

Voluntary teaching in retirement: a transition between work and non-work

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Abstract: The teaching practice in federal public institutions has particularities that have repercussions at the time of retirement of these professionals, causing many to continue to perform their teaching activities, voluntarily, after they retire. The present study was developed with eight retired teachers who remained in the professional practice through the performance of voluntary work at the Federal University of Santa Catarina. It was evidenced that the choice of continuing is linked to the meaning attributed to the teaching work and that both personal and external factors influence this decision. The results indicated that the continuity of the professional teaching practice is a form of maintenance of the habitual way of life and is mainly seen as a transition towards completely withdrawing from the activities performed. Although retired, the teachers practiced voluntary teaching as a bridge employment strategy toward permanently withdrawing from the work and the institution.

Keywords: retirement; work; teaching; meaning; volunteering.

DOCÊNCIA VOLUNTÁRIA NA APOSENTADORIA: TRANSIÇÃO ENTRE O TRABALHO E O NÃO TRABALHO

Resumo: A atividade docente em instituições públicas federais possui particularidades que repercutem no momento da aposentadoria desses profissionais, levando muitos a permanecerem exercendo suas atividades docentes de forma voluntária ao se aposentarem. O presente estudo foi desenvolvido com oito professores aposentados que permanecem em atividade profissional via adesão ao trabalho voluntário na Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina. Evidenciou-se que a escolha por essa permanência se vincula ao significado atribuído ao trabalho docente e que tanto fatores de ordem pessoal quanto externos aos sujeitos influenciam tal decisão. Os resultados encontrados indicaram que a continuidade do exercício profissional docente se configura como forma de manutenção do modo habitual de viver e principalmente como uma transição em direção à desvinculação total das atividades desenvolvidas. Embora aposentados, os docentes exercem a docência voluntária como estratégia de *bridge employment* em direção ao desligamento definitivo do trabalho e da instituição.

Palavras-chave: aposentadoria; trabalho; docência; significado; voluntariado.

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DOCENCIA VOLUNTARIA EN LA JUBILACIÓN: TRANSICIÓN ENTRE EL TRABAJO Y EL NO TRABAJO

Resumen: La actividad docente em instituciones públicas federales tienen particularidades que influyen em el momento de es os profesionales retirase, llevan do muchos a permanecer mejerciendo sus actividades de emsenanza de manera voluntaria. Este estudio fué desarrollado junto a 8 (ocho) profesores jubilados que permanecen em actividad profesional a través de la adhesión al trabajo voluntario em la Universidad Federal de Santa Catarina. Se ha evidenciado que la elección de es a permanencia se vincula al significado atribuido al trabajo docente y tal qual factores de orden personal como factores externos a los sujetos influyen tal decisión. Los resultados encontrados indican que la continuidad del ejercicio profesional de docencia se configura como forma de manutención de la manera habitual de vivir y principalmente como una transición en dirección a la desvinculación total de las actividades ejercidas. Apesar de jubilados, los docentes ejercen la docencia voluntaria como estrategia de “bridge employment” em dirección al alejamiento del trabajo y de la institución.

Palabras claves: jubilación; trabajo; la en señanza; significado; voluntariado.

In contemporary times, work has a high degree of centrality in the lives of individuals, creating reference standards and directly influencing the way in which people recognize themselves and are recognized. It is a psychosocial phenomenon that consists of one of the main sources of meaning and identification for the subjects; in addition to supplying physical survival needs, it also provides achievement and enables economic and social status.

Due to this preponderance, the discontinuation of work with the arrival of retirement is a process surrounded by complexity and challenges, making an adaptation phase between working and withdrawing from the work routine necessary for many individuals. Studies with retired people have become increasingly relevant in Brazil given a social context of significant populational aging, with an estimate for the next 50 years of a growth of almost 400% in the population over 65 years of age, which will reach close to 58.4 million by 2060 (IBGE, 2014).

Retirement can be considered a transition, which is often experienced by people that are physically active and with the psychological conditions to keep working. They often seek other professional activities and undergo the process of reflection on what to do in life after formally leaving work (França & Soares, 2009; Duarte *et al.*, 2010). In general, the expectations and behaviors of workers in relation to retirement are associated with the meaning attributed to the work they perform and the links with it maintained in the course of the professional trajectory. In addition to the loss of professional identity, the possibility of not working during retirement can be linked to negative and/or ambivalent feelings, representing a passage toward loneliness and boredom, when compared to the positivity of work in contemporary social life (Selig & Valore, 2010; Moreira, 2011).

By rethinking their personal and professional trajectories at the time of retirement, individuals make choices that lead to continuity or breaking with the patterns of behavior adopted and the paths traversed in the course of life. These choices gain unique profiles in certain professions, the particularities of which have repercussions in the

bonds established by the subjects with their work practice and, consequently, in the process of withdrawing (or not) from the work when retiring.

Teaching work is one of the professional practices in which retirement does not necessarily represent withdrawal from the activities and the termination of the career. The recognition achieved, the status constructed, the links with development agencies and/or research groups, or even the desire for continuity, commonly associated with an emotional dependence generated by the very nature of the work performed, are some of the motivating factors for retired teachers to continue working (Silva, 2010; Guimarães, Soares, & Casagrande, 2012; Krawulski & Ribeiro, 2013). These aspects depend on whether their retirement originated from planning and personal choice or from the 70 years age limit in the federal public service, changed to 75 years, by the Complementary Law No. 152/2015 (Brazil, 2015).

To continue working in the same institution after retirement has been achieved in some universities through the granting of senior fellowships or, in the majority of the cases, by means of voluntary work, in spite of the controversy regarding the financial counterpart to this mode of work (Guimarães, Soares, & Casagrande, 2012). In the Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC), in the field of study presented here, this continuation is formalized through adherence to a Voluntary Service Program established by a specific Resolution approved by the University Council. This legal resource defines voluntary activity as that which depends on willingness and may be related to teaching, research, extension or other aspects of a technical-administrative, assistance, cultural, artistic, sporting or recreational nature, the performance of which requires the presentation and approval of a work plan. In a previous study, Krawulski and Ribeiro (2013) found that 64 teachers signed an adherence term for this mode of work in the institution in the period between 2008 and 2012, with this number increasing in the subsequent years.

What factors influence the decision to remain in the teaching profession in the institution after retirement? Are the professional identities of these teachers so superimposed on their personal identity that they cannot definitively withdraw from the work or the institution after they have retired? Is the difficulty of withdrawing from the teaching role related to the professional career and to the high degree of involvement and time devoted to the work? Are the high levels of demands, especially those of graduate work, making the work so central to the lives of these professionals that spaces for other spheres of achievement are inexistent or lacking in their lives? Does status and recognition, coupled with the fact that many are intellectual references in their areas, make them feel de-characterized and face a void when they withdraw from the academic environment? To what extent and in what way does the university itself benefit from the decision of teachers to continue voluntarily working after retirement? Taking these questions as references, this article aimed to understand the meaning of teaching work and its relationship with remaining in the professional practice after retirement through voluntary work, as well as the main motivations that lead to this continuity.

Method

To achieve the aim of the article, a qualitative study was developed with retired professors of the Federal University of Santa Catarina, who continued to participate partially or totally in their professional activities, through a formal link with the existing Volunteer Services Program. This investigation followed a documentary study that mapped the incidence of adherence to voluntary work by retired teachers considering their distribution according to the different academic units of the institution (Krawulski & Ribeiro, 2013). The project was previously submitted to the Human Research Ethics Committee of UFSC and approved under authorization No. 430.378, of October 21, 2013.

Participants

Eight teachers participated in the study, selected in an intentional way, observing the criteria previously outlined, including in the sample participants linked to different academic units of the institution and who had been teaching on a voluntary basis for at least one year. Of the eight interviewees, four were men and four women, aged between 57 and 73, with six Brazilians and two foreigners. Seven were married and one a widow, six had children and the other two had stepchildren, with four being grandparents. Five had postdoctoral degrees, two had PhDs and one had a Master's degree. Four of the participants acted as volunteer teachers exclusively in the graduate program, while two only worked in the undergraduate program and two others were enrolled in both teaching levels. Regarding the practice, three were from the area of human and social sciences, two from the technological area, two from the health sciences and one from education. In order to guarantee the condition of anonymity of the participants, it was chosen to designate them with names of birds.

Instrument and Procedures

A semi-structured interview was used as the data collection instrument, with a previously designed script divided into four main areas: the professional trajectory in teaching, the retirement process, the exercise of voluntary work, the voluntary teaching and the strategies for continuity of the working life. The presentation of the questions to the participants was carried out flexibly and favored the dialogue.

The invitation to participate in the study was delivered via email or made by telephone. All signed a consent form and the interviews, lasting between 40 and 90 minutes, were audio recorded and then transcribed. The data were analyzed through content analysis (Bardin, 2011).

Results and Discussion

The results were analyzed from two thematic axes: 1) meaning of the teaching work and continuation in the work after retirement; 2) reasons that lead to voluntary teaching after retirement.

1. The meaning of the teaching work and continuation in the work after retirement

According to Coutinho, Dal Magro and Budde (2011), teaching constitutes a creative practice that provides recognition and identity, and through the affective relationships established in the work contexts, allows for exchanges, social insertion and self-realization. These aspects were contemplated in different ways by the participants, whose discourses were repeatedly permeated by the likes and dislikes experienced in the daily teaching practice.

The statements of Pelican and Owl portray these dimensions, especially highlighting their relation with identity and personal fulfillment: "life as a professor for me is very important, it is not a random thing; I feel suddenly like I'm missing part of me without teaching" (Pelican) / "I like what I do, I think I do it selfishly, because I need it!" (Owl).

The practice of teaching brings together the contribution for the construction of knowledge by the students and, at the same time, the improvement of the knowledge of the teachers themselves, constructed throughout their personal and professional lives (Enricone & Grillo, 2007). Pelican referred both to the relationship established with the students and to the knowledge itself: "I normally like to study, to read, but the dialogue with students, whatever level they are, [...] is something that interests me a lot". Bullfinch said: "I find it rewarding to have before you a network of interested people who are your students and who form true networks and pass it on to the others. Thus, the fascination for study and the pleasure of being with the students, being the subject of change in the lives of others, makes teaching enjoyable (Martins & Honório, 2014), generating meanings for the teaching work.

Some participants associated the teaching with youth and vitality, as well as with the full exercise of their capacities and potentials, and due to this meaning they choose to continue working after retirement. Peacock said that he felt "*much* more active than the active ones", referring to those who have not yet retired, and stated that "the university is a soul of youth, because you mingle with the youths, [they] are contagious, [...] they let you stay young, behave like a youngster".

The university, socially represented as a differentiated space in the production of knowledge, seems to grant, by itself, a certain value and importance to those who work in it, especially to the professors. This social value is related to the institutional identity, often embodied in an expressive way by the teachers. In addition to the identification and enthusiasm provided by teaching, the universities, especially in recent years, have been under pressure to contribute to the competitiveness of the economy. This direction places pressure on the professors, who must be subordinated to the dictates of the market and act in contexts of reordering of practices according to the mercantile and skills logic (Lopes, 2006). The process of productive restructuring has led to the rationalization of time and the valorization of the qualification, as well as demanding multifunctionality and efficiency from the worker and a constant increase in productivity, which also affects teachers in their daily work (Coutinho, Dal Magro, & Budde, 2011).

The logic of competitiveness established is expressed by indicators of production of articles, supervisions and projects, which result in the aggregation of multiple tasks and the intensification of the teaching workload, characterizing the “productive university” (Lopes, 2006). Swallow especially portrayed this overload: “In the last years my workload was passing the limits; I would arrive at the University at seven in the morning and leave at seven, eight O’clock at night... I even took work to do at home. So my life was to work”. In view of the excessive workload, the time and energy for dedication to other life activities become scarce over the course of the career.

This intensified context of work generates the paradox of pleasure-suffering experienced by the university professor. On one hand, there is the satisfaction resulting from the production of knowledge and the recognition made possible by the activity and, on the other, the conditions and work relationships, characterized by long hours and excessive burden, pressure to publish articles, high number of classes and requirement for participation in meetings and administrative functions, which affect their physical and mental health (Coutinho, Dal Magro, & Budde, 2011). The fatigue resulting from the performance of these other activities is referred to by Wren: “the big problem is the administrative activities [...]. it is a very great burden, and if I were to count the years that have worn me out the most, it was these and not those spent teaching or in other work”.

Regarding the negative aspects of the reality of the current teaching work, referred to by all the participants, the construction of the meaning of their work was based on the characteristics and positive aspects that were highlighted in the narratives, which makes it difficult for many teachers to completely withdraw from activities at the time of retirement. The daily work of teachers, precisely because of its characteristics, or in spite of them, molds the professionals in such a way that they construct their trajectories and their own lives around the teaching practice, characterizing the so-called centrality occupied by the work in their lives (Guimarães, Soares, & Casagrande, 2012). The phenomenon occurs in such a way and with such intensity that, when approaching the moment that would lead to the end of the career, they do not envisage other perspectives for their lives that do not involve continuing to practice teaching, in many cases, voluntarily. Multiple reasons lie at the heart of the choice for this continuation.

2. The reasons that lead to voluntary teaching in retirement

The continuation in the work after retirement by federal university teachers generally does not have financial need as the main reason. Researchers highlight that this continuation is previously anchored in the sense of recognition provided by the activities, as well as in seeking the preservation and experience of health, the active intellect and the contribution to the formation of other people (Moreira, 2011; Ribeiro & Smeha, 2009). The “emotional dependence” on the work, coupled with the desire to continue activities in progress, with less overload and more quality of life at work has also been highlighted (Guimarães, Soares, & Casagrande, 2012).

The reasons for continuing to work identified in the discourses of the participants referred to factors related to the subject itself and also to external factors. Among the personal reasons are those that give them some direct reward, such as the social maintenance of the status and recognition as a UFSC teacher, the occupation of idle time and feelings of usefulness and youth associated with continuing.

Elements such as the status derived from the exercise of the profession and recognition for the work carried out directly impact on the personal identity and self-perception of these teachers, as people who have constructed a legacy, realized dreams, achieved success and created their own spaces in the professional sphere. Peacock used numbers to express these elements: “[...] I have more than 400 published works, 5 books, I do not remember how many doctors and masters I supervised, about 200, 400 undergraduate projects”.

The decision to continue working as a volunteer is overlapped by the satisfaction with the profession, which allows the individual to assign an eminently positive value to the personal trajectory (Krawulski *et al.*, 2015). From this perspective, while career continuity is marked by feelings of recognition and achievement, the perspective of retirement is perceived as emptiness, loss, and rupture.

To continue working in the institution through volunteering therefore seems to be a strategy to experience a transitional period between work and non-work, as highlighted in the study by Guimarães, Soares and Casagrande (2012). Swallow explained this notion by emphasizing the need to “understand that voluntary work is a way out and not a continuation; [...] you still make a contribution, but with the idea of leaving”. For Stork, “it [the voluntary work] is important for the teacher not to enter into this existential void of doing nothing else”. According to this participant, the option for voluntary teaching after retirement is a “probationary stage” to move more slowly toward the moment of withdrawal from the work at the institution.

It was perceived that the voluntary teaching exercise is therefore a period of continuity and transition that allows the retired people to remake plans, weave new choices and reestablish themselves in other spaces and activities while still maintaining a link with the career that had been constructed, as well as with the institution. This continuity can be comprehended from the bridging employment concept, the transition phase in which older workers are beginning to psychologically disengage from the workforce but are not yet fully ready to start life with the total absence of work responsibilities (Wang, Adams, Beehr, & Shultz, 2009).

Some concrete aspects justify the need for such a transition, such as the filling of time for example, as the arrival of retirement and the possibility of having a more flexible and open agenda create a paradox for these professionals: it is desired, as a deserved rest after years of dedication, however, also feared, for bringing with it uncertainties and imminent readjustments. Issues related to the occupation and flexibility of time were present in the statements of the participants. Bullfinch associated continuing to teach voluntarily as a strategy to occupy the free time: “I stay on my

computer for an hour and get tired of it. I have to go out, but my space for going out is very small. It's going to the bank, going to the lottery ticket shop, going to the bakery. Some, however, emphasized the flexibility of schedules as a possibility for dedication to other activities such as traveling, leisure activities and health care, among others.

Health care in particular was another aspect also related to the choice to continue working, which expresses an association of retirement with illness and a perception of work as a "medicine" that maintains health. The statement of Owl is symbolic in this sense:

My husband always complained [about her decision to continue working as a volunteer]: but how are you going to work without earning anything, this doesn't exist! Then I said: look, it's not that I'm not going to earn anything, I'm not going to pay a psychologist! Because if I stay at home without doing anything I will have to pay a psychologist and I will still have to take a lot of medication! No, I'll stop spending money!!! (Owl).

Considered from this perspective, the teaching work allows the maintenance of intellectual capacities and activities, stimulating them and preventing possible health problems (Ribeiro & Smeha, 2009). Continuing to work through voluntary teaching as a strategy to maintain the youth and to remove the stigma of retirement as a phenomenon associated with old age was reiterated by the participants: "it's amazing, you never grow old here, ever!" (Peacock) / "[...] if I stayed at home, I would close down my memory, giving a class I am obliged to do reading, to be updated" (Bullfinch).

As external factors motivating the decision for continuing in voluntary teaching work, contributions to society in general, to the University and also specifically to the graduate programs with which the majority of the participants continued to be linked, were alluded to. The definition of voluntary work itself expresses the aspect related to the social contribution of teaching work. In this direction, Seagull said: "I believe that I have made a difference for a lot of people, and this is voluntary work, it has a very important expression not only for my pleasure but for the contribution of people to society.

The specific contribution to the university itself also permeated statements addressing reasons for choosing to do voluntary work. Peacock, for example, called the withdrawal of such experienced and knowledgeable teachers after retirement an "academic crime". In his view, someone like him, who "had such deep and rich knowledge" cannot take that knowledge "to the grave". In Pelican's assessment, "the departments generally gain from volunteer teachers, because we are very experienced people, retired from the profession ahead of time, we could still work for a few more years, so we strengthen the teaching staff".

The question of continuing to contribute to the university also refers to the links with the graduate program. In fact, the possibility of continuing to work in the gradu-

ate program to which they were linked before retirement, as well as the commitment to research groups, which in many cases they helped to create, and continuing to contribute to the production of scientific knowledge, with publications considered decisive for the good evaluation of the courses by CAPES were the main reasons indicated for remaining.

Stork thus reported her willingness to remain attached to the graduate program: "I had a good curriculum, I had a lot of articles being published. I said to the commission of the master's program: as long as my curriculum is good for you, I'll stay". Wren, in turn, stated: "I am very important to the graduate program because I have a grant from CNPQ, because I am an adviser, etc. [...]. When CAPES is going to evaluate the program, it will look at how many productivity grants it has, how many professors have postdoctoral degrees", making it clear that the advantages of staying are not only in his interests.

There was a paradox among the professors who were linked to the graduate program, especially among those who received a productivity grant from the development agencies: despite the voluntary condition of their work, which theoretically provides a more flexible choice of what and how much to do, in practice, to remain in the graduate teaching staff and fulfill other requirements derived from the status of grant recipients, they could not reduce the workload. Swallow reported: "I did the volunteer link only with the graduate program. I give classes, supervise, do research, maintain my international contacts, because the post needs this and, therefore, I maintain all the activities of the post" [...]. So telling you that I work 16 hours a week, that's not true. I easily work thirty!".

It is undeniable that graduate programs benefit from the participation of voluntary retirees on their teaching staff, and many even rely on these professionals to maintain their standards of academic performance and productivity with the rating agencies. However, it is up to the universities to create management strategies that will allow the systematic reduction of the publication requirements for teachers who are approaching the retirement period, redistributing such requirements to the younger teachers. It is also necessary that excessive demands in terms of productivity be redefined in development agencies, such as CAPES and CNPQ, in order to valorize the quality of publications, rather than the quantity, as is the case today.

Conclusion

The patterns of excessive dedication to work to meet the productivity requirements, especially those derived from the graduate programs, have, for years, led to the lack of time for teachers to engage in other life activities outside of work. In this way, voluntary teaching, after retirement, is characterized as a strategy of continuity of the behavior patterns with which the subjects were accustomed, which generate feelings of security and self-recognition due to the maintenance of an identity constructed in/by the work.

The practice of teaching after retirement through voluntary work is an important transition resource, since the majority of professors retire at the height of their professional career and do not envisage the immediate interruption of this career. As one of the study participant expressed, the teaching activity can be considered to be “work that has no end”, justifying, therefore, the deep involvement of these professionals with the daily tasks in the institution, the set of reasons to remain working and the need itself for the practice of voluntary teaching as a gradual transition, towards the definitive withdrawal from the teaching work in the institution.

It is important to create specific retirement preparation programs for the teaching community that stimulate the creation/recovery of bonds with social groups outside the work environment and that gradually allow the unraveling of the personal identity from the professional identity. It is also important to create policies in the universities that provide a remunerated way for the systematic disconnection of older workers from the graduate programs with the gradual reduction of workload and production requirements.

The reflections generated by the present study provide a deepening of the discussions about the reasons that lead to the continuation of voluntary work after retirement. However, it should be pointed out that these analyzes resulted from research with a specific group of retired teachers from a single federal university, which would be a limitation. It is suggested that future studies on the same subject be carried out with retired teachers from other federal universities, private universities and also comparative studies with teachers and retired professionals from other areas of practice.

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