the method of categories, a kind of drawers or significant rubrics that allow the classification of the constitutive elements of meaning, of the message" (Bardin, 2011, p.37).

The first courses to be installed at UFAPE were Agronomy, Veterinary Medicine, Higher Normal, and Animal Science, in 2005, which marked the beginning of academic activities at the institution. To meet the demands of the Ministry of Education (MEC) and following the discussions on the nature and function of the Normal Superior courses in the face of the Pedagogy courses, which are already recognized as responsible for teacher training to work in Early Childhood Education and the Early Years of Elementary Education, the IES decided to replace the Normal Superior course with the Undergraduate Course in Full Degree in Pedagogy, in February 2007.

Given this, we carried out a survey, together with the Department of Registration and Academic Control of the Federal University of Agreste de Pernambuco (DRCA/UFAPE), of the list of graduates of the selected courses to verify those who fit the inclusion criterion of the research, which would be the completion of the course. Graduates who did not complete their respective undergraduate courses were excluded.

To go against the grain of research that reports on school failure, without, however, failing to recognize its importance, we adopted this criterion. We believe that researching cases of school success allows us to identify the factors that contribute to the good performance of students, reverberating in practices that promote successful strategies in the university environment and broadening academic debates in this regard.

To carry out our research, we had a universe of 76 graduates, 18 from the Pedagogy course, 18 from the Agronomy course, 21 from the Veterinary Medicine course, and 19 from the Animal Science course. Thus, we draw one graduate from each course. Thus, we interviewed four individuals who, given the objectives of our research, met the inclusion criteria and were identified as: Animal Scientists, agronomists, Veterinarians, and

Pedagogue.

The interviews were carried out in 2023, on days and times scheduled by the interviewees, remotely and in person according to their availability, being recorded and transcribed for analysis.

RESULTS

During the testimonies about the period in which they were at UFAPE, we could perceive a common point among the interviewee's speeches of great admiration and pride for having been part of and experienced the entire process of implementing an institution, where they made a point of highlighting the moments of overcoming that were necessary. Reports about the difficulties present in this period were also common.

The research participants reported that the HEI, its form of organization, its professors, employees, institutional programs, and its policies acted to stimulate the formation, permanence, and completion of the respective courses, evidencing the importance of these aspects in the university environment.

DISCUSSION

During the research, we sought to understand the trajectory of the first graduates of UFAPE, addressing important aspects of daily life, teachers, classes, projects, colleagues, facilities, and difficulties, in short, to identify elements that permeated their experiences in the institution, since, after managing to overcome the barrier of entry to higher education, the deponents had to fight for permanence and completion.

According to the results of research carried out by Zago (2006) and Costa and Picanço (2020), it is wrong to consider access to higher education "school success", because this aspect alone is not enough, this success goes far beyond, it is necessary to consider other characteristics such as the choice of course and the conditions of insertion and permanence. According to Zago (2006, p. 233), "If entering higher education represents a 'victory' for this group of students, the other will certainly be to guarantee their permanence until the end of the course".

Upon entering the institution, the deponents reported that they started their activities in a temporary building and felt the lack of many materials and a better physical structure. It was common to report on classes attended under some trees in this space, which was

usually associated with a good memory. In addition, faculty, administrative technicians, and other employees were cited in a mixture of admiration and overcoming.

When describing their trajectories at UFAPE, the research participants report that they felt very happy with the approval, were very excited, and also enjoyed good and bad moments. At first, they commented that they felt many difficulties with the physical infrastructure of the institution since they were in a temporary building, which did not have so many resources for the courses, as shown in the following excerpt,

[...] Not to mention that the agronomy course, unlike the other courses that were there, mainly, is, those that had more practice in the field, we were more outdated because there was no laboratory, there was no experimental field, there was nowhere to plant, it was all a bureaucracy to be done. It was more complicated. Different, many times, from the veterinary course, the animal science course, when they had anatomy in the first period, they had an incredible place there, there was the Zoonoses Center, which I even had a colleague who was a monitor, he went straight to the zoonoses center, there was the cattle clinic, there was support. The people in agronomy didn't have it [...]. Yes, I see, we struggled a lot to be the first, right? (Agronomist, 2023).

Brazilian Higher Education has faced and continues to face great challenges since its implementation, and, according to Silva (2001), one of its major problems is the scarcity of financial resources. According to Mancebo, Vale, and Martins (2015, p.39), one of the criticisms received by the university expansion program would be about the resources allocated to improving the infrastructure of the institutions that would be "insufficient to meet the ongoing expansion and for the quality of academic activities".

For Lima and Machado (2016), the criticisms made of the democratization and growth of higher education permeate the agenda of the loss of quality, a discussion that, according to the authors, is far from a consensus even because of the very clash around the definition of quality.

The participants reported, in their statements, that the structural difficulties encountered during the beginning of their respective courses made the teaching-learning process difficult at times, as they often did not have laboratories and materials for practical classes, in addition to there being few books made available by the library sector. For Lima and Machado (2016), we cannot ignore the existence of several problems generated by the expansion or accentuated by it.

For Peñaloza (2022), the political guidelines in our country seek to reduce or not expand financial support to public universities, even in the face of demands for increased vacancies and production. Therefore, the reports of the research participants demonstrate

that there were structural problems in the HEI, not only because it was a temporary building, but because of the entire context of the implementation of a new university.

Given this, "REUNI emerges at a time and context of increased investments by the Federal Government in Brazilian public education" (Lima; Machado, 2006, p.403), but, even with the resources allocated to the program, the research participants reported experiences of structural difficulties at the same time that they recognized that, during the process of implementing the university, and, especially, with the beginning of the construction of the definitive building, these problems gradually decreased, according to the report of the Zootechnician.

[...] When we were already finishing, then it was already much more structured in comparison, right? And then a year or two after I finished, when I was in my master's degree, I came to do my master's analysis here [Garanhuns]. Because I had to change projects there in Recife, yes, my advisor wanted me to extend it and I told him that I had no condition to extend it because I couldn't stay in Recife. Then I spoke with Professor Keila here [Garanhuns], and the laboratory was already very, very, very structured. And then I did my master's analysis all here [Garanhuns], and then at that time there was already a soil nutrition laboratory, there was already a lot of stuff, right? But in our time (Zootecnista, 2023).

Despite the structural difficulties reported, all agreed to say that they enjoyed good times at the institution. In this aspect, there was also unanimity about the importance of the professors throughout the course period, who encouraged and supported the students, as observed in the following reports:

Before it was complicated, but I liked the people there, right? There was a period when I spent in the laboratory, it was good, that I had company. My teachers, who I still have a friendship with, especially Marcelo Metri who is, who was my PIBIC advisor, I am friends with him. Okay, that's what remains, besides the fact that I learned a lot, right? (Agronomist, 2023).

And then when I entered, the chemistry discipline, [...], I didn't like chemistry before. [...]. Then I liked it a lot because I had great teachers, right? That it was Suzana Rufino, there was a math teacher that he had, we had no math teacher, right? That Sansuke arrived later. Then all these chemistry and math teachers I had were wonderful, right? I was delighted and I learned, right? Then once, we organized this party business, freshman, to raise money for the class, then I took one and a half in a chemistry test, then the teacher said: my God, you took one and a half, I was so hoping that you would be my monitor next semester. Then that drove my mind crazy, right? Then I said: my God, I'm going to have to recover this grade because the teacher said I was going to be a monitor. Then I studied, studied, studied, to do the third VA [Learning Verification] and eliminate that grade, right? Then I studied, then I don't remember the grade I got, but like, I got a good grade and such, then I passed and then when it was the following semester, she opened the monitoring selection. Then there was the proof, right? [...]. Then I studied for the test [...]. Anyway, there it was me and Mábio, monitors of the discipline (Zootecnista, 2023).

[...]. If you ask the teachers, they always say, the first class was a class, right? Because we weren't victims and we were very interested, right? So, it was a good group, it wasn't so bad [...]. Because there we had teachers who did everything for us, yes, they took it out of their pockets to do it, get material for us, we don't know that from them, then we found out, right? (Veterinarian, 2023).

Then at the time, Professor Marcelo, who is a cover, Juliene, right? Professor Claudio. And all the others, all good teachers. Only a doctor [...]. At that time I had to be a doctor. So everyone doctor. None from here [Garanhuns]. For some professors, it was their first university class. So they gave it their all, knowing that that university was the first academy in the countryside, right? So they gave it their all. I get goosebumps to talk about it and so it was too good, too good, they like that, they gave us a lot of strength, a lot of strength (Pedagogue, 2023).

Through these excerpts, we were able to apprehend that the institution's professors played an important role in the lives of students, impacting their actions, to encouraging them to stay at the university and study. It was observed, during the analysis of the interviews, that these experiences aroused admiration and recognition for their efforts in classroom practice by our interviewees. These facts did not stop at just one course, since different experiences were mentioned by all and demonstrated positive results, so it was possible to observe that the commitment of the professors went beyond the transfer of knowledge.

For Junges and Behrens (2015), the work of the teacher in higher education is justified through the transposition of scientific knowledge into meaningful learning for students. In addition, with the expansion of higher education and the diversity of students, teachers must understand the context in which they teach, to whom, and how they teach. Thus, this work goes beyond the domain of knowledge in its discipline, it is necessary that "[...] the teacher also acts on the pedagogical foundations of the teaching-learning process, allied to the knowledge of his experience and his scientific production" (Junges; Behrens, 2015, p.286).

According to Borralho, Fialho, and Cid (2012), university professors must be concerned, above all, with making them learn, increasing, this learning process, in addition to basic professional skills, autonomy, critical thinking, and reflection.

A characteristic that caught our attention in this part of the interviews was the establishment of a certain degree of friendship that the interviewees reported having been able to establish with some of their teachers, which also had a significant contribution to their training processes.

In research on teaching practice in Higher Education, Junges and Behrens (2015) conducted interviews with a group of teachers at this level of education, launching reflections on their pedagogical practices. When analyzing the teachers' answers about the relationships with the students, the authors stated that, as they began to get closer together, the students began to show more interest in the classes, so a mutual increase in trust and commitment was perceived.

For the authors, partnerships between teacher and student contribute to better participation of the student body, because "[...] interested and committed students stimulate the teacher's work, favor dialogical communication, discovery, and meaningful learning" (Junges; Behrens, 2015, p.305).

When the teacher encourages the participation and collaboration of students during classes, projects, and other academic activities, positive impacts are produced in the learning process that results in better academic performance (Borralho; Fialho and Cid, 2012).

Given this, it is possible to affirm that the teaching work in higher education goes beyond the professional training of its students since the commitment also encompasses the citizenship and ethical training of people who will interfere in the construction of society (Junges; Behrens, 2015), a characteristic that we could observe through the reports of the interviewees when they commented on the good experiences they had with their teachers.

In addition, it was also possible to observe reports on participation in academic research and extension activities, which contributed in several aspects to the permanence and intellectual and professional growth in the specific areas of each deponent.

[About your participation in PIBIC] Yes. I think it was about two and a half years. I don't remember. I was a monitor too. I was a monitor of the physics discipline. That was, the teacher was Carlindo, [...] a figure [laughs]. That was one of the most fun periods I had at UAG, it was the period when I was Carlindo's monitor. [...]. And PIBIC was with Marcelo Metre. In the area of soils (Agronomist, 2023).

[...] Then I spent a year, then I was doing an extension project with the same chemistry teacher, and then, other monitoring appeared other projects, and then I started to participate, I changed to Cleber Regis, he taught me a lot of things, especially how to write, right? Which was the first trip like this, to a congress, to present work, it was all up to him (Zootecnista, 2023).

We had classes at the zoonosis centers, we said that we were going to gnaw on bones there because we were going to prepare the pieces, so we didn't use the pieces, we prepared them from the other classes they were using. [...] So here we noticed a difference of, oh we have to do monitoring, we have to do initiation, we

have to do it, right? PIBIC, PIC, and everything else. So we had a lot of this here [...] (Veterinária, 2023).

[...] Yes, we spent some time teaching in Capoeiras, in a community that has in Capoeiras, a very poor community. And we went there several times to guide the teachers. The teacher formed a class and we went to guide the teachers there because it was those teachers without much training, who taught the community and so it was a lot of learning (Pedagogue, 2023).

According to the Federal Constitution of 1988 (Brazil, 1988), it was established, in its Article 207, that, "universities enjoy didactic-scientific, administrative, and financial and patrimonial management autonomy and shall obey the principle of inseparability between teaching, research and extension". Thus, it is up to these institutions to insert such activities into their daily lives.

Through the reports, we observed that, while they were undergraduates, the deponents had the opportunity to participate in monitoring activities, and research, through the Institutional Program of Scientific Initiation Scholarships (PIBIC) and the Voluntary Scientific Initiation Program (PIC), and extension, recognizing the importance of these activities in their training.

Law No. 5,540 of 1968 (Brasil, 1968) establishes the rules for the organization and functioning of Higher Education, to establish, in its Article 41, that "universities must create the functions of monitor for undergraduate students [...]". To promote initiation to teaching, UFAPE describes in its PDI 2023-2028 (UFAPE, 2023) that monitoring is a collaboration between professor and student monitor and between student monitor and their monitors.

Through monitoring programs, the interest in teaching is stimulated in the student. In addition, there is also the possibility of deepening knowledge of the discipline's area of expertise, assisting in the teaching/learning process, thus becoming an active, cognitive, constructive, meaningful, mediated, and self-regulated process (Gonçalves, et al., 2021).

In the same way, scientific initiation (CI) is also configured as an instrument for the construction and development of critical thinking, which is one of the paths for the training of researchers, since it inserts students in the practice of research.

For Cabrero and Costa (2015), USR activities are an obligation of universities, thus they are configured as a training mechanism and cannot be confused with a passing task. In addition, with USR, students have the opportunity to develop research projects, experience debates through interaction with other researchers, and learn about the

processes used in the generation of new knowledge, thus contributing to the acquisition of maturity and other values indispensable to the academic career.

In this regard, Canaan and Nogueira (2015) state that the opportunity to participate in USR research develops, in students, greater mastery of the set of dispositions necessary for the development of scientific activity, such as, for example, the knowledge of academic codes and language and their appropriate use.

Costa (2021) complements by stating that initiation stimulates the learning process and development of skills, enabling research to be carried out in different contexts, and providing students with the opportunity to awaken through the academic area. Another aspect observed by Cabrero and Costa (2015, p.112) and Bardagi and Hutz (2012) in their research is that, generally, few undergraduate students involved in research drop out or interrupt their higher education course, so this is another effect of involvement with university activities.

In addition to scientific initiation, university extension activities not only promote science but also stimulate the search for solutions to the various problems observed in the fields of activity of professors and students.

Resolution No. 6/2022 of UFAPE, which provides for its extension policy, in its Art. 2, clarifies that.

[...] the extension aims to promote dialogical interaction between higher education institutions and other sectors of society, through the exchange of knowledge, the production and application of knowledge, aiming at the student's protagonism in his or her training as a professional-citizen and social transformation (UFAPE, 2022).

According to Nunes and Silva (2011), through extension, the university receives demands from the community that contemplate its real needs, desires, and aspirations, at the same time that it brings knowledge and/or assistance so that this interaction contributes to the development and improvement of the quality of life of the community in which it is inserted, thus exercising its social responsibility.

Thus, there is an exchange between the systematized knowledge of the academy and the popular knowledge, enabling the confrontation with the local reality and providing the participation of the community (Silva, *et al.*, 2019). In this way, extension, combined with teaching and research, produces profound changes in the pedagogical process, since it enables the teachers and students involved to constitute themselves as subjects in the act of learning.

In addition to the activities mentioned, the research participants also reported several experiences with practical classes and participation in scientific congresses. At this point in the interviews, we observed that the reports were accompanied by smiles, a feeling of pride they had in participating in scientific events, satisfaction in getting to know new places that until then had not had the opportunity, and, once again, recognition of the efforts made by the professors at this stage, whether in the writing of the articles presented or in the trips to the experiences, According to the following excerpts:

There was, the first time I went to Recife, no, it was no, no, it was a congress that I went to, I was in the second period, then it was in Recife, but I had already gone to Recife to take the entrance exam. There were some places, in the countryside, in Alagoas, Santana do Ipanema, it was through UAG, João Pessoa, I had never been, then I went to a congress through UAG. yes, let me see more, Maceió for a congress too, but Maceió I already knew. So, it was a few more places nearby. Here near Garanhuns (Zootechnician, 2023).

We went, we were close, we were in nearby cities, I think we went to Saloá, we went to Gravatá, we went to Recife, they were closer places, but we could have practical classes with their knowledge [teachers], right? Producers, friends or their own family. We went to a practical class in gynecology, part of animal production, we had a practical class, we went to viruses, bacteriosis, we had a practical class, then there was one, something they did for a week in Recife, we went, everyone, we took practical classes in various areas there, surgeries, clinics, Because we hadn't had anything here. And our practical class was a week. We went to the hospital, right? there. They achieved this, we went there to have a practical class (Veterinária, 2023).

[...] once [laughs] we had nothing to do [laughs] everyone went to the source of the Mundaú here, the teacher said look, Professor Cláudio said, tomorrow everyone will go to the spring, see? Get ready because we are going into the woods. Oh my daughter, mud, everyone in sneakers, the mud was here [laughs, pointing to the knee], we look, and the sneakers didn't do any good [laughs]. We put our foot in the mud and went to the spring, the most beautiful thing in the world, the spring. [...] Then we went to the spring, to see the spring, a spring, to get water from the spring to analyze, then to study about riparian forest, these things, right? That at the time the spring was already like this with the riparian forest well, like, little that you can, you know there is a distance, right? From the source to the riparian forest, right? And at that time we went and found that [...]. We traveled, my daughter, we have our names here, in Elfe, a congress that takes place, every year this congress takes place and then we went, we participated in this congress. Along with Juliene, right? At the time, it was Juliene who guided us. We traveled to so many places, we went to the Catimbau Valley without any experience [laughs], there it goes, everyone goes to the Catimbau Valley, with a drop of water, in the summer, little got sick afterwards, almost fainted [laughs], I myself almost fainted [laughs]. [...] We went to Recife several times, we went to visit the academic unit there. I lived there, I already knew it, but I went with the boys to visit. We walked in that school park, with teacher Marcelo and teacher Juliene and teacher Claudio, right? Who else hung out with us. We went to many places. [...] I remembered something, we went to Recife, on the way back, he made a detour and went to the coast, then Sadraque saw the sea for the first time. Woman, he was like this, look, standing like this, with his arm crossed, think about happiness, of all of us, right? Especially from the teacher who provided him with this, right? Seeing the sea for the first time, imagine. Is there anything

more beautiful than the sea? Woman, tell me if we have anything bad to say about these professors at this university? (Pedagogue, 2023).

We can consider that, through these activities, it is possible to involve students in scientific discussions, expanding their worldviews, because, by encouraging reflection and interaction with different thoughts and environments, it is possible to stimulate the criticality of individuals.

For Cabreiro and Costa (2015), even if the student has participated in scientific initiation, extension and/or monitoring activities and does not opt for an academic career, when entering the job market, he will have a differentiated profile, because the experience in these contexts produces a better intellectual resourcefulness in the professional field.

During the reports, the deponents commented on some scholarships received during the realization of these projects, with the exception of Pedagogue, who claimed not to have received scholarships. For them, the scholarship helped them stay and encourage them to continue at the institution. However, we also observed that they developed many other activities on a voluntary basis, claiming that the experiences would bring many benefits to their training.

The participants reported that they received research, extension and monitoring grants, as follows:

And it was the period that kept me at university, it was what held me back. Because when I was in the third period I did another, another selection process for Physics, Degree in Physics at Rural but in Recife but I was not able to stay there and not even my father would be able to keep it there, because my sister was already studying in another capital which is in João Pessoa [...]. Then it wasn't possible, then in addition to being closer to home I was starting to receive a scholarship. Then he held me. (Agronomist, 2023).

But, like, at the beginning of graduation I did everything, everything, everything that came up I did and it was all without a scholarship, right? And then it is, even I made waves, said when, one day they look at me and will say, let's give the bag here to this poor guy, everything that is free he does, I said one day there will be a bag, right? And then I think that, then there was an extension scholarship with the chemistry teacher, that's when the first things started to appear [laughs]. [...]. When I entered the monitoring it was in the second [period] and then I think from the second to the third that there was the extension project, then there was an extension project scholarship, and then I think that when I was in the fourth period I joined Cleber Régis, right? For genetic improvement, in PIBIC. But it was me, Catarina and Luciana. And then there was only one bag, but we had agreed that, for whoever the scholarship came out, we would divide it among the three. And then the scholarship was three hundred reais, then it was one hundred reais for each (Zootechnician, 2023).

She [the professor] said she was going to make a shirt for me who was friends from the university [laughs], because I did everything without a scholarship, because at the time I didn't have it either. So I was very much a volunteer for everything. I think I only received a scholarship in PIBIC that was shared with Wando, we were a scholarship for both of us and we shared it. So I think it was the only thing I had in terms of remuneration from the university, the rest was all solidarity, all without receiving a scholarship, everything, then she said I'm going to make a friend shirt from the university. And I was up for everything because, I said, everything is an experience for life, like that, I may not use it in veterinary medicine, but I do, I'll learn somehow, so if a project comes up that wasn't, which was chemistry, which was, I'll do it! Ah, but it won't. Later on I'll go and it'll be good for something, right? It may not serve in the practice of veterinary medicine, but it serves as a person itself (Veterinária, 2023).

For Cabrero and Costa (2015), this difficulty in obtaining scholarships happens because, due to the great demand and because it is a matter of resources from research funding agencies and the universities themselves, there is no way to pass on a scholarship to all students, which results in disputed selection processes. Therefore, there is a large number of students acting as volunteers in research and extension activities.

We understand that, by increasing the number of these types of scholarships, it is possible to attract a greater number of students who have a vocation for teaching and research, which ends up contributing to the strengthening of national science.

However, there are cases in which the receipt of some financial aid becomes crucial for the student's permanence in public universities, this happens because, according to research carried out by Pacheco and Ristoff (2004, p.12), "[...] About 25% of potential university students are so needy that they cannot afford to enter higher education even if it is free." This demonstrates that, in addition to free education, students depend on scholarships (study, work, monitoring, extension and research), university restaurants, student housing, among other actions that enable their stay on campus.

It is worth emphasizing, in view of this, that, during the period in which he was at UFAPE, Agronomist was the only one, among the research participants, who did not have his family members residing in Garanhuns, so he had to rent a place to be able to attend classes.

It was like his pension there, because it was a rental with, in the beginning, I think it was me and seven other people all from the same city. Then we moved places, but it was always me and someone else, it was never me alone, always two or three more people, it was a lot of people. [...] divided everything (Agronomist, 2023).

This report demonstrates the impact of the implementation of the university in the interior of Pernambuco on the lives of these students. All participants reported that it would

be very difficult to stay in the capital and that they probably would not have been able to. At the same time, they also exposed how good they felt when they were able to study at a federal university while still at their parents' house, and, in the case of Agronomist, much closer compared to the capital Recife.

When asked about the interaction between colleagues at the institution, all employees reported that they had a good experience. At this moment, we observed many smiles when they cited several examples of situations in which the good relationship with peers was constituted in nostalgic memories, in the help of studies or in moments of relaxation among them, factors that became a stimulus within the university environment, as highlighted below,

[...] I talked [with colleagues], exchanged ideas, there was no stress, right? (Agronomist, 2023).

[...] The crowd always said that I cried, cried and in the end passed with a good grade, right? What a type, we went to Ianara's house to study, with Ianara and Mané. Then, sometimes we got there and Igor and I were hungover, dead on the test, or dead to study. Then Mané taught us things, then Igor and I got better grades than Mané [laughs]... then he, these boys come here drunk, [...] and I stay here teaching, so they get a higher grade than me and stuff, then we were making fun of [laughs] [...]. (Zootechnician, 2023).

[...] But my class was a good group, of course no one is friends with everyone, but at the end of the day I think that even for that, because of the need for absence, right? We kind of got together to try the best for everyone [...]. But obviously there were the nitpicks in the room, the disagreements that no one can, right. Today everyone gets along very well, because everyone is more mature too, but at the time, right? There was always a fight, anyway, I fought myself, I was a bit of a brawler [laughs]. [...] I passed, I passed, usually on Mondays, it was difficult for me to go to the final, but even without needing to, everyone came here and I studied with everyone who went to the final. I didn't need to, so we were very much like that, it seemed very, very beautiful, it helped for no one to be left behind, for the whole class to pass through (Veterinária, 2023).

Think of a good class. It was one of the first classes at the university. I don't think any other class has ever been like ours. Think of one, we traveled, see? We walked until a few hours [...]. So, because our class was a group that was very mixed, there were young people but there were also a lot of old people already... And I was already a certain age, right? At the time I was in my fifties, and today I am sixty-two (Pedagogue, 2023).

On this aspect, Teixeira, Dias, Wottrich and Oliveira (2008) state that when students are able to integrate academically and socially into the university, they have more chances to grow intellectually and personally. Thus, it is of great importance to establish bonds of friendship in the university environment, as they provide the sharing of experiences and

problems. On the other hand, when there is no such characteristic, frustration may occur regarding expectations related to social life, compromising the progress of the course.

According to research carried out by Bardagi and Hutz (2012), who interviewed a group of university dropouts and sought to identify, among other aspects, perceptions about the importance of relationships for the decision to drop out of the course, it was found that interpersonal relationships in undergraduate courses play an important role in the permanence of students in the institution, so that, when it does not happen satisfactorily, This becomes one of the reasons for giving up.

Also during the research above, the authors could perceive that the aspect of interpersonal relationships was remarkable, so that, when it had a positive effect, it acted as a criterion to postpone leaving the course. However, when the effect was negative, it was considered a criterion for dropout. Therefore, good coexistence is a fundamental part of the integration of students with their respective courses, because "[...] feeling part of the environment and the new group is fundamental for the consolidation of professional identity, since the student tends to make an association between the course, colleagues, the institution and the profession itself" (Bardagi; Hutz, 2012, p.180).

In this sense, the relational dimension, with the integration into the group, both of colleagues, professors and other employees of the institution, constitutes a fundamental aspect for academic satisfaction and adherence to the course (Bardagi; Hutz, 2012; Teixeira, Dias, Wottrich; Oliveira, 2008; Nierotka, Bonamino; Carrasqueira, 2023). In addition, colleagues become support in coping with day-to-day difficulties, such as, for example, helping with studies for evaluations, mentioned in the excerpts mentioned.

In view of the reports, we observed that the daily life of university life required a great effort from our collaborators to adapt to the new challenges that this phase imposed. Moments of difficulty have become a stimulus to overcoming and resilience. In this way, the opportunity to enter higher education provided the experience of experiences that made possible the personal fulfillment of the completion of the higher education course and the long-awaited graduation.

The Higher Education Census, carried out by INEP annually, offers statistical information that makes it possible to monitor data on this level of education. Taking into account that, in 2005, the year UFAPE was implemented, the number of graduates in federal education institutions in Brazil, in the face-to-face and distance modalities, was

92,626 (INEP, 2012) and that, in 2022, the total was 142,853 (INEP, 2024), we realize that the increase in the number of graduates, in a period of 17 years, it was 54.2%.

Even considering the expansion of higher education in Brazil, access to this level of education and its completion are still a challenge in the Brazilian reality (Nierotka; Bonamino; Carrasqueira, 2023). The numbers of students enrolled in higher education institutions alone are not enough to show the effects of the expansion of higher education. In this sense, it is important to pay attention to the aspects that made their trajectories successful, thus understood through the permanence and completion of their courses (Costa; Picanço, 2020).

According to the interviews, we realized that the opportunities experienced by the deponents in the institution and the way they reacted to them, as well as the entire social and economic context, contributed to the culmination of the graduation. Studies show that university students have a central role in their education process, so that this involvement depends much more on them than on the environment, because the active exploration of opportunities must come from the student himself (Bardagi; Hutz, 2012; Teixeira, Dias, Wottrich; Olivera, 2008; Nierotka; Bonamino, 2023).

According to a research carried out at the Federal University of the Southern Border (UFFS), a HEI that is also the result of the expansion and interiorization of higher education, in which the characteristics of students who completed their undergraduate studies were analyzed, the authors found that social support and participation in extracurricular activity programs, with a scholarship or on a voluntary basis, constituted aspects of great relevance in the academic trajectory and in the consequent conclusion (Nierotka; Bonamino, 2023). These data are in line with the analysis of the reports made available by our interviewees, as we were able to observe similar characteristics that contributed to the conclusion of their courses.

In view of this, when the day of graduation arrived, the deponents reported how the event was and how they felt about family, friends and teachers. We observed that this was a moment of emotion, a mixture of joy and relief, and that participating in this day symbolized the achievement of a victory, not only for them, but also for their closest relatives, as we can see in the following reports:

I think it was more of a relief, I was relieved to have finished, to have made it, because I thought I wouldn't make it. There came a time when I said, oh, it's been five years, right? Yes, the course only does, if you don't have any obstacles, it's five years. [...] Then I managed to complete the course and I thought I wouldn't be able to complete it in the right period, then it was more of a relief, my parents were happy, right?. (Agronomist, 2023).

[...] I was very happy to have made it, to have been able to hold the prom, the graduation day, the graduation ceremony, which as it was also the graduation ceremony of the first classes, it was that event, right, full of politicians, such a big talk, such, it was a little tiring for the guests but for us it was still wonderful, because, yes, the teacher of the people who was honored, which was Jalmir, he spoke of each one of us, it was a super special moment [...]. My parents were also very happy with the graduation party because for a long time they saw me leaving for college but they didn't understand, yes, the course, what I was doing and such, you know, oh, as time went by that they understood, but then they saw that this graduation party was supposed to have an ending, Right. [...] (Zootechnician, 2023).

My father was like this, my father wanted to be a veterinarian, right? He just didn't have the courage because he's soft with blood, not that, but he wanted to, because he wanted to, because it was my grandfather's dream that he would be a veterinarian, this grandfather of mine, right? And then I feel that my grandfather when I finished veterinary school, my grandfather had Alzheimer's, so he didn't, he didn't, he didn't get to, I didn't get to give this joy of, wow, my granddaughter, because I was my favorite granddaughter, right? I had a lot with him and then he had Alzheimer's and he didn't know me, he didn't know me anymore, when I graduated he didn't, he didn't come to my graduation and he didn't even know it, right? That I was graduating for what he wanted so much, right? (Veterinária, 2023).

Our graduation was at the forum. We were the first university class that really received the straw. It was, we really received the diploma, it wasn't make-believe. They were ready, we thought we were going to get just one imitation there and the director came there for us and said [...]. It was a beautiful graduation, our graduation was very beautiful (Pedagogue, 2023).

Through the reports, we were able to identify aspects of the daily life of our employees that helped us understand how their trajectories took place in the institution, enabling the exploration of details that were crucial for understanding the singularities of this process.

To understand the trajectories of students from their entry to completion, Nierotka (2021) highlights that it is necessary to analyze three dimensions, which would be the characteristics: socioeconomic and educational; institutional and choice of courses; and academic performance and/or performance. Thus, by analyzing the information of these dimensions together, such as, for example, age, gender, income, parents' education, extracurricular activities, social support, shift, grades, failures, among many others, it is possible to have a better visualization of the relationship between these variables and the

success obtained with the conclusion. In addition to these factors, the author highlights the influence of friends and family, the relationship with professors and the professional appreciation of the course.

In view of this, we searched, in the reports of our collaborators, information about their considerations about their trajectories, how they perceived and how they evaluate this period in which they were at UFAP, in order to identify whether they considered it good or not. After recalling these experiences, we observed that the interview raised reflections on all the barriers and difficulties encountered during the undergraduate period, translated through the feeling of overcoming and the feeling of victory. In relation to these aspects, it was said:

It's very fluctuating, because when I entered it wasn't where the building is today, it was in another place behind the Hotel Tavares Corrêa [...]. yes, when you, when I passed college it was one, I was very happy, right? (laughs) That it was something that I like, it's not even arrogance, but it's something that I already knew was going to happen. That at one time or another I was going to pass the entrance exam, I was going to be hired. I knew that at one time or another I was going to pass the exam, that I was going to make it. I did it. yes, when I, in the first days, is always good, right? Always something here because it's new, but there was a period when I couldn't wait to end it, right? Like everyone else, right? Five years with the same faces, the same routine is exhausting, right? [...]. Today I only have a degree, but I don't think I'll even go back to Agronomy in the future. But I learned a lot, especially in relation to textual production, the issue of standards, writing, these things, at least it's one thing, I kept that and I don't forget it (Agronomist, 2023).

That's how it is, I consider it to be a good trajectory because I always got involved in everything I had time for and that I was able to get involved in from the beginning. I think that, maybe because, I had been working for some time and only, that business just studying, when something else came up I wanted to do, right? Even if it was, even if the beginning was all without a scholarship, because initially, it wasn't because it was competitive, right? Because we were in the first class and we practically didn't have all these competitions, right? But because he didn't really have a scholarship. At first I didn't even know that there was such a thing as a stock exchange, right? From you like, for me scholarship was something from a private university, like you had to pay the monthly fee then you worked in the library so you didn't pay the tuition. But I didn't imagine that if you were studying in a public school and you would still get paid for that, for something, right? Then after you enter, you understand a little bit how it works, right? So, I consider it because I got involved in everything and I always liked to study. Since I joined, right? I won't say no before. I think that the desire I had to enter was what made me work harder. (Zootechnician, 2023)

Difficult, in fact with difficulty but at the same time light. We had difficulty with the structure, we had difficulty in this sense. But we didn't lack knowledge, guidance, right? There was no lack, like, we had teachers to really guide, to guide, really, us, for what we did, right? Because it was the first class, they were very careful. Here we also realized that here the professors let us, they directed students a lot to research. (Veterinária, 2023).

It was just happiness. The time, my time at UAG, I think it was the best time of my life, I believe it was the best time of my life. It was the time of the university. We did everything with a lot of satisfaction, a lot of satisfaction, a lot of effort, like, but a lot of satisfaction (Pedagogue, 2023).

For Nierotka and Bonamino (2023), the permanence and completion of the course are fostered by the policies and interactions established by the institution with the students, so that this aspect helps in understanding their trajectories and the phenomenon of completion.

We observed from the reports of the employees that they evaluated their trajectories as good, making it clear that the difficulties and challenges were many and needed a lot of effort to reach the day of the long-awaited graduation. We understand that, in this context, the HEI, its form of organization, its professors, employees and its policies acted in order to stimulate the training, permanence and completion of students, corroborating what was indicated by the studies cited throughout the chapter regarding the importance of these aspects in the university environment.

CONCLUSION

In this research, we seek to understand how the university trajectory at UFAPE was of its first graduates, analyzing the aspects that marked their academic daily life. The different life stories that we accessed through the interviews demonstrated different representations of what was experienced, since each individual built their analyses influenced by the political, social and economic contexts in which they are inserted.

Having the opportunity to learn about the life trajectories of our interviewees made us realize how urgent and necessary the policies of democratization and permanence of higher education are in an unequal country like ours. Knowing details of the stories of overcoming people from the lower classes towards a higher education course in a public and quality institution made us understand that this is still a difficult reality to achieve today.

Accessing higher education was a profoundly impactful and significant event in the life of each one, according to the reports of our interviewees, because, in this case, the prediction of failure commonly associated with people who do not belong to the highest strata of society in relation to education did not materialize.

From the analyses, it was also possible to identify that aspects such as social relationships, participation in academic research, teaching and extension activities and the

support and encouragement of professors were fundamental both for their trajectories and for the completion of the courses.

We believe in education as a tool for building a more just and egalitarian society, and higher education is inserted in this context as an important aspect in a society like ours, as it should help promote an expansion of man's consciousness in the world, in the struggle for a society that provides opportunity for all citizens.

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