TEACHER-AUTHORS IN DISTANCE HIGHER EDUCATION: KNOWLEDGE AND PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES

PROFESSORES CONTEUDISTAS NA EDUCAÇÃO SUPERIOR A DISTÂNCIA: SABERES E PRÁTICAS PROFISSIONAIS

DOCENTES-AUTORES EN LA EDUCACIÓN SUPERIOR A DISTANCIA: SABERES Y PRÁCTICAS PROFESIONALES

How to reference this paper:
SILVA, E. C. da; NAZIMA, M. M.; Celia Maria HAAS, C. M.; BARBOSA, A. P. R.; NUNES, G. F. S. Teacher-Authors in Distance Higher Education: Knowledge and professional practices. Revista @mbienteeeducação, São Paulo, v. 16, n. 00, e023026, 2023. e-ISSN: 1982-8632. DOI: https://doi.org/10.26843/ae.v16i00.1224

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Revista @mbienteeeducação, São Paulo, v. 16, n. 00, e023026, 2023. e-ISSN: 1982-8632
DOI: https://doi.org/10.26843/ae.v16i00.1224
ABSTRACT: Focused on the context of distance higher education, this article presents the results of research conducted to identify knowledge and professional practices that teacher-authors mobilize in their work of designing and building disciplines. Narrative interviews (JOVCHELOVITCH, 2002) were carried out with three university professors and teacher-authors using a qualitative approach. The thematic contents identified from the interview were analyzed and related to the teaching knowledge (TARDIF, 2002), the constituent elements of the teaching work (MACHADO, 2007) and the understanding of the challenges of collective work from the perspective of multi-teaching (MILL; OLIVEIRA; RIBEIRO, 2010), recognized by the participant teachers. The results suggest that teachers’ conceptions of education, professional trajectories, and academic paths are reflected in how they produce, organize, and articulate disciplinary content, contributing to a better understanding and characterization of teacher-authors work based on their practices.


RESUMEN: Este artículo presenta resultados de una investigación realizada con el objetivo de identificar saberes y prácticas profesionales que los docentes autores movilizan en su labor de diseñar y construir disciplinas. Con base en un enfoque cualitativo, se realizaron entrevistas narrativas (JOVCHELOVITCH, 2002) a tres profesores universitarios que también son docentes autores. Se analizaron y relacionaron los contenidos temáticos identificados en las transcripciones de las entrevistas con los saberes docentes (TARDIF, 2002), los elementos constitutivos del trabajo docente (MACHADO, 2007) y la comprensión de los desafíos del trabajo colectivo desde la perspectiva de la multienseñanza (MILL; OLIVEIRA; RIBEIRO, 2010), tal como fue reconocido por los propios profesores entrevistados. Los resultados indican que las concepciones de formación, trayectorias profesionales y trayectorias académicas se reflejan en la producción, organización y articulación de contenidos disciplinares, contribuyendo a la comprensión y caracterización del trabajo de un docente autor a partir de la práctica.

Introduction

Content does not exist by itself, it is part of a relationship, it has an intention. (Teacher 3, a participant in this research, 2021).

This article seeks to disseminate the main results of research whose objective was to identify professional knowledge and practices mobilized by content teachers in their work of designing and building disciplines in the context of a public university in the state of São Paulo that offers higher education courses exclusively in the distance.

Investigating the work of content teachers is relevant due to the complex and specific nature of this activity. If, in face-to-face education, it is common for there to be a single teacher responsible for planning activities, content design, evaluation, conducting classes and class management, in the context of distance learning (DL) there is often a process of division of the work among a multidisciplinary team.

This collective character behind teaching activity in distance learning was synthesized in a term proposed by Mill, Oliveira, and Ribeiro (2010): poly-teaching. This category is defined by the authors as a “[...] collective of workers who, even with different training and functions, are responsible for the teaching-learning process in DL” (MILL; OLIVEIRA; RIBEIRO, 2010, p. 26, our translation). In this collective, there are multiple actors, such as “[...] author-teacher [or content teacher], virtual tutors, applicator teacher [or teacher-trainer], educational designers [or instructional designers], face-to-face tutors, multidisciplinary team and coordinating team” (MILL; OLIVEIRA; RIBEIRO, 2010, p. 36, our translation).

The relevance of distance higher education is also evident as it is increasingly an object of study for the scientific community. The search for the subject “distance education” on the Capes Periodicals Portal in the years 2000 to 2010 reaches a total of 345 results, while, for the decade from 2010 to 2020, the number jumps to 1,165 (search held in September 2021).

However, if we consider the substantial number of works that focus on teaching activity in the context of distance learning, the work of the content teacher is rarely studied in a more specific way. In a search conducted on August 16, 2021, on the CAPES Periodicals Portal, we found greater scientific production around the figure of the tutor (412 articles) or the facilitator (77 articles), as opposed to the figure of the author professor (263 articles) or content teacher (13 articles). The searches were conducted using the “Search by subject” menu and the advanced search tool with two fields (e.g., DL + professor author).

Given this, the research we sought to disseminate chose content teachers – so called in the studied institution, but also referred to in the literature as teacher-authors – as the central
theme of study, being interested in identifying the knowledge involved and placed in their elaboration work. Of disciplines to make them more explicit and contribute to understanding content teachers’ relevance in the search for quality distance learning.

To begin with, we can characterize this work from the point of view of the researchers who investigated this field and from the point of view of what institutions require from teachers when hiring. Mill, Oliveira, and Ribeiro (2010, p. 37, our translation) characterize this work as follows:

Teacher-author or teacher-content writer: this educator prepares the content and is responsible for methodologically adapting the concepts and learning activities to the profile of the graduate on the course. The teacher-author is, necessarily, an expert in the discipline's content, and his/her primary function is to prepare teaching materials in different media: printed study guides, video classes, virtual materials (internet), web conferences, etc.

According to these authors, in the first distance learning experiences it was customary for teacher-authors or content writers to be responsible for preparing the written and audiovisual materials but did not teach the classes in the courses in question. More recently, the management of distance learning courses has been concerned with reviewing this situation, integrating such teachers into working with students also as “teachers-appliers or teacher-trainers” (MILL; OLIVEIRA; RIBEIRO, 2010, p. 36, our translation) of subjects.

It is observed that the task of designing the course, which is under the responsibility of content teachers, is articulated with those of the other actors in the DL multidisciplinary team, which highlights a complex interdependence between the activities of the various professionals involved without which the work pedagogical is not conducted. And this work, from the perspective of the subjects who experience it, requires specific knowledge and practices.

From the point of view of the university in question, after consulting the 2019 hiring notice, it was found that the requirements for qualifying applications to be part of the Content-writers Database do not include specific training or experience working in a virtual learning environment, but they require consistent training combined with relevant academic production.

To qualify content teachers, they must have: an updated Lattes CV; a degree in the subject area; a doctoral degree in the subject area; proven teaching experience in the subject area; a teaching contract of at least 12 hours per week or as a retiree from a public higher education institution; publications in the subject area, at least one in extract A or equivalent in the last five years, or teaching position in a stricto sensu postgraduate program.
Teachers are qualified by a Commission appointed for this purpose when they meet the indicated requirements, without evaluation of merit, experience, career, or qualifications. Once qualified in their specific areas, they are accredited for two years to enter the distribution, conducted annually, of subjects that will be developed (unpublished) and/or updated (monitoring). This distribution is conducted through a draw, using the Federal Lottery as a reference, with the purpose of ensuring the impersonality of the process, a legal requirement regarding the application of public funds.

The institution studied offers specific training for mediation in distance learning only for its learning facilitators (tutors) – *stricto sensu* postgraduate students from state universities in São Paulo responsible for mediating between the content of the disciplines prepared by the content teachers and the students. Thus, it is observed that, while for facilitators, specific training to work in the context of distance learning is part of the institution’s strategy, for content teachers, work in the context of distance education is constructed and conducted based on the knowledge and practices of the individuals themselves.

In this sense, interviewing teachers working in this context and recording narratives of their experiences can contribute to expanding the set of academic works that describe, based on empirical elements, teaching practice in distance learning. It can also identify knowledge and practices of the subjects mobilized in this teaching context, provoking reflections on teacher training in digital education and expanding the visibility of teachers’ performance in this teaching modality.

**Teaching knowledge and professional practices in the teaching profession**

In this research, theoretical assumptions were considered that teaching is based on knowledge that is structured in the teacher throughout their history, the so-called teaching knowledge, and that this teaching is conducted in a specific work context (TARDIF, 2002), as explained below.

Tardif’s (2002, p. 11) approach to defining knowledge seeks to avoid positions linked to both “mentalism” – which reduces knowledge to mental processes (representations, images, beliefs) exclusively associated with the individual’s cognitive – and sociologism” – which tends to eliminate the contribution of actors in the concrete construction of knowledge, privileging the identification of external social forces, ideologies and symbolisms. For the author, knowledge is social, as far as it is established in the “relationship and interaction between the
individual and others in a given social situation” (TARDIF, 2002, p. 11, our translation). We consider, with Tardif (2002, p. 15-16, emphasis added, our translation), that

[...] Teachers’ knowledge is not an “intimate forum” populated by mental representations, but knowledge always linked to a work situation with others (students, colleagues, parents etc.), knowledge anchored in a complex task (teaching), located in the space of work (the classroom, the school), rooted in an institution and a society. [...] Teachers’ knowledge is based on constant transactions between who they are (including their emotions, cognition, expectations, personal history etc.) and what they do. [...] A teacher’s knowledge is a reality materialized through training, programs, collective practices, school subjects, institutionalized pedagogy etc., and is, at the same time, his/her knowledge.

In this sense, Tardif (2002) maintains that teaching knowledge should not be studied in isolation, but within the broader framework in which the teaching profession is situated, considering the constraints and the teacher's work context. This is because the diverse knowledge and “know-how” of teachers do not originate in themselves or in their daily work, but have a social origin: “[...] professional knowledge occurs at the confluence of various knowledge originating from society, school institution, other educational actors, universities, etc.” (TARDIF, 2002, p. 19, our translation).

These pedagogical knowledge bases—subdivided, according to the author, into “personal, school training, professional training, disciplinary, curricular and experiential” (TARDIF, 2002, p. 36-39, our translation) – are shaped by various variables that encompass the teacher's training throughout their career.

From the knowledge highlighted by Tardif (2002), the research we disseminate in this text focuses on the professional knowledge and practices mobilized by content teachers when hired to produce a subject. Considering the context of institutional requirements related to research, including teachers’ training and academic production and the process involved in the work in question, the research highlighted curricular knowledge and experiential knowledge as the most relevant for the analysis.

Curricular knowledge was considered to correspond to the prescriptions placed by the institution (in this case, university) in order to categorize and present the contents that will integrate the curriculum, presenting itself “concretely in the form of school programs (objectives, contents, methods) that teachers must learn to apply” (TARDIF, 2002, p. 38, our translation).

In addition, experiential knowledge is a set of updated knowledge, acquired and necessary for teaching practice that does not come from training institutions or curricula. These
are practical knowledge that are integrated into the act of teaching, forming a set of “representations from which teachers interpret, understand and guide their profession and [...] constitute, so to speak, the teaching culture in action” (TARDIF, 2002, p. 49, our translation). They are related to the formation of skills or *habitus*, that is, “they arise from experience and are validated by it” (TARDIF, 2002, p. 39, our translation). Thus, experiential knowledge is manifested through a know-to-be and a personal know-how validated in everyday work. According to Tardif's (2002) analysis, in the mobilization of other knowledge and its relationship with them.

These concepts allow us to understand that the knowledge involved in the content teacher’s work (as in that of every teacher) is formed from diverse sources – their training, disciplinary tradition, pedagogical conceptions, and professional experience – and are constructed, related, and mobilized by teachers by the requirements of their professional activity.

The professional practices involved in teaching are not restricted to the teacher-student-knowledge triad in class interaction but encompass complex work involving broader aspects. In this sense, we resort to the definition of “teaching as work”, proposed by Machado (2004) from an articulation of the socio-interactionist perspective (BRONCKART, 1999) and the perspective of labor sciences (AMIGUES, 2002; CLOT, 2001). For Machado (2007), teaching activity is always situated in a specific context, permeated by the teacher's intentions, prefigured by institutional prescriptions and determinations, and mediated by artifacts and instruments such as teaching materials, theoretical texts, videoconferences, etc.

We understand that this activity involves multiple actors, having at the same time, as Clot (2001) describes: a personal dimension, since is an activity of the subject, the teacher; an interpersonal dimension, as it interacts with others, such as students, colleagues, coordination, community; an impersonal dimension, as the work is influenced by external determinants, such as guidelines, curricula and programs; and a transpersonal dimension, as work is also marked by the history constituted by the collective of working subjects over time, as well as by the ways of doing work socially transmitted in a context.

These dimensions of work, proposed by Clot (2001) and taken up by Machado (2007), are close to the knowledge studied by Tardif (2002), who also considered the personal, relational, institutional and experiential dimensions.

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*Bourdieu [...] associates them with internalized schemes (habitus) that organize social experiences and allow them to be generated” (TARDIF, 2000, p. 222, our translation).*
For Machado (2007, p. 93, our translation), the object of teaching work is “[...] to create a conducive environment for learning specific content from different disciplines and the development of specific skills” related to them. We highlight here the idea of creating and organizing an environment conducive to learning and development, since the results of learning and development are internal processes of the subject on which the teacher cannot act immediately or directly, only indirectly. What can be proposed and managed by teaching work is precisely the construction of an environment conducive to the development of these processes and their monitoring.

Teaching work does not exist in a vacuum, but, as Bronckart (2005) explains, it is influenced by the particular socio-historical context, in this case, the Brazilian context in the year 2020, and by the organization of the teaching context, which is the author subdivides into three superimposed systems:

a- Educational institutions are established in official documents and legislation.

b- The education system, which concretely organizes institutions with a view to achieving the purpose and educational objectives established by public education policy, within the scope of the rules for hiring teachers, the development of programs, teaching platforms and teaching materials.

c- Finally, the didactic system, within which didactic interactions between teachers, students and the teaching object occur.

Based on these theoretical contributions, the research sought to understand the teaching knowledge involved in the process of designing and preparing distance learning disciplines and the practices that constitute this work, observing it as a situated activity, prefigured, mediated, and recognized by teachers in their narratives.

The interviews: talking to content teachers

To achieve our objective of identifying knowledge and professional practices that content teachers mobilize in their work designing and constructing disciplines, we chose to carry out research with a qualitative approach, which would allow subjects to explain how they experience and interpret their experiences (BOGDAN; BIKLEN, 1994).

The research was conducted in the context of a university with distance learning courses. Invitations were sent to a list of approximately eight teachers who worked as content writers in subjects on the Pedagogy degree course at the institution investigated at the time of scheduling.
the interviews (first semester of 2021) and, of this total, three teachers agreed to participate in them. They will be represented here by the letter D (teacher) and the number corresponding to the order of the interviews – 1, 2 or 3 – to preserve their identities.

Data production and collection took place through narrative interviews (JOVCHELOVITCH; BAUER, 2002, p. 93, our translation), with a view to encouraging and stimulating the interviewee “[...] to tell the story about some important event in their life and social context” to “reconstruct social events from the perspective of informants, as directly as possible”. Narrative interviews, as discursive material, do not directly express or mirror reality, but discursively (re)construct the representations and interpretations of reality for the interviewed subjects (MUYLAERT et al., 2014, our translation).

The research also included the study of hiring notices for the institution’s content writers, as well as institutional information available on the university's website for a better understanding of the broader context.

The interviews took place between May and June 2021 through video calls lasting an average of sixty minutes on the Google Meet platform, with the presence of the interviewee plus two or three researchers. Recorded and conducted from the perspective of the possibilities of narrative interviews, the proposal sought to make the participants feel free to report and comment on episodes they experienced.

The narrative interviews were organized by open questions addressing three themes open enough to include narrative episodes from the interviewed teachers, namely, (i) the teacher's profile and professional trajectory, (ii) knowledge and professional practices that he mobilizes in his work as a content teacher, and (iii) factors that facilitate/hinder the carrying out of this work of designing and preparing disciplines.

Regarding the three interviewers, we highlight that they were postgraduate students from public universities in the state of São Paulo (in master's and doctoral programs) who were also taking a lato sensu specialization course in didactics for the distance learning modality.

Relating to the profile of the three interviewees are three Ph.D. professors with main activities in-state public institutions of higher education in São Paulo – University of São Paulo (USP), State University of Campinas (UNICAMP), or State University of São Paulo (UNESP) – simultaneously hired as content teachers for distance learning degree courses at the higher education institution in question.

Concerning training to work in distance learning, D1 and D2 had part of their academic training related to the area, and D3 had experience as a teacher in a hybrid course. In the
interview situation, the interviewees were aware of the objective of understanding aspects mobilized in their work of designing and constructing disciplines and agreed with the possibility of the content of their speeches being the object of analysis, and could eventually be published, safeguarding the anonymity of their identities.

It is also noteworthy that, during the individual interviews, the interviewees were interested in talking about their work, their experience, and their learning on the path to becoming a content teacher. This interest was demonstrated by the active and participatory way in which they responded to the interview, starting from the initial questions and expanding the answers with reports of their experiences in the profession, difficulties and ways of overcoming that they were able to develop over time, with little need for the interviewers reformulate the questions.

After collecting the interviews, the transcription analysis procedure used was to identify the thematic contents conveyed in the interviews that were related to three categories extracted from our theoretical assumptions – curricular knowledge (cf. 3.1), experiential knowledge (cf. 3.2) and the specific constituent elements of the work of content teachers (cf. 3.3) –, highlighting those that made explicit the situated, intentional, prefigured and mediated character of this work. Although other knowledge (disciplinary and training) has been mentioned, the focus of this article is on the categories listed above. In short, the procedure conducted was based on a thematic analysis of the content covered in the narrative interviews.

Results: what do the narrative interviews reveal about the knowledge and practices in the construction of distance learning disciplines?

The results of the interview analysis are presented below under three topics, according to the procedures adopted: curricular knowledge (3.1), experiential knowledge (3.2), and constituent elements of teaching work (3.3). Regarding the axis of curricular knowledge, it was observed how teachers reported understanding the course syllabus and how they mobilized it to prepare the course. In the axis of experiential knowledge, the way in which teachers transpose their previous teaching experiences was identified, mobilizing them in the conception and construction of new professional experiences related to distance learning. Finally, we surveyed the elements of content teachers’ work based on this knowledge.

A general characteristic common to the three interviews conducted was the comparison between the form of organization of the institution where they work in person and that of the institution where they work with distance learning courses. In both institutions, teachers are
subject to rules, explicit or not, that influence their work. As Tardif (2002, p. 12, our translation) explains, teachers “[...] are subject, because of the collective structure of their daily work, to comparable conditioning and resources, including programs, subjects to be taught, rules of the establishment etc.”.

What stands out in the interviewees’ reports about the organizational structure in the institution where they are content teachers is poly-teaching, the teaching work done in conjunction with other actors. This comparison between teaching systems and teaching activities (teacher and content teacher) corroborated the relevance of the research problem initially presented, highlighting the need to identify which specific knowledge and practices can be described.

**Curricular knowledge: from the syllabus to course construction**

The analyses reveal that the curricular knowledge of the interviewed teachers is mobilized, as we will see below, in at least three moments: in the conception of the subject, in the comparison between new subjects and existing subjects, and the care not to repeat the same content in subjects many different.

When designing the course, D3 (2021) reported that, after designating the subject, it is important to know the syllabi, since the course already has a programmed structure and content, as well as knowing the materials already prepared for that course. From this, the content teacher will “[...] imprint a logic, a sequence” to the course, as shown in the excerpt below. Therefore, he focuses his work on this construction or reconstruction based on curricular knowledge:

> [...] we need to understand what the syllabus is, what the discipline requires [...] and then make use of what production is, what has already been done and how we organize this knowledge so that they can be understood. So, we create a logic, a sequence, we try to choose classic authors, people who work in production in the area [...] (D3, 2021, our translation).

It is observed that D2 deepens this need to adapt to the pedagogical project of the higher education institution, which precedes the work of content writers, as shown in the following excerpt. This “acceptance” of the “contract” and “rules” directly references the prescriptions set out by the educational institution, which point to the knowledge and methods that are part of the teaching curriculum (TARDIF, 2002).

> You accept that contract, those rules, so you know that you will have to appropriate those bibliographic references [...] because, in addition to my
subject, there are other subjects that make up the curriculum of that course, and the subjects need to be complementary, do not overlap each other (D2, 2021, our translation).

Working with previously offered subjects, which are already available to teachers with predefined content, they reported a clear difference compared to working with new subjects currently being designed. The former limits the teacher's autonomy, unlike the latter, which is open and offers freedom of choice within the limits set by the institution. This difference narrated by the teachers mobilizes curricular knowledge as knowledge about the program and the syllabus, at the same time, it indicates the construction of experiential knowledge in the comparison between experiences and in the elaboration of the idea of greater autonomy in the face of a new program.

When complying with the syllabi prescribed by the institution, teachers also identified the challenge of not overlapping content from different subjects and avoiding repetitive content for students. In addition to this concern, there is the need to not overlap your role with other polyteaching roles, such as facilitators, as pointed out by D2:

As I was a hub coordinator, I followed the first subject I taught very closely, but the team of facilitators at the first meeting 'pulled my ear', as it was their role. So, I started to follow the dialogue with the facilitators more (D2, 2021, our translation).

It is common for higher education professors to design subjects. However, what we see in the interviewees' reports about the curricular knowledge they mobilize is that they do not have the same autonomy regarding previously offered subjects, which can only be re-elaborated based on existing elements. This demonstrates that the required curricular knowledge (TARDIF, 2002) goes beyond the mere knowledge or science of previous proposals: it is necessary to understand, relate, and create based on the curriculum and integrate coherently. Furthermore, there is a concern about not overlapping subject contents with each other or their performance with others involved in the distance learning educational process.

Experiential knowledge: transposing livingness and experiences

If “[...] teaching is mobilizing a wide variety of knowledge, reusing it at work to adapt and transform it through and for work,” as Tardif (2002, p. 21, our translation) puts it, we were able to identify the experiences of the interviewees, reports in which such adaptations and transformations were present.
The analysis of experiential knowledge referring to knowledge and skills that arise from experience and are validated by it revealed four interesting aspects. The first is the transposition of experiences between distance and face-to-face teaching modalities. On the one hand, teachers seem to bring the experience built in their training and practice to the digital context, as seen in D3’s speech:

[…] It’s a very important part of my training to deal with materials that teach, because we learn to read and write, we go through school and use textbooks, I studied books that taught how to teach. And, when I joined […] [institution where he works as a content writer], I think it was in the role of someone who creates the material that teaches how to teach. (D3, 2021, our translation).

On the other hand, it was possible to identify reports of how working in the distance modality seems to have marked their in-person work at the universities to which they are originally linked, whether by rethinking activities and the volume of texts required to be read by students (D1), or making the necessary adjustments for remote teaching due to the need for social distancing in 2020 and 2021 (D1), or even rethinking the adaptations depending on the audience of students on the courses. Both movements represent the “adaptation and transformation” highlighted by Tardif (2002).

The second aspect refers to the interpersonal character of the work, that is, the construction of experience in conjunction with the collective (CLOT, 2001) and the idea of polyteaching (MILL; OLIVEIRA; RIBEIRO, 2010). D3 points out the importance of dialogue with instructional designers (ID) and the familiarity that develops in the process of creating or recreating a discipline. Furthermore, it highlights the perception of inadequate aspects of previous subjects as pertinent information for the reconstruction of the course:

As I have been working at the institution for a while, I already know some [instructional designers]. I think that's really cool because they already know a little about the way we do it […] the teachers, each one has a style, so they know how we work, there's already a dialogue, you know, it's very it's cool […] to hit a ball together with those who are thinking about the course in its various dimensions, because there needs to be a drawing of the discipline for us to follow […]. Then you realize, from previous years, what wasn't very good. It can and does happen, right? There's no problem with that, but this is the moment when this information is important to build. And then there's… there's this, everything is thought out, right? So, what is the text? So, these principles, of choosing texts from various authors... or allowing the student to want to read more; he has information from other authors there that he can search for later. You know, so […] this relationship is cool and even the relationship between the people who record the classes is really cool. (D3, 2021, our translation).
The third aspect refers to experiential knowledge under construction (TARDIF, 2002). The three interviewees share a similar length of time since they were hired as professors at a public state university: around a decade. When working as content writers in a higher education institution via distance learning, the experience is much shorter and does not reach four years. For this reason, some questions in your work still seem to have no answers, for example “[...] how to dialogue with students from another profile while maintaining a critical perspective?” (D1, 2021, our translation).

This type of question points to the fact that there are central elements of the work that have already been understood by teachers (profile of students on distance learning courses and the need to maintain a critical perspective), but still present themselves as a challenge to be elucidated in secondary education distance.

The fourth aspect consists of the elements narrated by teachers as facilitating or hindering their work. Among the elements that facilitated the know-how, the team of professionals involved stood out, which helped them a lot in implementing their ideas. D1 highlighted the quality of these professionals, justifying that the institution's instructional designers have the initiative to develop creative resources to support them in developing content. Teachers D2 and D3 reaffirmed this support, which favored the creation of content made available to students, as we see in D2's speech: “[…] in remote teaching, there are not these various instances that facilitate the entire organization and [in a way] that we really contemplate the characteristics of distance learning” (D2, 2021, our translation).

Teachers perceive the existence of these various poly-teaching instances as something positive and effective for their performance at the institution in question.

Regarding the complicating aspects, some situations were highlighted; the majority related to the rotation of content writers in the subjects since there is no guarantee that they will work on the same subject in subsequent two-month periods due to draws for the subjects every two months. Issues related to facilitators have also mentioned: their rotation due to the expiration of contracts, as well as the attitude that some have as “discipline evaluators”, using, according to D3, contact with students to criticize the content and how this is presented when it does not follow the way they would like: “I realized that it came to me more like this, and
kind of [the facilitators] put themselves in the place of evaluator of the discipline... and I don't know to what extent this can reverberate for the students [...]” (D3, 2021, our translation).

Interviewees also reported missing a greater relationship with other areas of the university, in addition to facilitators and instructional designers. D1 mentioned the difficulty of working within a team that has a high turnover of professionals, especially facilitators, but highlights the learning in this institution of “organizing work taking difference as an initial assumption” (D1, 2021, our translation).

The work of the content teacher through the voice of the interviewees

The analysis allowed us to outline the constituent elements of the work of content teachers, highlighting those that explain the situated, intentional, prefigured, and mediated nature of this work (MACHADO, 2007) by the voices of the interviewees. We list these elements in items a) to e) below.

a) Understanding the syllabus points to the “prefigured” (MACHADO, 2007) character of the work, that is, guided and prescribed by the institution. This component was present in all the narratives of the participating teachers. It was observed that there is a draw to define the subjects they teach and that, in most cases, they are already structured through a syllabus. Therefore, it is necessary to first understand the objectives, methods and bibliography provided for in the institutionally proposed syllabus to build the discipline and evaluate the need, or not, for the inclusion of new materials or extra bibliographies. As D3 informs: “[...] when we receive the invitation, the course is already structured... it has the subjects [...], we need to understand what the syllabus is, what the subject requires” (D3, 2021, our translation).

D2 also reports this prefigured character when citing the bibliography that appears in the course syllabus. Although teachers have a certain freedom of creation, it must consider points already defined, as seen, for example, in the following statement:

[…] what bibliography does it bring, because the content teacher... they cannot bring a bibliography different from the bibliography that is on the subject's syllabus. [...] The syllabus is created by the Univesp pedagogical team; we arrived, and it is ready. (D2, 2021, our translation).

The syllabus constitutes a starting point and a guide that establishes the basis for the creation of the course.

b) The appropriation of existing materials points to the “mediated” character (MACHADO, 2007, p. 91) of this work, that is, the fact that it is carried out using artifacts and
instruments available in the work environment. Due to the prior structuring of some subjects, the content writers narrated the importance of studying and appropriating the material already prepared for the course. The materials include texts, audiovisual and graphic materials. They reported that, for the continuity of the work to be possible, it is necessary to consider the constructions made by teachers previously in order to “[...] make use of what is the production of [...] what has already been done” (D3, 2021, our translation), since “[...] you accept that contract, those rules, then you know that you will have to appropriate those bibliographic references [...]” (D2, 2021, our translation).

These constructions can be appropriated by teachers as an element that facilitates the conducting of their work, when they believe that the choices made in the previous edition were correct, or they can be the object of reconstruction, when they seek to improve or update the proposed materials.

c) Understanding the profiles of the institution's students shows that the elaboration of subjects is a “situated” work (MACHADO, 2007, p. 91) and also oriented according to the recipients, the students of that institution, not restricted to the menus and materials already made available, but also developing a look at the student and the pedagogical relationship, as shown in this record: “The [...] [institution] helped to look at the other, considering even more the plurality of students before 'entering the classroom' [...] , organize the work taking difference as an initial assumption” (D1, 2021, our translation).

The learning path built in the discipline takes into account who these students are, what part of the path they are on, and their differences from the profile of students at state public universities in the face-to-face modality.

Still, on this topic, teachers mention the long-term purpose of their work, that is, the student's academic-professional training. To this end, they highlight the need to develop content that participates in the training of readers, illustrating the “debate in the area” (D3, 2021). In this sense, in the following excerpt, D3 highlights that one of the content creator's concerns is that “in the long term” (D3, 2021), the contents brought enable students to know, deal with and position themselves in relation to the issues debated in that area of knowledge.

Especially because it is not just a matter of us memorizing the content, but, by knowing how to deal with reading what the subject of that subject is, you allow the person to graduate in that subject because [...] they have the ability to deal with those issues (D3, 2021, our translation).
This component reveals the mobilization of professional training knowledge aimed at students appropriating curricular knowledge.

d) The (re)construction of a logic, of a learning path, explains the intentional nature of the work by having a teaching subject who mobilizes curricular and experiential knowledge for the construction of the discipline. Compared to face-to-face education, the interviewees highlighted specific characteristics of creating content for distance learning. Starting from the syllabus and carrying out the elaboration (or re-elaboration) of the subject requires the (re)construction of a learning path, stages, opening and closing points, discussions, different ways of treating content, which will involve, in the words of D3, a logic: “[...] how do we organize this knowledge so that it can be understood? [...] we imprint a logic, a sequence there” (D3, 2021, our translation).

To resume Machado (2007, p. 93, our translation), this is the core of the teaching work, that is, “creating a conducive environment for learning specific content from different disciplines and the development of specific skills” related to them. This logic mentioned by D3 for the organization of each subject is also associated by D2 with the curricular matrices, that is, it is expected that the construction of the contents of a subject takes into account the other subjects that make up the curriculum and are taught before and after, avoiding overlaps: “[...] because, in addition to my subject, there are other subjects that make up the curriculum for that course and the subjects need to be complementary, not overlap with each other” (D2, 2021, our translation).

This logic also serves as a basis for coherence in the evaluation, according to those interviewed.

e) The construction of this path that we mentioned in the previous point is carried out concretely through the curation of reading and study materials, which involves surveying possibilities, analysis and thoughtful, intentional choices, depending on the characteristics of the context. This curation, depending on the “logic” or “sequence” (D3, 2021) chosen by the teacher, will choose reading materials, audiovisual study materials and proposals for teaching activities that function as “mediating” elements of the teaching work (MACHADO, 2007, p. 91). This is one of the crucial points of the content writer’s activity. The following excerpt comments on this process, articulating the choice of classic or fundamental texts from the disciplines taught alongside more recent audiovisual materials: “[...] we try to choose classic

8 The term “logic” was used by D3 in the sense of a previously thought out conception of the path or route that leads the student to learning.
authors, right, people who work in production in the area [...] this is [...] the choice of text and now we have more and more opportunities because there is a lot going on the internet” (D3, 2021, our translation).

If, on the one hand, the choice of texts is based on professional training, curricular and experiential knowledge (TARDIF, 2002) built into the teachers' careers, the choice of audiovisual materials, on the other, seems to mobilize experiential knowledge that is constructed more specifically at this institution according to the interviews.

We can summarize the elements described here in five items in a reinterpretation of the scheme proposed by Machado (2007), to characterize the work of content teachers.

**Figure 1 –** The work of the content teacher in its context.

In the scheme of Figure 1, the educational situation is understood in a contextualized way by the broader picture, which contemplates the context and the particular socio-historical moment; the educational system, with its guidelines, guidelines and laws; and the education system, with the guidelines and political-pedagogical project of a given institution, such as the one we investigated in this study. Within the larger context, the pole of the triangle in the face-to-face model is occupied by the teacher in this model and is represented by poly-teaching, bringing together the multidisciplinary team members in which the content teacher is inserted.

The content teacher starts from the syllabus offered by the institution and mobilizes his knowledge and professional practices, as well as the available artifacts (material, such as previous courses, or immaterial, such as schemes and methods of preparing the course), to create a conducive environment for learning and developing students’ abilities. The articulation between the elements of the scheme is not static, but dynamic, implying continuous choices and
reorientations on the part of the teacher considering the needs, demands and intentions that arise in their activity.

Among these elements, we find: the impersonal dimension (syllabus), which originates in the context of the education system and points to the prefigured character of this work; the interpersonal dimension (of the student), which points to the situated nature of the work; the personal dimension (the choice of materials, the construction by the teacher), which points to its mediated and intentional character, mobilizing artifacts for teaching; and the transpersonal dimension (the appropriation of the history of that discipline, debates in the area, etc.), which indicates the mediating nature of the contents of the discipline (CLOT, 2001; MACHADO, 2007). Finally, it is worth mentioning that this scheme has the status of a proposal, remaining open to re-elaboration in the face of new empirical research that investigates this work.

Final considerations

As qualitative research, the study presented here sought to investigate the work of the content teacher based on teaching knowledge and practices, placing this objective in a public university institution offering distance learning. Although qualitative studies are not directly or automatically generalizable, it is important to highlight that they constitute an essential step toward understanding concrete reality based on subjects' experiences.

It is considered that the results obtained from the thematic analysis of the contents of the narrative interviews allow us to understand and characterize, although not exhaustively, constituent elements of the content writer's work, which points out some specificities different from those in the context of face-to-face higher education.

The characteristics of the content teacher's work revealed in the narrative interviews point to work that:

- it is prefigured by institutional prescriptions, demands and objectives, requiring teachers to mobilize curricular knowledge (TARDIF, 2002) and adapt it to them, in a different logic from that which they bring from their experience as face-to-face teachers.
- it is mediated (MACHADO, 2007) by the curation of bibliographic and audiovisual content, considered artifacts and instruments in the teaching activity, involved in the articulation between curricular and experiential knowledge (TARDIF, 2002).
- is guided by pedagogical conceptions and reflections that are reflected in its performance in the production, organization and articulation of disciplinary contents in favor
of the constitution of an environment conducive to learning and the development of capabilities relevant to student training, mobilizing the articulation between knowledge of professional and experiential training (TARDIF, 2002) in the elaboration of a logic or sequence of the contents of the distance learning discipline that lead to learning.

- reverberates previous professional experiences, different interests, perspectives and points of view, which are the experiential knowledge (TARDIF, 2002) of each person, and is carried out in a not static and isolated way, but dynamic, dialogical and collective, in a plural teaching process – or poly-teaching (MILL; OLIVEIRA; RIBEIRO, 2010) –, always in interaction with other actors in the process: facilitators, supervisors, managers, instructional designers and students.

With many years of experience in face-to-face university teaching, the interviewees revealed themselves in the reports as professionals discovering themselves as teachers of another modality. Because of this, their knowledge is not always sufficient to provide confidence in how to dialogue with students with the distance education profile while maintaining a critical perspective, how to involve the student so that they can lead their learning process, and how the different roles of polyteaching could better integrate for the benefit of students.

The questions they asked also revealed some challenges, despite extensive experience with face-to-face university education, about contact with students, their assessment, and their feedback in the institution's context.

Some factors that caused difficulties in this work but were not explored in this paper deserve to be better investigated in future research. Among them are the relative lack of autonomy when teachers face subjects that have already been offered, the difficulty in obtaining student responses, the fixed format of assessments, and the targeting of subjects through draws. Such points were mentioned by educators in the interviews as conflicting elements with the conception of education they bring and through which they seem to try to organize their narratives. These items constitute difficulties and dilemmas to be explored by the institution's coordination and training aimed at content writers.

Finally, we can consider that the study detailed in this paper, by analyzing the curricular and experiential knowledge evoked in the interviews and by raising constituent elements of a work that is still little researched through the voices of the interviewees, brings contributions to
a more concrete understanding of the profile and trajectory, the knowledge and practices of content teachers who work in distance education.

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**CRediT Author Statement**

**Acknowledgements:** Thank the Virtual University of the State of São Paulo UNIVESP.

**Funding:** Scholarship for participation in the Program “Didactic-Pedagogical Training for Distance Learning Courses”.

**Conflicts of interest:** There are no conflicts of interest.

**Ethical approval:** Did the work respect ethics during the research? Yes. 3 content teachers who worked at Univesp were interviewed.

**Data and material availability:** Are the data and materials used in the work available for access? The data is available in the paper.

**Authors' contributions:** All authors participated in the construction of the paper, both in defining the problem, objectives, and definition of methodological procedures, as well as in carrying out the interviews and subsequent data analysis and search and construction of the theoretical framework.

**Processing and editing:** Editora Ibero-Americana de Educação.

Proofreading, formatting, normalization and translation.