

Socioeconomic Profile of Distance Education Students: Relations with permanence

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Abstract— It was proposed in this work to outline the interfering factors of the permanence and non-permanence of the students of the Pedagogy Course of Distance Education, taking as reference the University of the State of Mato Grosso – Unemat. The objective of this study was to analyze the profile of beginner students and graduates of the Pedagogy Degree Course of the class 2014/1 at UAB / Unemat, seeking to understand the factors that interfere in the students permanence and non-permanence. To this end, we look for to map and to know the socioeconomic profile of beginners and graduates, using the socioeconomic questionnaire answered at the time of registration by the candidates, relating to the profile of the graduates. Thus, the results point out that the profile of beginners contrasted with that graduates showed that the students who remained are women (92.9%); browns and mulattos (59.5%); are over 30 years old (76%); are from families that have between one and four people (83.96%); the family income range is from 3 to 10 minimum wages (20.3%), that exercise paid activity on a part-time basis (up to 30 hours a week) (40.09%) and chose the course by identification (41.04%). It was also evident that the profile of students who gave up (did not remain) are men (7.1%), black (9.9%); under 30 years old (24%); live with 5 or more people (9.44%); the family income range is up to three minimum wages (79.2%); they work eventually or they don't work (22,65). Throughout this job, it was understood the needy to develop research with graduates of the UAB System to ascertain the quality of the distance education policy.

I. INTRODUCTION

Distance education (DE) is a model of teaching that has been implemented in the occidental world since 1980. In Brazil, the first distance graduation course was offered in 1995, by Federal University of Mato Grosso – UFMT. In 2006, by the Decree n° 5800, of June 8th, 2006, the Brazil Open University System – UAB – was instituted, aimed at the development of the distance education, with the objective of expanding and interiorizing the offer of courses and programs of higher education in Brazil. It was the first great attempt of the Brazilian government in the

search for a bigger reach of higher education, as well as for the modernization and democratization of the models offered. This enlargement of spots and availability of poles in places of difficult access created opportunities for many people, but, at the same time, contributed for the increase of the evasion problem, that already reached education in all its levels. The data and references used in this study point distance education to be necessary in the process of expansion and democratization of higher education, however, they also indicate a high evasion level, as it is possible to observe in the Higher Education Census 2016

(44,76%) and also in Higher Education Census 2017 (34,65%). Distance education is among the modalities that present a high level of non-permanence.

In this context, this paper searched to outline the factors that interfere with permanence and non-permanence of students in the Pedagogy Course of Distance Education, taking as reference the State University of Mato Grosso (Unemat), which began the offer of distance courses in 1999, and, in 2010, through the Directory of Management of Distance Education (DEAD/Unemat), started offering distance education linked to the UAB system. Thus, the objective of this study was analyzing the profile of the students (beginners and graduates) of the course of bachelor degree in pedagogy of group 2014/1 from UAB/Unemat, searching to understand the factors that interfere with the permanence and non-permanence of students. For that, in the methodology, the aim has been mapping and getting to know the socioeconomic profile of beginners and graduates, using as instrument the socioeconomic questionnaire answered when the candidates enrolled in the course, relating it with the profile of the graduates, which was drawn through the socioeconomic questionnaire applied by the authors towards the students who were taking the last semester of the course, the aforementioned graduates. The number of students enrolled in the course of bachelor degree in pedagogy through e-learning in the first semester of 2014 was of 349 (three hundred forty-nine), which was the universe of this research. Among these, there were 212 (two hundred and twelve) graduate answers, that is, 60,74% of the enrolled students, which were the subject of this study.

The first questionnaire applied to the beginners was elaborated by the Entrance Exam Co-Ordinating (COVEST), answered by the candidate when applying for the exam; and the second questionnaire was elaborated by the authors and applied to the graduates with the objective of detailing personal and academic information and identifying the causes of permanence and non-permanence in the course, noticed by the answers of the active students that had access to the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).

The questionnaire applied to the graduates was organized in two sections. The first one was made up by multiple-choice questions, that aimed at characterizing the profile of the students; for that, there were the variables gender, color, marital status, age, if they have children, who they live with, how many members there are in the family, income range, if the participant works in the education area, if they have another high education formation, city where they live, if they have internet access, if they were motivated by the professors to continue the course. The

second section was constituted by two open questions, with the objective of collecting their perception about positive and negative aspects of the course and gathering change suggestions, in order to analyze the reasons that took to permanence and non-permanence. The open questions offered the respondents the possibility of exposing their ideas. They were chosen with the intention of deepening the analysis about the factors that interfere with permanence.

This article is structured in three sections: in this first one (the introduction), we present the study problem and the methodology used; in the second one, we bring a contextualization of distance education in Brazil and in the State University of Mato Grosso (Unemat), without the intention of going too deep; and in the third section, we present the results and discussion, analyzing the profile of the beginners and graduates of the distance education pedagogy course – group 2014/1 – searching yet the voices of the students, so, at last, we could be able to unravel factors that interfere with permanence and non-permanence. We conclude, in final considerations, presenting the analytic synthesis of the results, evidencing the importance of mapping the socioeconomic profile of the students for the construction of programs and politics of permanence in higher education.

II. DISTANCE EDUCATION: INITIAL CONTEXTS

Distance education emerges in the context of public politics in education, as a possibility of enlarging the board of enrollments through the expansion in the number of places in higher education, since the physical and structural limitations become less relevant, considering that a big part of the process of teaching and learning happens in places chosen by the students themselves to develop their courses. Distance education appears in the process of democratization of higher education as a strategy of expansion and enlargement of the number of places.

So as to have an idea of the size of the expansion that happened in the number of students beginning in distance education, we recurred to the higher education census, which presents the data of face-to-face and distance education. According to the census, in 2001, there were, in face-to-face education, 3.030.754 students enrolled. In the same year, in distance education, there were 5.359. In 2017, the census brings the following numbers: face-to-face enrollments – 6.529.681; distance education enrollments – 1.756.982. In the period of 2001 to 2017, the face-to-face education grew 215,45%, whereas distance education grew 32.785,6%. These surprising distance

education numbers demonstrate the strength that this modality won in the last years, despite little demonstrating the conditions with which the courses are offered, whether in infrastructure, professor hiring, or the conditions with which the pedagogical activities for the students happen.

In this context, it is necessary to understand the dimensions of the democratization of the access to higher education, but also analyzing the warrantee of quality education when it comes to distance modalities. In this search, we present, in table 1, the data of the census of graduation courses in distance higher education between 2005 and 2017, as well as the number of beginners and graduates and the percentage of success throughout these years. We observe that the highest success rate was among the beginners of the year of 2006, which concluded in 2009, with percentage of 62,32%, being that the generation that started in 2008 had the smallest percentage (32,73%). By calculating the average of success between the years of 2005 and 2009, we found 49,31% and between 2010 and 2014, there was an average of 41,76%. If, on one hand, the number of beginners increased each year, the same did not occur with the success rate, therefore, there was a significant variation, below 50%, starting with the beginners of 2010, as it is possible to notice in table 1.

Table. 1 – Number of beginners and graduates by Generation in distance graduation courses in Brazil (2005-2017).

Year	Beginners	Year	Graduates	Success Rate
2005	127.014	2008	70.068	55,16%
2006	212.246	2009	132.269	62,32%
2007	329.271	2010	144.553	43,9%
2008	463.093	2011	151.552	32,73%
2009	332.469	2012	174.322	52,43%
2010	380.328	2013	161.072	42,35%
2011	431.597	2014	189.788	43,97%
2012	542.633	2015	233.704	43,07%
2013	515.405	2016	230.717	44,76%
2014	727.738	2017	252.163	34,65%

Source: elaborated by the authors from the data of the Higher Education Census (2005 -2017)

In the state of Mato Grosso, the teacher formation, considered as public politics, was expressed in the Institutional Program of Teacher Qualification, involving the State University of Mato Grosso (Unemat), Federal University of Mato Grosso (UFMT), State Secretary of Education (SEDUC), Municipal Secretaries of Education

and, yet, the Syndicate of Public Education Workers of Mato Grosso (SINTEP). It was from the effective participation in this program that the Distance Education Division (DEAD) of Unemat was created, aiming at accomplishing activities of a distance education program for working teachers, in order to improve the levels of productivity and the quality of the education offered.

Unemat searched, starting in March 1999, the approval of the merit of the “Political Administrative Project of the Distance Education Division (DEAD)”, which defines the decisions for the organization, implantation, and implementation of infrastructure for offering courses in distance education modalities. This program gave origin to the course of Full Bachelor Degree in Basic Education, 1st to 4th grade, in distance modality, implanted in Unemat in 1999, opportunity in which was created an infrastructure for providing autonomy in managing distance courses. Offered in the campus of Nova Xavantina/Pedagogical Pole of Nova Xavantina and in the campus of Pontes e Lacerda/Pedagogical Pole of Jauru, 424 and 491 places were offered, respectively, in the period of 2000-2004, for working teachers. The courses offered were both for teacher formation: Pedagogy Course: Bachelor Degree in Pedagogy – Basic Education – 1st to 4th grades (Resolutions 9 and 10/2005 – CONSUNI) and Full Bachelor Degree in Pedagogy: Teaching in Child Education (Resolution 011/2005 – CONSUNI), the latter offered through an interinstitutional partnership, firm by consortium Pró-Formar.

In 2008, with the adhesion of Unemat to the Open University System of Brasil (UAB), the Co-Ordination of UAB-Unemat was created (Order of Regulation nº 379/2010 UAB-Unemat – 10/1/2008 to 10/2/2010), which restructured the distance modality at Unemat, since, when signing the Term of Technical Cooperation and Commitment with UAB/Capes, DEAD had to adequate to the exigences of the Federal Government Program, both in what concerned infrastructure and personal conditions, so it would receive financial resources to invest in equipment and furniture, as well as in the courses.

According to the data reported in the Management Report 2017-2021, DEAD/Unemat has a central administrative and pedagogical organization, destined to outlining politics, planning, follow-up, and execution of actions in the face-to-face support poles, located in strategic regions of the state, where face-to-face pedagogical activities are developed, being the place where the student meets up with tutors and professors and where they also have access to the library and labs, since, in the modality of teaching, the UAB pole is the physical reference of the institution.

Table 2 presents the number of enrollments in DE in the period of 2010/2 to 2014/1, showing a recurring enlargement in the expansion and success rate that came against the similar expansion aforementioned, in table 1,

about the student flow in DE in Brazil. By analyzing these data, it is possible to say that the entrance was democratized with the implantation of the DE modality, but not the permanence and conclusion. Let us see:

Table 2 – Number of enrollments, level of conclusion, evasion, and retention of enrolled students 2010/2 to 2014/1.

Course/year	Enrollments	Conclusion	Evasion	Dead	Retention
Ba. Degree in Physics – 2010/2	291	10,31%	84,88%	00	4,81%
Biological Sciences – 2010/2	490	23,34%	18,39%	0,21%	58,06%
Ba. in Public Administration – 2010/2	378	34,92%	53,44%	0,26%	11,38%
Ba. in Public Administration – 2012/1	496	28,43%	53,64%	00	16,94%
Ba. in Public Administration – 2012/2	402	34,32%	43,29%	0,25%	22,14%
Ba. in Public Administration – 2014/1	148	12,73%	29,98%	00	57,29%
Letters – English – 2014/1	50	30%	70%	00	00
Letters – Spanish- 2014/1	98	38,78%	43,88%	00	17,34%
Ba. Degree in Pedagogy – 2014/1	349	48,14%	25,21%	00	22,64%

Source: elaborated by the authors from the research data.

When presenting the conclusion, evasion, dead, and retained rates by course, according to Table 2, it is possible to observe that, in the Bachelor Degree in Physics, starting in the second semester of 2010, there was an evasion rate of 84,88%. In the graduate percentage, it is possible to highlight the Bachelor Degree in Pedagogy 2014/1, with 48,70%. The course that presents the highest retention rate is Biological Sciences 2010/2, with 58,06%.

It is possible to verify that there were students that passed away: in the course of Biological Sciences, there was 1 beginner, in the second semester of 2010, and another one, who started in the second semester of 2012. Also draws our attention the course of Letters (English) 2014/1, in which there were 30% graduates and 70% evaded students and no retained students.

In the research conducted by Nodari (2016), there are average levels of face-to-face education at Unemat for beginners in 2009: conclusion 27%, evasion 37%, and retention 32%. These levels of face-to-face education, if compared to the ones of distance education courses of DEAD/Unemat, show a very similar reality. For example, we presented the data for the Baccalaureate in Public Administration 2012/1 face-to-face course, presented by Nodari (2016): up to the second semester of 2014, it was the course with the highest number of enrollments at

Unemat: 496, with conclusion levels of 28,43%, evasion of 53,64%, and retention of 16,94%. It is possible to observe that the average of conclusion of distance courses is equivalent to face-to-face education at Unemat, however, the number of evaded students is higher in distance education.

Considering the high expansion of offer of places by Unemat through the UAB system, in DE modality, and that this expansion happened with a bigger effervescence in the entrance exam of 2013, starting the courses in 2014/1, we searched, in the next section, to present indicators of the socioeconomic profile of the beginning students and the graduates of the Pedagogy course, group of 2014/1, and also to present the voices of the graduates with the object of analyzing the interferences of permanence and non-permanence in the course.

1. Profile of beginning students and graduates of the Pedagogy DE Course – Group 2014/1: searching for factors that interfere with permanence

In the boards and figures that follow, it is possible to see the common questions referring to questionnaires 1¹ and

¹ Questionnaire answered at the moment of the inscription for the entrance exam.

² and the profile of the students, answered by the academics of the DE Bachelor Degree Pedagogy Course at DEAD/Unemat – Group of 2014/1. The objective of comparing the two questionnaires consisted in the analysis of the profile of the beginners and in the relation of this with the profile of the graduates, observing the social, economic, and personal characteristics at the beginning of the course and at its end. This analysis has made possible to notice the profile of the students that remained and the profile of the students that quit, making it possible to outline the factors that probably influenced this situation.

2. Gender: women dominate the entrance and the conclusion

According to the Higher Education Census of 2014, year in which the data for this research started being collected, the enrollment for face-to-face courses and distance courses in Brazil are represented by 55,7% of female students, while male students represent 44,3%. Considering that the objective of the study are students that were approved in the specific entrance exam 2014/1 of the Bachelor Degree DE Pedagogy Course, it was verified that, in relation to the variable gender, 89,57% are female and 10,43% are male. Among the graduates, 92,9% are female and 7,1% are male, according to figure 1.

Gender

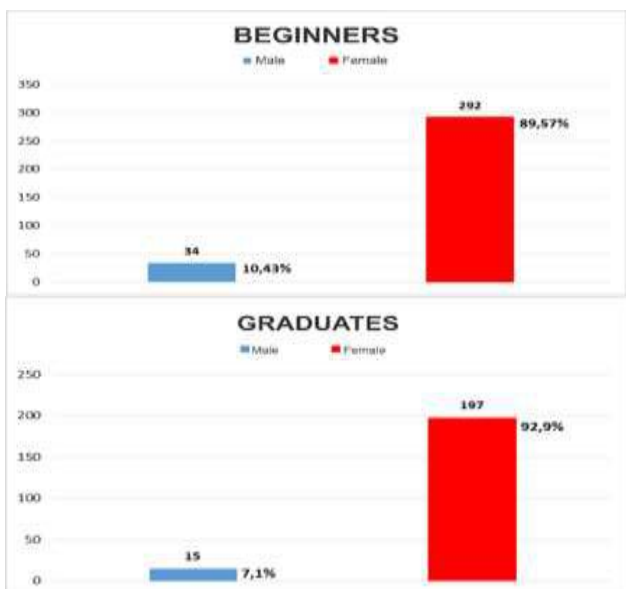


Fig.1 - Percentage of female and male students in the Bachelor Degree DE Pedagogy Course of DEAD/Unemat – Group of 2014/1

3. Color: black students own the smallest conclusion level

Unemat, in the specific edict 2014/1, with the politics of affirmative action, reserved 25% of the places in graduation courses for candidates who were self-declared black or mulatto, through the Ethnical-Racial Integration and Inclusion Program – PIIER. 40% of the places were destined for wide competition and 35% of the total amount of places were destined for candidates from public schools. It is possible to understand that 15,34% of black people entered the course and 9,9% of them concluded, indicating the giving up of black people. The percentage of people that considered themselves mulatto in the entrance exam was of 3,07% and, among the graduates, 1,04%. These data show that there was a higher percentage of giving up among black and mulatto people.

Color

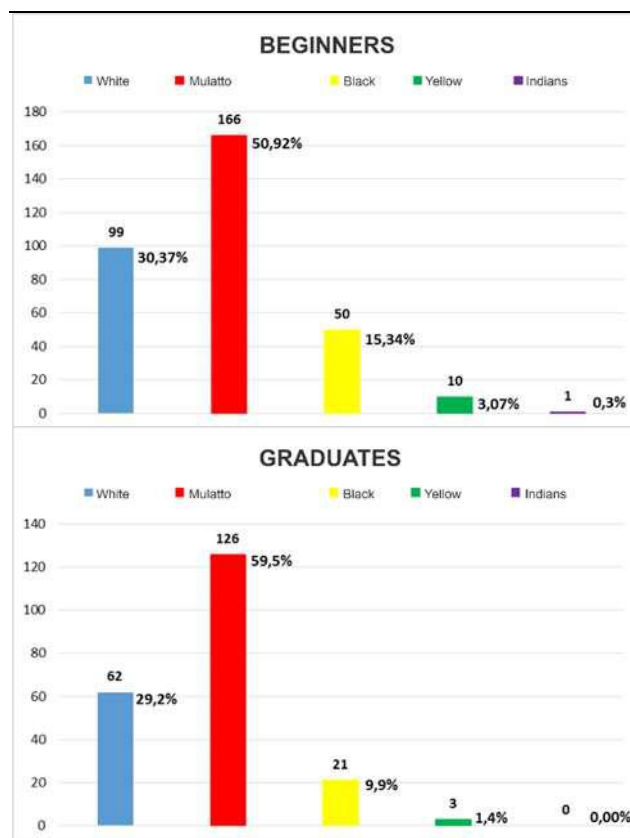


Fig.2 – Color of beginners and graduates.

According to the IBGE Census in 2010, black and mulatto people formed the biggest populational group in Brazil, with 50,7%, while 47,8% identify themselves as white people. For Ristoff (2014), Brazilian education as a whole is far for reflecting the populational profile, since, in percentual terms, the students in Brazil are 17% whiter than Brazilian society. In Mato Grosso, according to IBGE 2010, 60% of the population belongs to the group of black

² Questionnaire Applied to the students, available at the VLE between 11/19/2017 and 1/5/2018.

and mulatto people and 37,5% identified themselves as white people.

In the studies conducted by Ristoff (2014), the whitest courses in Brazilian graduation are in the health area: veterinarian medicine, medicine, and odontology, with percentages of white people superior to 60%, while Brazilian population declared as white is, according to IBGE 2010, 48%. Thus, it is possible to understand that people considered mulatto and black in our country search for bachelor degree courses, while white people look for baccalaureate courses.

It is important to highlight that the research conducted at DEAD/Unemat meets up with what was said in Ristoff's paper (2014), since, for the bachelor degree course in pedagogy 2014/1, in the questionnaire answered by the graduates, the highest percentage of mulatto and black people, who are considered quota students, according to Resolution n° 200/2004 – CONEPE.

4. Age: young people over 30 have higher conclusion rates

When analyzing the variable “age” for beginners and graduates, according to Figure 3, we verify that the beginners who are over 30 years old correspond to 49,08%. On the other hand, graduates over 30 correspond to 76%. These data show that the people who evade the course are, in a large number, people who are 30 years old or less.

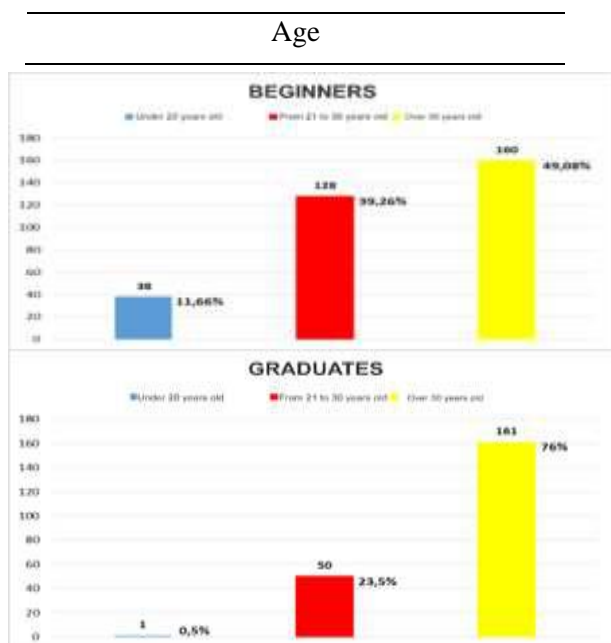


Fig.3 – Age of beginners and graduates

Source: elaborated by the authors according to data from the research.

Answers to Q2 confirm what was answered in Q1, since most respondents chose that they are over 30. In the pole of Comodore, there were 3,23% who chose the option “under 20”. It is important to highlight the pole of Campo Verde, where 93,94% answered being over 30 years old. The smallest pole where respondents chose the option of being over 30 was Nova Xavantina's, with 57,89%. The rest of the students chose being between 21-30 years old, 29,63%. These data meet up with the Higher Education Census 2016, when affirming that the average of the graduates of distance education is 34 years old.

According to the Higher Education Census 2016, the average age of enrollment of face-to-face students is 21 years old, while the average age of distance education students is 28 years old. The entering age for face-to-face students is 18 years old, while for distance education it is 27 years old. When it comes to graduates of face-to-face education, the average is of 23 years old, and, for distance education, the average is 34 years old.

The DEAD/Unemat data correspond to the data of the Higher Education Census 2016 in all of the researched poles. The highest percentage of students approved in the bachelor degree in pedagogy DE course chose the option of being over 30.

5. Marital status: married students are the ones that most conclude the course

In relation to the general graph about the variable “marital status”, 49,69% of the beginners of the course answered being single, 44,48% answered being married, the divorced ones are 4,91%, and the widowed ones are 0,92%. In relation to the graduates, 25,94% answered being single, the married ones are 64,62%, the divorced ones are 7,55%, and the widowed ones are 1,89%, as it is possible to verify in Figure 4.

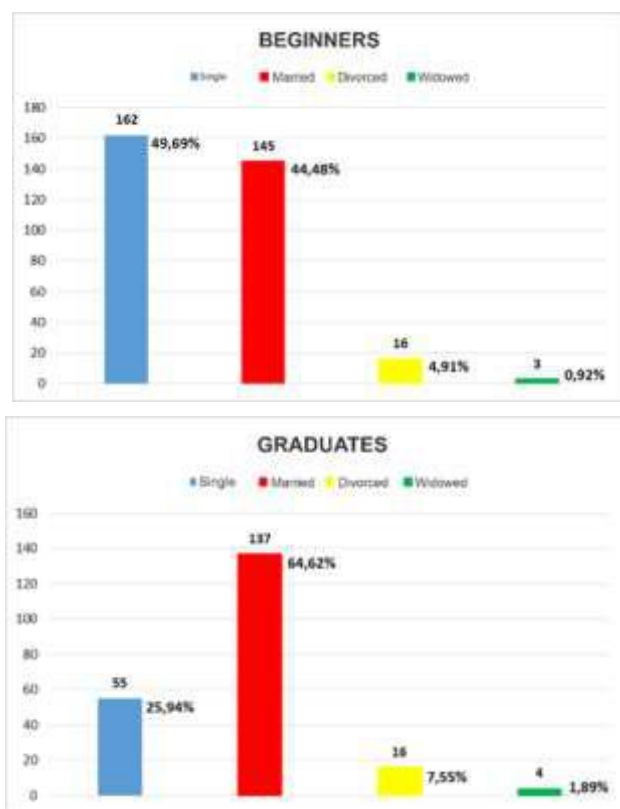


Fig.4 – Marital Status of the beginners and graduates.

Source: elaborated by the authors from data of the research.

In 2014/1, among the students approved for the bachelor degree DE course in pedagogy, a great majority identify itself as single, with highlight to the pole of Cáceres, in which 64% of the students approved identified as single. The highest percentage of married students was found in the pole of Campo Verde, with 57,69% of the approved students. The percentage of divorced students is higher in the pole of Comodoro, 10%. About the number of widowed students, there are 2% in Juína, 2% in Comodoro, and 3,8% in Campo Verde.

In the questionnaire answered by the graduates, in almost all of the poles, more than 50% chose the option “married”, highlighting the pole of Cáceres, with 72,22%. The highest number of divorced students is in the pole of Juína, with 55,56%. There are 6,06% widowed students in Campo Verde, 3,22% in Comodoro and 2,78% in Sapezal. According to the data of PNAD/2014, in Mato Grosso, 47,3% of the population over 15 years old is married³,

³ In this, are gathered all the people in the following situations: consensual union, civil union, religious union, civil and religious union, with different genders and of the same gender.

4,1% is divorced, disunited or legally separated, 3% is widowed and 45,6% consider themselves as single people.

6. Number of family members who live in the same house

In the answers of the beginners about how many people live with them, 58,6% answered that 3 or 4 people live with them. Among the graduates, the highest number live with 1 or 2 people, with 42,92%. Among the beginners, the number of people who live with more than 5 or 6 people was of 9,51% and with more than 6 people was of 3,98%. In conclusion, this percentage for 5 or 6 people was of 7,08% and, for more than six people, 2,36%, as demonstrated in Figure 5.

How many family members live with you

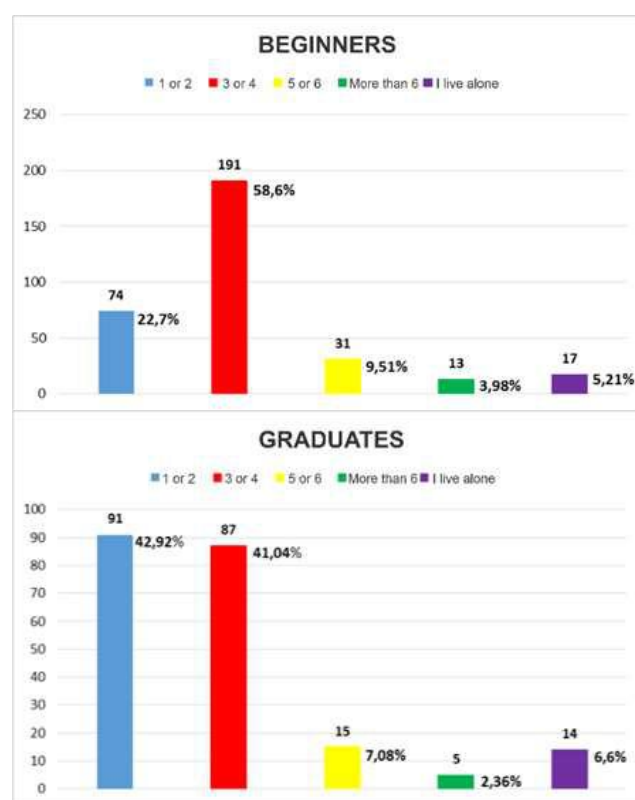


Fig.5 – General: number of family members who live with you.

Source: elaborated by the authors according to data from the research.

According to the data of IBGE (2016, p. 98), the average number of people per household in Brazil was of 3,5 in 2005, reducing to 3,0, in 2015. In Middle-West, the average, in 2015, was of 3,19 people per household.

7. Average monthly family income range below 3 minimum wages

Among the graduates, the highest percentage, 84,58%, has an average income between 1 and 3 minimum wages. Among the graduates, for the income up to 3 minimum wages, the percentage is of 79,2%. The beginners who receive between 3 and 10 minimum wages are 14,72%. Among the graduates, the percentage is of 20,3%, as it is possible to verify in the following figure:

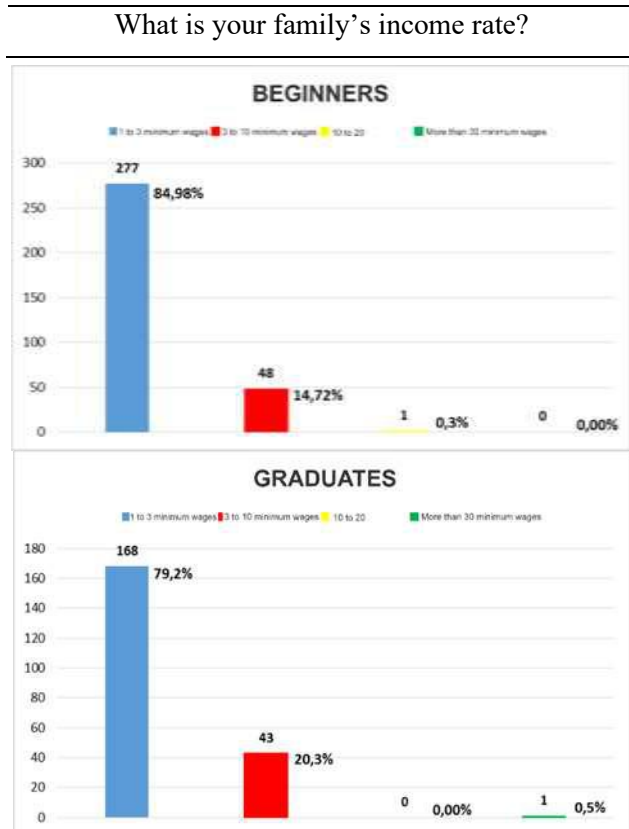


Fig.6 – General: income rate of your family.

Source: elaborated by the authors according to the research data.

According to the answers of Enade (2016), 47,6% of graduation students in Brazil have monthly family income of 1,5 to 4,5 minimum wages. In the studies conducted by Corbucci (2014), the income may be pointed as the main factor for academic performance and, when it comes to entrance, the income may constitute a barrier in continuing the studies for students who need to work.

8. Do you perform any kind of paid activity: students who work

About paid activities, 33,1% said that they perform part time (up to 30 hours). Among the graduates, this percentage is of 40,09%. The ones that work full time are 37,4% for beginners and 37,26% for graduates. The ones

who say that do not work are 22,8% of beginners and, for graduates, they correspond to 17,93%. Inside the aspect “paid activity”, it is possible to say, according to Figure 7, that there was higher permanence of students who work part time (up to 30 hours a week).

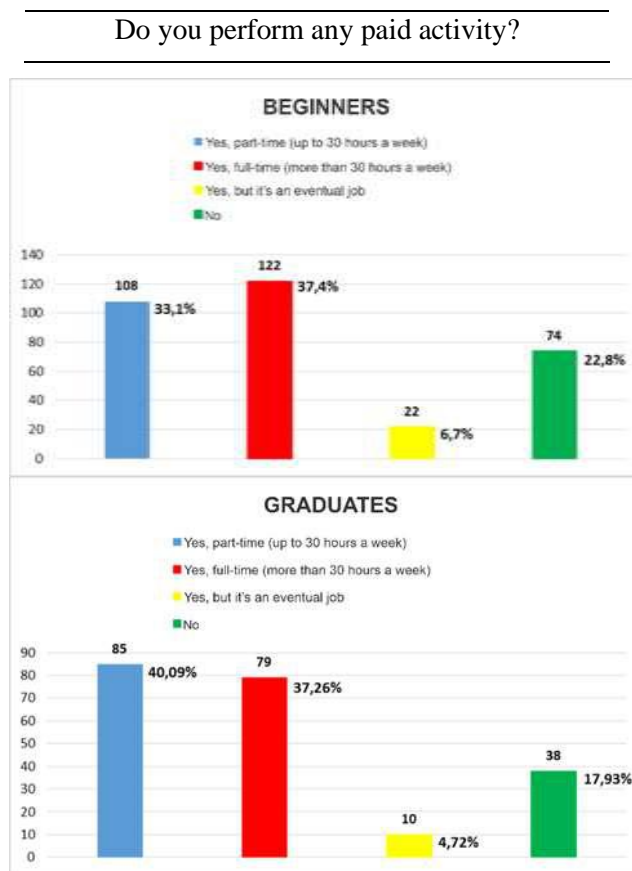


Fig.7 – Performance of paid activity.

Source: elaborated by the authors with the data from the research.

9. Reasons for choosing the course

About the variable “reason for choosing the course”, 45,7% of beginners say that they chose the pedagogy DE course due to work market. On the other hand, graduates who chose this option were 26,42%. A factor that draws attention for beginners is that 25,2% of them chose the bachelor degree pedagogy course for improving an activity they already perform. This shows that this person already works in the education area and the course will help better develop the function.

I chose the course because

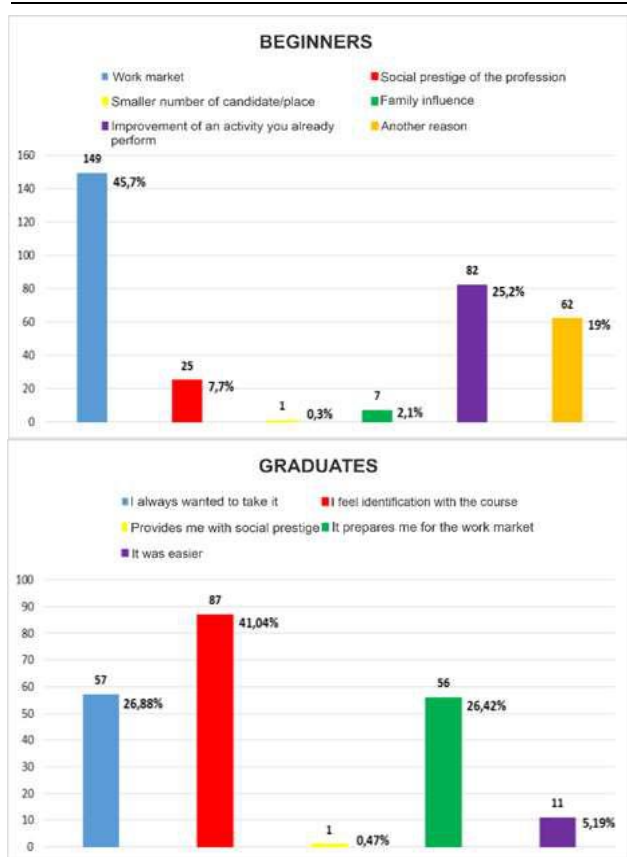


Fig.8 – Reasons for choosing the course.

Source: elaborated by the authors according to the data from the research.

Laham (2016), in his studies, has reached the following conclusion regarding the choice of students for the DE pedagogy course: in face of the manifestation of students and the frequency of answers that point the factors “time” and “autonomy for studies”, it has been evidenced that the main factors to influence the choice for the course and modality are traversed by the rationality and pragmatism. These characteristics show the intention of effectively concluding the chosen course.

To sum up, the variables of the socioeconomic profile of beginners and graduate students indicate:

- a) In relation to the variable gender, the highest giving-up rate was of men, who, in the entrance, represented 10,43% and, in the conclusion, this percentage fell to 7,1%;
- b) In relation to color, the highest giving-up rate was of black people who, in the beginning, corresponded to 15,34% and, in the conclusion, this percentage was of only 9,9%.
- c) In relation to the variable age, the ones that most remained were the ones over 30 years old. In the entrance,

they were 49,08% and, when concluding, the ones over 30 corresponded to 76%. On the other hand, the beginners under 20 years old corresponded to 11,66%. In the conclusion, this percentage corresponded to 0,5%.

d) In relation to marital status, the ones that most gave up were the single ones: in the beginning, they corresponded to 49,69% and when concluding, 25,94%;

e) In relation to family members, the ones that most gave up were the ones with the highest number of family members: the beginners with 3 or more people in the family were 58,6%. The ones with 5 or 6 members were 9,51% and with more than 6 members, 3,98%. Among the graduates, these percentages fell: 3 to 4 members, 41,04%, 5 or 6 members, 7,08%; more than 6 members, 2,36%;

f) In relation to family income, the one that most gave up are the ones that receive between 1 and 3 minimum wages. In the beginning, this group corresponded to 14,72% and, among the graduates, 20,3%.

g) In relation to paid activity, the ones that most remained were the ones that work part time (up to 30 hours a week). In the beginning, they corresponded to 33,1%; the graduates corresponded to 40,09%.

h) In relation to the reasons for choosing the course, the highest giving-up rate was for the ones who chose the course because of work market: in the beginning, they corresponded to 45,7% and among the graduates, 26,42%.

In order to go deeper into these results, we analyzed the sayings of the students, aiming at clarifying the factors that interfere with permanence. The answers were crossed with the result of the analysis of the profile of the beginners over the graduates, aiming at building the categories that indicate factors that interfere with permanence and non-permanence in the course.

The analysis of the sayings of the research subjects were, firstly, systematized, by using Nvivo 11⁴ software, by Microsoft, which gives support to researches. It was used for the creation of word clouds, having the specificity of creating clouds with the 100 most expressed words in the discourse of the interviewees.

These clouds were created with reference to the “nodes”⁵ created for the crossing of the data obtained through the questionnaire sent to the students of the bachelor degree DE pedagogy course enrolled in 2014/1.

⁴ The software was downloaded as a trial version, with free license for 14 days. Available at: <https://www.qsrinternational.com/nvivo/trial/trial-portuguese>. Access in: July 2018.

⁵ Term used in Nvivo 11 to name the interposition of the analysis of the crossed data.

The first question raised with the students was about the suggestions to improve the course in order to make permanence possible. From the graduate's answers, a cloud with the 100 most evident words was made.



Fig.9 – Map of the suggestions of the graduates for the bachelor degree DE pedagogy course aiming at permanence

Source: Cloud elaborated by the authors through Nvivo 11 software.

In order to understand the cloud, the words that had the most highlight were: face-to-face, classes, professors, tutors. Among the highlights, the conjunction “more” is always related to the enlargement of an aspect of the course, such as: more classes, faster answers, more interaction, clearer answers, as we can see on the following sayings:

- Q1. “More face-to-face classes”.
- Q2. “For me, it is very good”.
- Q3. “We should have faster answers in order to clarify our doubts”.
- Q4. “Despite being a distance course, we should have more face-to-face classes, so we could have more access to the professors”.
- Q5. “Faster answers from the tutors, professors, and about the contents”.
- Q6. “Facilitating the communication between professors and students”.
- Q7. “I suggest the availability of a free phone line for clarifying the doubts of the academics immediately. The publicizing, since the beginning of the course, of complementary activities that will be accepted, since, in our course, we only had this information in the beginning

of the 8th semester and the time was short, because courses we had took with this purpose were disregarded.

Q8. “There should be more classes at the poles, because this is one of the moments in which we learn the most”.

Q9. “More interaction of the professor/tutor with the students”.

Q10. “Clearer and faster answers from distance professors”.

Q11. “More face-to-face classes and more quickness in returning the posted assignments”.

Q12. “I would like very much that there was printed material and that there could be more face-to-face classes”.

In face of the suggestions mentioned above, it is noticeable that many students of the bachelor degree DE pedagogy course need more face-to-face meetings. Regarding the other question that they most suggested, faster answers from professors and tutors, it seems that the students' questions take a lot of time to be answered and, by their sayings, there are indications that this delay interferes with the learning, causing demotivation about the course and, consequently, leading to giving up. Let us see, as follows, the synthesis with the building of the categories that emerged about the factors that may interfere with permanence.

10. The building of the categories: the factors that interfere with permanence

Based on similarity criteria of content, logics, and pertinence, as oriented by the procedures of content analysis proposed by Bardin (1977), two categories emerged: the first one was “Reasons for permanence”, highlighting flexibility of time for studying, good professional perspective, quality, and gratuitousness of the course; and the second category was “Reasons for non-permanence”, highlighting the lack of fast answers by tutors and professors, the lack of face-to-face classes and the feeling of loneliness (interactivity).

In the category “Reasons for permanence”, it was possible to observe that, for the students that remained, most (37,26%) presented that factor “time flexibility” as the main reason for permanence, followed by quality and gratuitousness of the course (34,91%). The evocations of the students evidence that the choice for the distance modality would be due to the freedom of choice of time for studies. However, during the verification of the answers presented, it was possible to understand that this reason was not determinant for all of the students.

According to the relates of the graduates and the analysis of the socioeconomic profiles, the time, or the lack of it, is

a determining factor both for permanence and non-permanence of students, who affirm that the responsibility of several things to do and the delay in the answers from some tutors and professors make it difficult, for the student, to plan and follow an organization of time for studying and they also say that conciliating studies with daily things to do is very difficult, and it takes a lot of discipline to prioritize time for studies.

The results about the socioeconomic profile of the beginners and graduates evidenced that 64,6% of participants declared being married, 85,4% affirmed having between 1 and 4 kids, and 77,4% perform paid activities from 30 to 40 hours a week, parallelly to their studies. Let us see the answers of the graduates about the difficulties they found to keep their studies, for example, Q2: "Sometimes, the answers from tutors and professors took too long, test were very difficult, and there were way too many assignments requested by the professors and not enough time to do them"; and Q3. "Professors took too long to give answers about an assignment; questionnaires with mistakes; delays in making grades for tests and assignments available".

According to Palloff and Pratt (2004), DE provides students with the possibility of studying anywhere anytime. This allows students to keep on working full time and give attention to their families. However, in researches conducted by Vargas (2004), Moura-Walter (2006), and Oliveira (2007), it has been demonstrated that conciliating studies, work, and family is still one of the greatest difficulties found by students.

Regarding the category "Reasons for non-permanence", the reasons that were most evidenced are related to the delay in answers from professors and tutors (39,23%); lack of face-to-face classes (22,10%); and the feeling of loneliness (13,81%). These subcategories may be presented as the factors that lead students to give up the DE pedagogy course.

The subcategory "feeling of loneliness" is also related to the matter of time and was related by 25 respondents, which corresponds to 13,81% of graduates: "studying alone, study time management". For Fávero and Franco (2006), the loneliness and the lack of interaction between professors and students and among students themselves may lead to a higher level of evasion. For Romão (2009), not all students have enough maturity to face by themselves and in loneliness a series of responsibilities that the distance studying embraces. The "lonely" hereby mentioned is not equivalent to the lack of companionship or to the brutal loneliness, but to the lack, for further than immediate contacts, of interaction, dialogue, and

collaboration among the subjects involved in the process, missing interactivity (ROMÃO, 2009).

In this subcategory, the feeling of being lonely, let us look at the following answer of a student: Q7. "it takes a lot of reading and doing the activities mostly on your own, because that doubts that came up took a long time to be answered and there were a lot of subjects that barely opened, we barely had time to read the material posted, and the time was already expiring to post the activities". Let us see that "being lonely" means the difficulties of interaction with professors, tutors, and the colleagues themselves.

In the manifestations of the graduates, it was possible to evidence that, despite the use of interactive tools in the learning platform of the course and the face-to-face meetings in the poles, there is a feeling of loneliness, which may indicate that these interaction tools are not enough or do not work properly. For Palloff and Pratt (2004), the problem of the loneliness is caused by the quality of the interaction and a quality interaction is fundamental to avoid the students to give up the course. It is necessary a good interaction between colleagues of the course and between students and tutors for the formation of a virtual learning community and the proximity between tutors and students makes them (students) not feel lonely and increases the opportunity of success in the studies, decreasing the giving-up. About the construction of a learning community, Palloff and Pratt (2004) highlight that the bigger the attention there is for the development of a sense of community, the more the students tend to continue the course until the end. If the students believe that they "are in this together", the possibility of retention will increase, because the feeling of isolation will decrease, independently of how difficult the studied subject is. The students start having the feeling that there is someone who understands them.

In this same context, Mourão et al. (2014) say that there are behavioral actions that can be adopted by tutors and professors in order to minimize or eliminate the feeling of virtual loneliness in the learning environment, which may lead to discouragement and abandonment of the course by the student. The actions to which the authors refer relate to conduction and evaluation directresses for assessment activities in the course, establishing a pattern of answer time and feedback for students within 24 hours.

According to the relates of Mourão et al. (2014), it is necessary to foment the presence of students in the discussion forums and other asynchronous interaction tools available in the learning platform, so that presence occurs. It is necessary agility from the tutors to give back feedbacks which would be a way to favor a more

individual and effective follow-up of the activities posted in the platform, minimizing the feeling of loneliness of the students.

III. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS: QUESTIONS FOR CONTINUITY

To sum up, the profile analysis of the beginners contrasted with the graduates' evidenced that the students that remained are women (92,9%); mulattos (59,5%); over 30 years old (76%); from families that have between one and four people (83,96%); with family income around 3 to 10 minimum wages (20,3%); who perform paid activity part time (up to 30 hours a week) (40,09%); and who chose the course by identification (41,04%). It was still evidenced that the profile of the students who gave up (did not remain) are men (7,1%); black people (9,9%); under 30 years old (24%); who live with 5 or more people (9,44%); the rate of the family income is up to three minimum wages (79,2%); work eventually or do not work (22,65%).

We highlight in the results of the profile of the students that did not remain the fact that black students give up more than white students; young people give up more, and the ones who do not work full time also give up more. There are no more answers for these questions in this study, which points at the need of continuity and deepening, but also indicates the need of elaborating politics and actions of permanence focused on these publics.

The analysis of the voices of graduates evidenced that the factors that interfere with non-permanence of students are, in synthesis, related to the matter of time and feeling of loneliness in the studies, understood as the lack of interaction. Here, there is a contradiction that also opens up possibilities for new studies, since some of the factors that lead to entering a DE course in the lack of time and conditions to take the graduation course face-to-face; on the other hand, students say, in this study, that some factors that interfere with permanence are lack of time for dedicating to DE activities and the loneliness to study. According to the students, the lonely study, pointed by them as the lack or difficulty to interact with professors, tutors, and colleagues, causes discouragement. It is necessary encouragement from colleagues, professors, tutors, and, in this sense, the face-to-face meetings are of fundamental importance, reason that may have taken students to suggest more face-to-face classes.

In this study, it has been identified the importance of mapping the socioeconomic profile of beginning students and graduates, in order to make a follow-up of students at risk of non-permanence. This knowledge of the profile should contribute for the elaboration of politics focused on

making possible the permanence of students and should be directed at the group with the profile that presents the highest probability of giving up.

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