

An analysis of student evasion in the public relations course at Unipampa – São Borja Campus

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Abstract: The purpose of this article is to analyze the data related to the phenomenon of student evasion in the Public Relations course at the Universidade Federal do Pampa (Unipampa) – São Borja Campus, and then reflect on this matter. The applied methodology is the bibliographical research, supported by document analysis. The first offer of the course was in 2010-2, and this article's focus of analysis lies on the dropouts comprising the years 2010 to 2017. The study indicates that the evasion rate is high, reaching almost 60% in the analyzed period. In view of this, this reflection intends to present strategies that can soften or reverse such reality and broaden the debate within the educational institution and among the academic community of the Public Relations field regarding student evasion in higher education.

Keywords: Public Relations; student evasion; Unipampa; higher education; São Borja.

Resumo: A proposta deste artigo é analisar os dados relacionados ao fenômeno de evasão discente no curso de Relações Públicas da Universidade Federal do Pampa (Unipampa) – Campus São Borja e, então, fazer uma reflexão sobre essa questão. Para tanto, a metodologia empregada é a pesquisa bibliográfica, amparada pela análise documental. O curso teve a sua primeira oferta em 2010-2, e o foco de análise deste trabalho está nas evasões compreendendo os anos de 2010 a 2017. O estudo aponta que o índice de evasão é alto, chegando a quase 60% no período analisado. Em vista disso, busca-se apresentar, nesta reflexão, estratégias que possam amenizar ou reverter essa realidade e ampliar o debate interno e entre a comunidade acadêmica da área de Relações Públicas a respeito da evasão no ensino superior.

Palavras-chave: relações públicas; evasão discente; Unipampa; ensino superior; São Borja.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Despite the significant expansion of Brazilian access to Higher Education in the last years, student continuity in this education level is problematic. The phenomenon of student evasion is a reality that worries not only private institutions, and even public universities are mobilizing themselves and reflecting on actions to reduce dropouts.

Based on the concern about this problem, this article intends to reflect on the causes for evasion in the Public Relations course of the Universidade Federal do Pampa (Unipampa) – São Borja Campus, Rio Grande do Sul, and to point out possible strategies that may be used by this course (collegiate, academic body, Structuring Development Center, and coordination) to avoid evasion continuity.

The study considers the period from 2010-2 (beginning of course activities) to 2017, when the emphasis on Cultural Production – which was the focus of the formation for seven years – was suppressed after the recommendation by the Graduation Pro-Rector (Prograd)¹. We understand that this article, by presenting data and a context reading of the Public Relations course at Unipampa – São Borja Campus, contributes to the debate on Higher Education evasion in Brazil, establishing a discussion that may help courses to reduce dropout rates.

The Pedagogical Project of the Course (PPC) helps to introduce knowledge on the origins of the Public Relations undergraduate course offered by the studied institution²:

the Public Relations course was created with the objective of reinforcing the area of Social Communication in the São Borja Campus and to meet the region's social and cultural matters. The suggestion of creating the course happened in a meeting of the Campus Council on the 3rd of November 2008, and the record with the council's homologation for the creation of the PPC happened in the 16th of September 2009. The course was created by the University Council Decree no. 1776, of the 07th of December 2011, based on the decisions taken by the University Council in 2009.

Since the beginning of the Public Relations course at Unipampa – São Borja Campus, in 2010, three curricular structures have been implemented, the last one in 2016, with the incorporation of the national curricular guidelines for the area, published in 2013³. The course lasts 4 years, which are distributed into eight semesters, with night classes, having a course load of 3.245 hours, comprised by Mandatory Curricular Components, including a Mandatory Supervised Curricular Internship in Public Relations (200 hours), Complementary Graduation Activities (200 hours), and Complementary Graduation Curricular Components (200 hours).

For this text, the methodology used was the bibliographic review, supported by document analysis. The study tools considered were the evasion data from the System of Teaching Information (SIE) of Unipampa, obtained at

1. Electronic message received by the course's coordination on the 26th of April 2017, with further detail.

2. UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO PAMPA. **Projeto político-pedagógico do Curso de Relações Públicas da Unipampa**. São Borja: Unipampa, 2015. Available from: <<http://cursos.unipampa.edu.br/cursos/relacoespublicas/pdi-ppc/>>. Access on: Nov. 22, 2017. p. 21.

3. BRASIL. Ministério da Educação. Resolução nº 2, de 27 de setembro de 2013. Institui as Diretrizes Curriculares Nacionais para os cursos de graduação em Relações Públicas. **Diário Oficial da União**, Poder Executivo, Brasília, DF, 1 out. 2013. Seção 1, p. 28-29. Available from: <<http://goo.gl/HI02iM>>. Access on: Oct. 2, 2014.

the Academic Secretary of the São Borja Campus. The theoretical references supporting the student evasion issue is based on the reflections by Ristoff⁴, Pacheco, and Ristoff⁵, Madeira and Silva⁶, and Marini⁷.

2. HIGHER EDUCATION IN PUBLIC RELATIONS IN BRAZIL

Although Public Relations activities have begun in Brazil in 1914 and started to be professionalized in the 1950s, it was only in the late 1960s that the first higher course in the area was created in the country. The undergraduate course was created by the Universidade de São Paulo (USP) in 1967, when the Law no. 5.377 passed⁸, regulating the profession. According to Ferrari, the fact of creating the law and the course, on the one hand, has enabled the opportunity of systematizing teaching and offering parameters for the market; on the hand, it has stifled the activity, creating a strict system controlling its activity by the control of Regional Councils⁹.

The documents of the Ministry of Education (MEC) that determine the curriculum of Public Relations formation are from 1969, 1978, and 1984, and there are also the National Curricular Guidelines for Public Relations, from 2002 and 2013, with the last ones being specific guidelines that had to be implemented by the courses until the end of 2015¹⁰. Among the main changes promoted by the documents are: the increase in course load, formation axes, and the regulation of internships, which are now mandatory.

According to INEP/MEC, there are 70 higher courses in the area currently in activity in the country¹¹. In the state of Rio Grande do Sul, where Unipampa is located, there are 13 courses. Of these, four are offered by public higher education institutions (HEI) and nine other by private HEIs, with one distance education course. The courses by public institutions, all classroom courses, are offered at: UFSM (Santa Maria and Frederico Westphalen) UNIPAMPA (São Borja), and UFRGS (Porto Alegre). While private courses are offered by the following institutions: *CENTRO UNIVERSITÁRIO DA SERRA GAÚCHA* – FSG (Caxias do Sul), UNIRITTER (Porto Alegre), FACCAT (Taquara), UCS (Caxias do Sul), FEEVALE (Novo Hamburgo), UNISC (Santa Cruz do Sul), UNISINOS (São Leopoldo), PUC (Porto Alegre), and UNISINOS (São Leopoldo), this last one being the only distance education course.

The Public Relations course at Unipampa was created with the intent of reinforcing the Social Communication area of the São Borja Campus, considering that there have already been Journalism and Marketing courses. Besides, the focus was to meet the social and cultural issues of the bordering region between the State of Rio Grande do Sul and Argentina. According to the course's PPC¹², the undergraduate course provides to the student theoretical and methodological knowledge, based on the conceptual and practical specificities of Public Relations. Overall, the student in the Unipampa course, based on the development of skills and abilities and of critical capacitation,

4. RISTOFF, Dilvo I. **Construindo outra educação: tendências e desafios da educação brasileira**. Florianópolis: Insular, 2011.

5. PACHECO, Eliezer; RISTOFF, Dilvo I. **Educação superior: democratizando o acesso**. Brasília, DF: Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais, 2004. (Série Documental, Textos para Discussão n. 12).

6. MADEIRA, Miguel Carlos; SILVA, Rosa Maria Alves. **Ensinar na universidade: didática para professores iniciantes**. Petrópolis: Vozes, 2015.

7. MARINI, Thereza. **A função do ensino e a formação do professor universitário**. São Paulo: Paulus, 2013.

8. BRASIL. Lei nº 5.377, Dec. 11, 1967. Disciplina a Profissão de Relações Públicas e dá outras providências. **Diário Oficial da União**, Poder Legislativo, Brasília, DF, Dec. 12, 1967. Seção 1, p. 12447. Available from: <http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/leis/1950-1969/L5377.htm>. Access on: Dec. 6, 2018.

9. FERRARI, Maria Aparecida. A prática das relações públicas no cenário brasileiro e latino-americano. In: GRUNIG, James E.; FERRARI, Maria Aparecida; FRANÇA, Fábio. **Relações públicas: teoria, contexto e relacionamentos**. 2. ed. São Caetano do Sul: Difusão, 2011. p. 205.

10. MOURA, Cláudia Peixoto. **O curso de comunicação social no Brasil: do currículo mínimo às novas diretrizes curriculares**. Porto Alegre: EdiPUCRS, 2002.

11. RHODEN, Valmor. **O ensino superior de relações públicas: formação digital, práticas e desafios na UFSM**. 2013. 331 f. Tese (Doutorado em Comunicação Social) – Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul, Porto Alegre, 2013.

12. UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO PAMPA, 2015.

can act on the management of communication and relationship among organizations and their interest public.

3. EVASION IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN BRAZIL

Even with the scenario of expansion of Higher Education in the country, with public policies that focus on this situation – the reorganization of student loans, creation of public openings, insertion of the National High School Exam (ENEM) in the selection processes, and the inclusion of social and racial quotas – student continuity in universities is a matter of concern, and one of the indicators of this situation is the phenomenon of student evasion.

It is a complex matter, mediated and driven by different factors, and which can be analyzed by different angles: per course or institution or in relation to the Higher Education system. According to Ristoff¹³, there is a mobility evasion, which occurs when the students migrate to other courses, be it in the same university or to another institution. The student simply changes course, remaining in the system.

Another kind of evasion is highlighted by Madeira e Silva¹⁴, namely the post-school evasion, in which the students, even after experiencing the feeling of incompatibility between their vocation and the course progress, prefers to conclude the course. However, when they are in the job market, they feel dissatisfied with the profession, renouncing it. The authors have shown data evincing that about 50% of graduated people are working in areas that are little or not related to the higher course they have attended. For the MEC, the concept of undergraduate course evasion is understood as the action of leaving the course definitely without finishing it¹⁵.

In this work, evasion is understood as the students leaving their original course, definitely or temporarily, for any reason other than their graduation. In this perspective, one of the evasion reasons observed, probably the most notorious one, is related to the socio-economic condition. According to data from Pacheco and Ristoff¹⁶, 25% of potential university students are so underprivileged that they do not have the condition to remain in higher education, if in free institutions. That is, the economic issue is a strong appeal to desistance, however, it is not the only one: there are many other personal or institutional situations that may work as mobilizing factors for evasion.

There is also the matter of the opportunities offered, since not always does the choice for the course corresponds to the students' personal interests, but to their needs.

Socio-economic factors pressure young people to choose this or that course, by determination of the work market, which not always corresponds to their vocation. A course that is not adjusted to their natural abilities creates a lack of synchrony between what the students expects of a course and what it offers them¹⁷.

Students' immaturity, the lack of information on the course, the choices given, and familiar influences may cause an early or unwanted entry in the

13. RISTOFF, Dilvo I. **Universidade em foco: reflexões sobre a educação superior**. Florianópolis: Insular, 1999.

14. MADEIRA; SILVA, op. cit., p. 237.

15. BRASIL. Ministério da Educação. Comissão Especial de Estudos sobre Evasão nas Universidades Públicas Brasileiras. **Diplomação, retenção e evasão nos cursos de graduação em instituições de ensino superior públicas**. Brasília, DF: Andifes, 1996. Available from: < <http://www.dominiopublico.gov.br/pesquisa/PesquisaObraForm.jsp>>. Access on: Nov. 30, 2017.

16. PACHECO; RISTOFF, op. cit., p. 9.

17. MARINI, op. cit., p. 37.

Public Relations course. These issues tend to reflect on the evasion of academic studies, since, by realizing they acted based on other expectations regarding the chosen institution or profession, the students start to consider the possibility of dropping out. Another aspect to be highlighted is the failing on curricular components, one of the discouraging factors that may lead to course evasion. Regarding this, it is observed a lack of adequate formation, a problem inherited from Basic Education.

Therefore, it is observed that the evasion in public universities is unsettling, once it has been gradually growing due to prevailing motives, in nationwide level, such as the lack of information about the courses and the students' difficulty in keeping up with the classes, due to having attended High Schools that had many flaws in terms of quality¹⁸. A research carried out in 2008 in the State of São Paulo has shown that the evasion average in “private institutions was of 21.10%, while for public institutions it was of 14.4%”¹⁹.

The main factors for Brazilian Higher Education evasion are related to a coordination of many factors concerning problems of financial character, adaptation, incompatibility of work time with studies, among other factors. However, generally, teaching institutions are more concerned to students' entrance than with their continuity. Thus, it is observed in the current educational panorama that changes in excluding forms occurred, given that the exclusion was formerly by the restriction in access, and now it happens within the Higher Education system.

4. EVASION IN THE PUBLIC RELATIONS COURSE AT UNIPAMPA

Focusing on local reality and considering the bordering cultural scope, this work intends to map the total situation of evasion since the beginning of the Public Relations course at Unipampa. It is important to emphasize the cultural differences found in the city where the course is located, the municipality of São Borja, Rio Grande do Sul. The place receiving students is bordered by the Uruguay River and is next to Santo Tomé, Corrientes, in Argentina. Its economy is basically associated to the primary sector, specifically to rice, wheat and soy grains, and to the creation livestock farming. The small-sized municipality, with 62,808 inhabitants, according to the 2017 estimation of the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics²⁰, provides little options of internships and professional activities, both for the ones arriving with the intention of entering the university and the ones that intend to keep on living at São Borja after the graduation. Given this, we highlight that the implementation of Unipampa was characterized by its contribution to the integration and development of bordering regions of Brazil and its neighboring countries, Uruguay and Argentina, aiming at the expansion and renovation of federal higher education institutions.

18. MADEIRA; SILVA, op. cit.

19. Ibidem, p. 233.

20. INSTITUTO BRASILEIRO DE GEOGRAFIA E ESTATÍSTICA. São Borja. **IBGE Cidades**, Rio de Janeiro, 2017. Available from: <<https://cidades.ibge.gov.br/brasil/rs/sao-borja/panorama>>. Access on: Mar. 5, 2018.

Based on this background, this study's analysis axis was defined as the evasion in Higher Education, considering its sociologic relevance related to student permanence in undergraduate courses and in public universities, so to assess data about the Public Relations course at Unipampa. The data in Chart 1 cover the period from 2010 to 2017 and were provided by the Academic Secretary of the São Borja Campus.

Chart 1 – Total evasion in the course per academic semester

Year/Semester	1st	2nd
2010	2	0
2011	9	12
2012	11	18
2013	21	25
2014	18	18
2015	13	24
2016	22	22
2017	11	27

Source: The authors.

We took into account the concept of evasion as the Public Relations student leaving the course, definitely or temporarily, without graduating. Given that, the total evasion number until now is 253 students, which corresponds to a 58.75% rate, since the beginning of the course in 2010, with a total sum of eight entry processes, each having 50 vacancies. This means more than half of the students have given up or delayed the graduation in Public Relations in the studied education institution.

The first selection process of the course was carried out by the Unified Selection System of the Ministry of Education (SISU), in 2009, for entrance in 2010-2²¹. When analyzing only the academic semester, and not the whole year, the process in which there was the highest evasion was 2017-2 and the one with the lowest, with no dropouts registered, was the first academic semester of the course, 2010-2. This can be observed in Graph 1.

In the evasion/year evasion, the highest evasion observed was in 2013, when there were registered 46 student evasions. From 2014 to 2016, the number of evasion increased, dropping a little in 2017, and the lowest rates were observed between 2010 and 2012.

When students change their bonds to the institution, they need to justify the reasons, so that a database is designed for the respective HEI. Considering this, regarding the origins of the evasion in the Public Relations course at Unipampa,

21. Classes began in the second school semester, but the entrance through the SISU happened in the first semester.

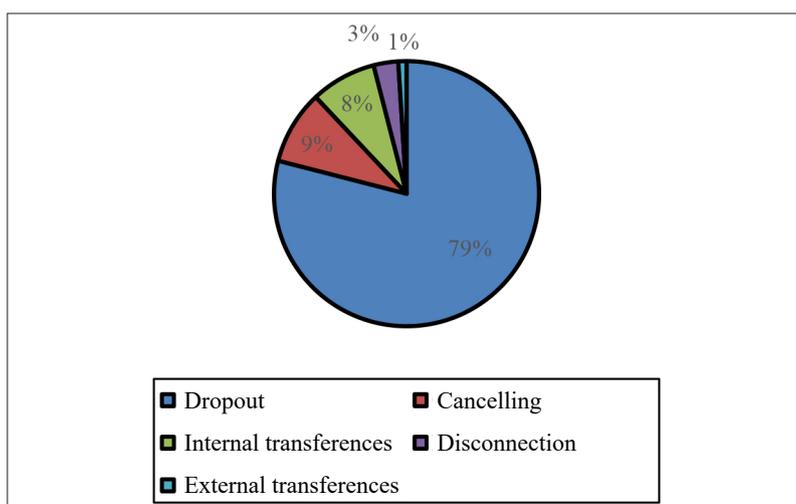
the data in Graph 2 demonstrate, among the evasions in the studied period, the following reasons: dropout (79%), cancelling (9%), internal transferences (8%), disconnection (3%), and external transferences (1%).

Graph 1: Total course evasion from 2010 to 2017



Source: The authors.

Graph 2: Evasion reasons



Source: The authors.

The Resolution no. 29 by Unipampa²², of the 28th April 2011, mentions six types of evasion²³: (1) *course dropout*, which happens when there is not enrolment confirmation or leave of absence for the current semester; (2) *cancelling*, which occurs when the students or their legal representatives requests the cancellation of the enrolment, with the intention of finishing the bond because they have been enrolled in another course, another HEI, and/or any personal reasons; (3) *disconnection*, which occurs when the student failed in all disciplines due to absences for two consecutive semesters and/or three non-consecutive semesters. It also happens when the students surpass the maximum time for finishing the course;

22. UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO PAMPA. Conselho Universitário. **Resolução nº 29, de 28 de abril de 2011.** Aprova as normas básicas de graduação, controle e registro das atividades acadêmicas. Bagé: Conselho Universitário, 2011. Available from: < <http://portais.r.unipampa.edu.br/portais/prograd/files/2011/06/Resolu%C3%A7%C3%A3o-29-2011-Normas-B%C3%A1sicas-de-Gradua%C3%A7%C3%A3o.pdf> >. Access on: Dec. 4, 2017.

23. For this research, the category "death" was not used, analyzing only the types directly related to the entry process.

(4) *reoption*, which happens when the student requests an internal transference for another course of the same HEI, in this case, Unipampa. For that, students use the Course Reoption Call (which is an evasion from the course, but not from the institution or from Higher Education); (5) *transference*, which happens when the students are transferred for another HEI (characterized as evasion from the course and the institution, but not from Higher Education); (6) death, which happens when the individual does not confirm the enrolment due to having deceased.

When analyzing only the last period, that is, 2017, with the data from the Campus Academic Secretary, it can be observed that most evasion reasons were dropouts, composing 79%, that is, they did not carry out the definite disconnection yet. Disconnections represented 2.6%, the same percentage of external transferees. Other 7.9% was composed by cancelling, the same percentage for reoptions for other courses in the institution. Given this situation, there is a hypothesis that needs to be better understood, the fact that many students in the course work (the course takes place at night). These students may have been penalized due to the economic crisis the country faces, which affected their lives and, thus, they are unable to conciliate the studies and work. However, this will be the focus of the research (second phase) that will be applied to graduated students.

The importance of this kind of internal analysis of education institutions, regarding evasion, is highlighted by Filho et al.²⁴:

the internal study, carried out by a HEI, based on its data, can be much more detailed, since it is possible to institutionalize a evasion follow up mechanism, registering the cases, grouping and analyzing subgroups or different situations [...], and, based on that, [...] looking for ways to combat it supported by the results.

In this sense, the purpose of writing about evasion in the Public Relations course at Unipampa is to find a way of understanding such complex issue, considering a certain case in which it is highlighted. Therefore, we understand that the discussion may work as subsidy so that, in the course and for the São Borja campus in general, actions can be designed to reduce evasion rates at a moment when the access to Higher Education is growing, when analyzed the numbers of the last decade in Brazil. As previously highlighted, the entrance has increased, but it is necessary to strongly invest in keeping the students.

Unipampa has performed a preliminary study on course evasion, in the intend of understanding this institutional reality, in 2011. As highlighted in the document, the purpose is to diagnose quali- and quantitatively the factors leading students to evade at a significant level²⁵. At that time, the research pointed out that the education gratuity may lead some students to choose the courses due to not having other options and needing a university degree to enter more easily in the job market. This means that problems when choosing may indeed be factors that lead to evasion.

The Public Relations course has also carried out a first study on student evasion in 2013. A questionnaire was applied to the students and the main results of the investigation indicated²⁶:

24. SILVA FILHO, Roberto Leal Lobo et al. Evasão no ensino superior brasileiro. **Cadernos de Pesquisa**, São Paulo, v. 37, n. 132, p. 641-659, Sept./Dec. 2007. p. 644.

25. UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO PAMPA. Coordenadoria de Apoio Pedagógico. **A evasão na Unipampa: diagnosticando processos, acompanhando trajetórias e itinerários de formação**. Responsáveis: Adriano Rodrigues José e Giovanni Souza Andreoli. Bagé: CAP, 2011. Available from: < http://porteiros.r.unipampa.edu.br/portais/cap/files/2010/07/Relat%C3%B3rio_final_evas%C3%A3o-na-UNI-PAMPA_out20111.pdf>. Access on: Nov. 30, 2017. p. 114.

26. UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO PAMPA. Curso de Relações Públicas. **Pesquisa de evasão do Curso de Relações Públicas – Ênfase em Produção Cultural**. Relatório impresso, disponível na Coordenação do Curso. São Borja: Unipampa, 2013. p. 9.

that 77% of evaded students had as their first undergraduate choice the course of Public Relations, as well as most of them (83%) were from São Borja. Of the students who answered the questionnaire, 55% have or had, when studying at the course, paid jobs. Overall, professors were well assessed, having been pointed out as positive points: the ability in capturing the students' interests, applied evaluations that were compatible to the content of the classes, observing time schedules and flexibility in receiving students after the classes. Among the disciplines highlighted in the learning difficulty item were expected ones, since they approached complex themes and had great theoretical load, with the exception of the discipline graphic creation and production, which was pointed out due to problems of professor absence and to content incompatibility. The campus has its infrastructure evaluated as satisfactory, with the exception of classes, in which there was need for more equipment. In relation to the course, it is possible to note that evaded students agreed with the offered curricular matrix and most of them knew student and teaching representatives, having easy access to them and being constantly informed of the decisions taken by the course's council. The fact of having pointed out the lack of professional practice was credited to the precocious desistance of the interviewed students, since practical disciplines are concentrated after the 3rd semester of the course.

At the time, the information gathered by the research were shared in a collegiate meeting and later on taken to the campus direction. The course, then, made curricular changes, and matters that were the collegiate responsibility were referred, however, when observing the evasion numbers, one can observe they have increased, with no practice effects being observed, that is, these measures lack new perspectives and measures.

It is also important to highlight that the research data described here were presented to the course's NDE (Structuring Development Center) and to the Course Commission in the beginning of the 2018-2 academic semester, since we consider that the research performed calls for joint actions. Besides, the data were also referred to the NuDe (Educational Development Center) and to the Campus Direction.

Based on this report, it is possible to affirm that the evasion problem must be analyzed in three different and interdependent situations: the institution's internal context, its external context, and the individual characteristics of the students. The students are inserted in these scenarios, thus, they cannot be dealt with separately, since the lack of support in any of the categories mentioned will affect the others.

Most scientific works on the evasion from Higher Education in Brazil focus on understanding its concepts and mainly on investigating the reasons for that, as in Bardagi and Hutz²⁷ and Quadros²⁸; the first one is also the result of a PhD thesis. Only a few deal with strategies to reduce this situation, in this sense, this work is different from others.

5. FINAL REMARKS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The data pointed out in the research on student evasion from the Public Relations course at Unipampa show high and concerning rates. In the first

27. BARDAGI, Marucia Patta; HUTZ, Cláudio Simon. "Não havia outra saída": percepções de alunos evadidos sobre o abandono do curso superior. *Psico-USF*, Campinas, v. 14, n. 1, p. 95-105, Jan./Apr. 2009. Available from: <<http://www.scielo.br/pdf/psuf/v14n1/a10v14n1.pdf>>. Access on: Oct. 8, 2018.

28. QUADROS, Daiane Franciele Moraes. A evasão discente na universidade: o caso da UEPG. In: CONGRESSO NACIONAL DE EDUCAÇÃO, 11., 2013, Curitiba. *Anais...* Curitiba: Champagnat, 2013. p. 3065-3074. Available from: <http://educere.bruc.com.br/arquivo/pdf2013/8167_4450.pdf>. Access on: Oct. 8, 2018.

seven years of the course, more than half of the students have evaded. This factor alone deserves attention and study, and, consequently, actions taken by the involved parts (the course and the HEI).

It is important to emphasize that we did not find any published scientific studies on the reality of Public Relations courses in Brazil dealing with student evasion. This fact makes it difficult to compare data with the other realities in the same area, and, on the other hand, highlights the novelty and originality of this work.

It makes sense, in this moment, to think on the particularities that contextualize and, at the same time, are specific to the Public Relations course at Unipampa: (1) it is a recent course, with only eight classes opened; (2) the course is free and, thus, it may be the only option for many citizens that wish to enter a public university, even if the undergraduate course in Public Relations is not their first choice; (3) it is a night course, therefore, it is an option for people who wish to study, but who work during the day; (4) the course is located in a bordering region, where the Communication and Public Relations course, specifically, is not yet developed²⁹; (5) information on what a Public Relations professional is and what they do are not actually widespread in society and, when entering the course, the students commonly see a scenario completely different of what they had imagined.

Moreover, there is still a broader issue that involves all Public Relations courses currently: the discussion on the essential contents, in Higher Education, for a good professional performance. “Despite being an activity of communication management, Public Relations in Brazil face hardships in order to be recognized and legitimated, be it in the job market or in the society in general”³⁰. These are some of the situations that show the current scenario of difficulties in Higher Education leading to a significant number of evasions.

Based on that, the challenge lies on reflecting on the possibilities for reducing evasion. Madeira and Silva have some suggestions³¹, establishing as the central axis the approach between professor and students. They suggest the creation of an official space for individual interviews, where students can ask for advice, present doubts, and so forth, in truly effective consultation hours.

Another suggestion is to reorganize the curricular structure, integrating the first semesters of the course with themes that are inherent to the profession and using a methodology that enables articulation to practice. In this sense, the approximation to companies and the world of work may motivate the students and present them to expectations and the reality of the professional practice, an essential element for the students to know how to place themselves in the profession after finishing the course.

Regarding academic experiences, evasion can also be minimized through levelling programs, an strategy that tends to lessen schooling deficiencies stemming from the Elementary and High School levels, so to quicken the undergraduate students’ adaptation to the university structure.

Another solutions would be designing a project for pedagogical support, with the participation of the course’s professors, a document with the intent of

29. We understand that as a positive aspect, since there is market to be opened up in the city and region. Moreover, agencies have begun to sprout, even though timidly. This scenario is better than market saturation, in which there is not perspective for acting or advancing.

30. FERRARI, Maria Aparecida; GROHS, Ana Cristina da Costa Piletti. Perfil e trajetória dos egressos de relações públicas da ECA/USP: subsídios para excelência acadêmica e competitividade no mercado de trabalho. In: CONGRESSO BRASILEIRO CIENTÍFICO DE COMUNICAÇÃO ORGANIZACIONAL E RELAÇÕES PÚBLICAS, 9., 2015, Porto Alegre. *Anais...* Porto Alegre: EdIPUCRS, 2015, p. 130.

31. MADEIRA; SILVA, op. cit., p. 238-243.

developing attendance duties, thus creating a space to listen to students, and guide them, and answer or minimize their questions.

In this sense, one can also think of structuring coaching environments, through which more experienced students can help freshmen upon financial incentives or not. It is also possible to schedule extension courses for specific demands, designed based on diagnoses obtained by researches performed with students, so that the formation's main needs and/or deficiencies may be solved. Moreover, it is essential to also offer some kind of student follow-up.

As highlighted in this study, it is visible the higher access to Higher Education in Brazil, but there are no guarantees of permanence. The measures pointed out here, given the brief reflection presented, may not solve the problem completely, but prevent the aggravation of the scenario. Pointing such strategies out corroborates to the initial intention of this study, which is to evince the theme of Higher Education evasion, considering that, to do so, it is essential to carry out a debate between the HEI and the academic community, so to point out alternatives and widen the knowledge on the matter.

In the meantime, it is observed that the development of more research is important to continue studying this theme, so that university courses and institution may have a reflection basis to create student retention practices, contribution to the development and maintenance of public Higher Education.

The next phase of our work will be to perform a research with dropout students, aiming at understanding the many reasons that may have led them to abandon the undergraduate course in Public Relations. After that, we will reflect on the frustrations and/or expectations of these subjects and, based on the information gathered, widen the observation and keep on looking for preventive solutions for student evasion and for the reduction of indicators.

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