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Quality of Graduate Specialization Courses: Two Decades of Production

Calidad de Posgrado de los Cursos de Especialización: Producción de dos décadas

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Abstract

Graduate Specialization courses were created to train and prepare professionals for the labor market. The aim of this investigation is to discuss issues regarding these graduate courses, the quality of the courses offered, and their disadvantages and contributions, given their relevance to the labor market. The retrieved studies were indexed in the Web Science, Proquest, BVS, and Scielo databases. The keywords were: “lato sensu graduate”, “MBA”, “quality”, and “employability”. 419 articles were retrieved, of which 31 were analyzed. The inclusion criteria: 2000 to 2019; scientific articles, open access for download; peer-reviewed journals; in Portuguese, English, and Spanish; build and/or validated measurement instruments; and quality of the literature. The main results indicate that professionals, when investing in graduate courses, believe in the possibility of insertion in professional life, ascension, or career redirection. These programs have shown a loss of quality over time, and this is due to the lack of official monitoring and regulations, in addition to the lack of credibility in the learning on offer. This study aims to contribute to the discussion and reflection on – graduate specialization courses, the outdated education system and, in this regard, to raise new scientific concerns that may arise from this research survey.

Keywords: Graduate Courses, Specialization Courses, Higher Education, Employability.

Introducción

To improve the professional training that the labor market requires after undergraduate education, mainly after the border breaks provided by internationalization and the new digital technologies, *graduate specialization* appear (Lima et al., 2012; Rivero et al., 2017). The objective of this study is to discuss questions about the graduate *specialization* courses, the quality of the courses offered, their disadvantages and contributions due to their importance in training and preparation for the professional market. For this, we will make a brief historical introduction on the topic to better understand the scenario to which this course modality has been designed over the years.

Graduate courses in higher education were created by the National Campaign for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (which later became CAPES) from 1951, by Decree n° 29.741 with the objective of “ensuring the existence of specialized personnel in sufficient quantity and quality to meet the needs of public and private enterprises aimed at the development of the country”. After the 1960s, the master’s and doctoral levels were structured, but it was only in 1981 that the CAPES was recognized as a regulator of activities related to higher education, which currently evaluates and supervises undergraduate and graduate courses to promote quality higher education (Nobre & Freitas, 2017). The CAPES considers two types of graduate courses: *Stricto Sensu*, aimed at the academic area and training of researchers, and *Lato Sensu*, whose objective is to train professionals for the labor market, in developing skills so that they perform their work activities (Paixão et al., 2014). The characterization of the main information regarding graduate courses, obtained from the website of the Ministry of Education (MEC) are compiled in the table 1:

■ **Table 1.** Characteristics of Graduate Courses

Course	Type	Objective	Regulation	Hours	Evaluation Type	Certification
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Lato sensu	Further Training	Intended for professionals who are in the exercise of a certain occupation related to the academic training at the graduation, related to the position or function.	CNE/CES Opinion n°. 263/2006 and CNE/CES Opinion n°. 254/2002	180 hours minimum	Monograph.	Certificate
	Specialization	Intended for graduated professionals.	CNE/CES Resolution n°. 1, of June 8, 2007	360 hours minimum	As of Resolution No. 01 of April 6, 2018, elaboration of the monograph is not mandatory.	
	MBA	Master in Business Administration considered a specialization.	CNE/CES Resolution n°. 1/2001			
Stricto Sensu	Academic Master and Doctorate	Provide the use of the scientific method in academic research problems in a given area of knowledge.	CFE Opinion n° 977/65; CNE/CES Resolution n°. 24/2002.	Master, 360 hours minimum. Doctorate, 720 hours minimum.	Master thesis. Doctoral thesis.	Diploma
	Professional Master and Doctorate	Train for the exercise of advanced professional practice; transfer knowledge to society; articulate professional training according to the needs of public or private organizations, increasing their productivity and competitiveness.	Ordinance n°. 80/1998; MEC Ordinance n°. 389, of March 23, 2017, and CAPES Ordinance n°. 131, of June 28, 2017			

Source: elaborated from the study of Souza (2018).

Historical context

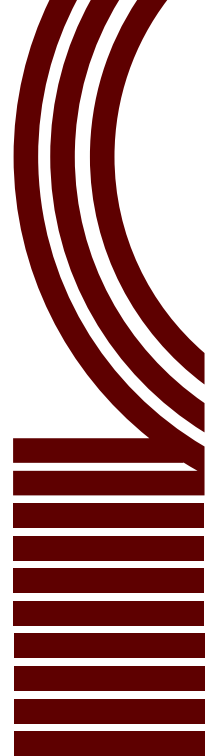
The graduate specialization program was under the supervision of the CAPES until 1991, when it was assigned the preparation of the PNPG - National Graduate Plan (Inocente, 2006; Fonseca & Fonseca, 2016). From the CNE/CES Resolution n°. 1/2001, graduate specialization courses did not require authorization, recognition or renewal of recognition for them to be implemented. In 2004, the Minister of Education, through Ordinance n°. 1,180, of May 6, 2004, declared his dissatisfaction with the deregulation that allowed the dissemination of poor-

quality graduate courses throughout the country. And he stressed that these actions should improve the quality of education, in his words: “Therefore, we cannot accept anarchy in the teaching of graduate studies in Brazil”.

The ordinance brought about a guiding concept and developed a Pedagogical Project script that contained: name of the course and area of knowledge; institution’s history; course objectives; target audience; program design; coordination; workload; period and periodicity; program content; teaching staff; methodology; interdisciplinarity; complementary activities; technology; physical infrastructure; selection criteria; evaluation system; frequency control; completion work; performance indicators; certification; detailed report and script of the pedagogical project (Fonseca & Fonseca, 2016). Therefore, due to the irregularity in the functioning of the graduate specialization courses and a more critical look by the Minister of Education, in 2004 the MEC instituted a Special Monitoring and Verification Commission, integrated with the Higher Education Secretariat (SESU) and the National Institute of Educational Studies and Research Anísio Teixeira (INEP), this Commission would act to promote the regulation of courses, the implementation and monitoring of their functioning. At that time, all courses were registered with the MEC, and from these records, the Higher Education Census produced official data on courses and students.

In 2005, regulatory frameworks were established with quality parameters for graduate courses through the National Graduate Plan (PNPG 2005-2010) one of the objectives of the Plan was the proposal for *graduate specialization* courses to be part of the graduate system, however, graduate specialization courses did not were contemplated by the regulatory and evaluative field of the CAPES (Hostins, 2006). The CNE/CES Resolution nº. 1/2007 only changed the geographic space in which the courses should take place, bringing no additional news. In 2012, the Commission was extinguished and no new data were available to generate any statistical indexes on graduate specialization courses. Since then, graduate specialization courses have lost their quality criteria and the offer of courses has increased.

The loosening at this level of education resulted in the expansion of the private sector, which provided new formats and modalities that could meet the demands of the labor market and, finally, more flexible policies and legislation that, as a consequence, have generated the offer of courses without academic criteria (Fonseca, 2004; Saviani, 2018). It is known that the resolution created

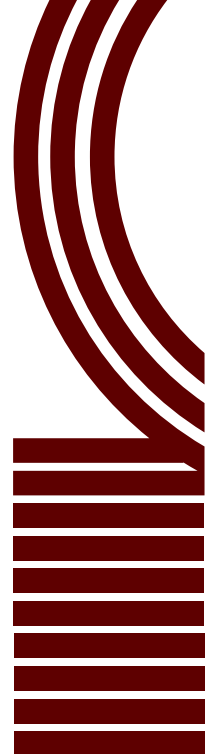


by MEC/CNA/CES, 2014, determines that higher education institutions register the offer of graduate specialization courses and provide data about the courses, to evaluate the dimension and the quality of courses to propose new regulatory policies (Fonseca & Fonseca, 2016).

The “massification” of graduate specialization courses brought losses in terms of the quality of the services offered, as they are not linked to academic quality criteria, generating deficiencies such as classes with many students, distancing from teaching practices and market needs, low level of teacher qualification. Some authors suggest the untying of courses due to academic quality criteria that are not subject to any type of systematic assessment that can verify educational results (Bertero, 2007; Pilati, 2007; Lima et al., 2012). In view of the losses that education has suffered on the issue of massification of courses, Resolution n°. 1, of April 6, 2018 of the MEC-CNE-CES was published, this Resolution regulates the prohibition on the offer of graduate specialization courses by Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) that are not duly accredited by the MEC, as a way of containing irregularities in certification; but the same regulation allows that HEIs and private institutions of work world can offer courses in the specialization modality.

While in Brazil, graduate specialization courses tread fuzzy paths as to their format and survival, in Europe, the education system seeks and promotes reforms that meet social and scientific demands by promoting them through the higher education system, adapting its needs to the global European context aiming at the unification of joint actions to ensure and raise the degree of international competitiveness, aiming at employability and promoting the competitiveness of European citizens (Vasconcelos et al., 2012; Neves, 2017).

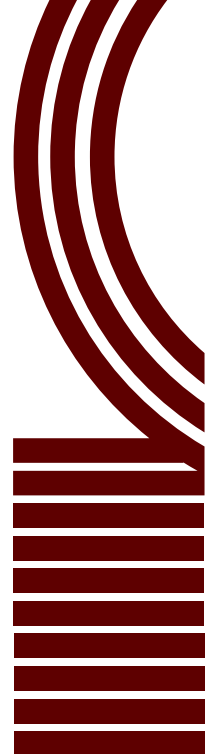
To achieve these objectives, the Bologna Process (1999) was created, which had political intentions about the European market, and its implementation took place in the educational policy of each country. From then on, higher education in Europe underwent several transformations, mainly after the resolutions of the Modernization Agenda, carried out by the European Council in 2007, which prioritized the search for the attractiveness of the higher education system, the qualification of teachers and the promotion of continuing education (Neves, 2017).



Prior to the Modernization Agenda in Berlin (2003), a study program was documented that privileged the transversal skills of the student. Subsequently, in the Bergen (Norway) report of 2005, the quality of higher education offered was discussed, and an evaluation system was defined that could promote quality assurance, assessments are recorded by quality assurance agencies, through meta-evaluation and meta-accreditation of the agencies themselves (Vasconcelos et al., 2012). The Bologna Process, from 1999, proposed a new educational model to privilege global competences, for that, the European educational system aims to: define the learning objectives of each course; elaborate the competencies (knowledge, skills and attitudes) necessary to carry out specific activities, both professional and in personal development, in addition to establishing criteria in the quality assurance of learning programs, ensuring the competences that must be acquired (Wielewicki & Oliveira, 2010; Vasconcelos et al., 2012). The line of action that has been most relevant in promoting the evaluation of the quality of higher education has been the continuing education program – lifelong learning – which encompasses a set of training activities, mobility programs, e-learning, research and vocational education, offered through a partnership between the educational service and organizations, considering that learning offers should provide and facilitate learning in the workplaces (Neves, 2017).

This presented European scenario can and should serve as a stimulus regarding the national education system, opening space for reflection on the possibilities and needs for transformation, through discussions and studies, as it is a complex process that has been reformulating its objectives and absorbing technological and social changes worldwide (Vasconcelos et al., 2014; Neves, 2017). The formulation of the initial objectives and those that were postulated later goes in the direction of the construction of public policies for higher education.

In the United States, the quality of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) is based on the standards presented and described in a clear and specific way by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation –CHEA–, where the quality standards that must be followed are determined, both the progress of quality and the demonstration of that quality are evaluated, that is, the academic performance of the students, aiming at the continuous improvement of the courses and programs offered by the HEIs (Vasconcelos et al., 2012). The CHEA, an accreditation agency, operates similarly to the CAPES, the evaluation is carried out by representatives through the evaluation form, which may include visits to the institutions. Accreditation is the only form of self-regulation of



standards, policies and procedures evaluated by peers, however, accreditation agencies that are not national in scope, nor do they concentrate all standards, they are divided by states or regions, respecting the laws of each state.

It can be noted that in the graduate specialization courses there is a significant gap in the system of evaluation and monitoring of the courses, as well as the need for research that can evaluate both the courses and the characteristics of the student profile (Fonseca & Fonseca, 2016; Rosa & Lopes, 2016). The studies produced by the Science of Training, Development, and Education (TD&E) deal with the need to characterize the clientele, so that the personalized instructional planning meets the needs of the students, as well as the intended educational objectives, in this way, the learning objectives can be evaluated, because the evaluation system feeds the whole process.

Current scenario

Work has always played a prominent role in people's lives and their relationships have become increasingly complex due to their economic function, both in meeting basic needs and in the social roles defined by work. Even today, there is a concern with the qualification of the workforce and the training of professionals (Mourão & Puente-Palacios, 2006; Karawejczyk, 2015). The Brazilian population has a low level of education, according to the National Household Sample Survey (PNAD) 2016, 51 % of the population has elementary education, 26.3 % has high school, 15.3 % has higher education, specifically in graduate specialization studies, there is no official data on this public, and less than 1 % of the population is in *stricto sensu* graduate programs.

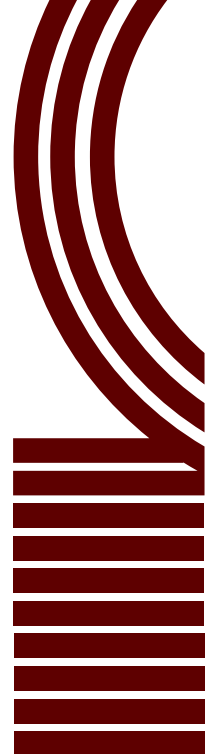
Although it seems to be a contradiction in view of the low priority, outdated and scrapped educational system due to the low investment of the State, professional training is constantly prioritized in the labor market, whether by organizations or by the workers themselves, mainly after the pulverization of the concept of employability, where the search for placing on the market has become an individual responsibility. According to Aranha (2001), the concept of employability is the responsibility of the worker for the acquisition and maintenance of the job, making continuing education, training and improvement the responsibility of the worker himself/herself (Mourão & Puente-Palacios, 2006; Mourão & Marins, 2010; Rivero et al., 2017).

The educational system is geared towards the formation of citizens as workers, because work occupies the centrality of life, inserts them into society and guarantees the country's development. For this reason, the Law of Guidelines and Bases of Education since basic education ensures the conditions for the individual to have professional training (Mourão, 2009). The educational system has been questioned, not only in Brazil due to the different lags it has presented, but also due to the rigidity of the system itself, which, after the phenomenon of globalization, has sought to balance itself with market demands (Vasconcelos et al., 2012).

The data published in the 2017 Higher Education Map, by the Union of Maintainers of Higher Education (SEMESP) in 2015, show that 919 thousand students completed a graduate course, with 234 thousand, that is, 23 % of this public, concluded a distance course, despite the growth of distance learning, due to new technologies and the economic viability it has offered, face-to-face courses are still the most sought after. The agency also released the Panorama of Graduates of Higher Education, a study on employability, it is observed that there is a 1.5 % increase in employability for students who complete higher education and the average remuneration is around R \$ 5.7 thousand. Of the students who complete higher education in a public HEIs, 44.4 % are not working and 56.2 % are still studying, mainly in the *stricto sensu* modality (53.1 %), of those who completed their undergraduate studies in private HEIs, 29,5 % is not working and 40 % continue with qualification in the specialization modality (SEMESP, 2017).

The data corroborate the urgency of higher education in adapting to the needs of students by offering quality courses that are geared towards employability, thus fulfilling their objective – to train students who are fit for the labor market. It should be emphasized what has already been said, there are no official data to compare the number of enrollments in face-to-face graduate specialization courses, because the responsible body was extinguished in 2012 (Fonseca & Fonseca, 2016).

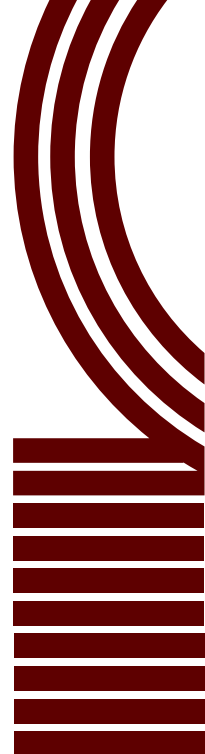
However, formal educational actions are necessary for learning, acquiring and developing skills that improve performance in the workplace. The concept of TD&E characterizes professional training as an operational strategy in the search for quality, understanding professional qualification as a set of skills, knowledge and competences that the individual has to develop his/her professional performance. This fact corroborates the interest of organizations in



evaluating aspects related to educational actions, providing a greater occurrence of transference than what was learned in such actions to different work environments (Mourão & Puente-Palacios, 2006; Zerbini et al., 2015; Martins et al., 2019). Thus, training courses need investment to improve their educational actions in any modality, increasing their capacity for transformation in terms of acquiring new knowledge, skills and attitudes in view of the need of individuals seeking professional and personal improvement and development.

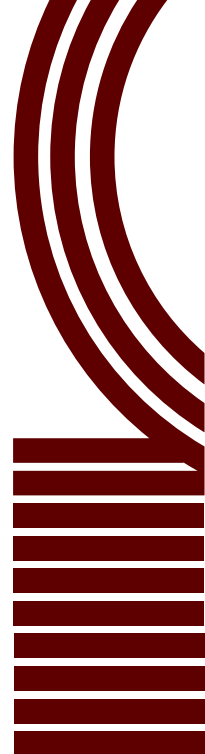
The quality of higher education offered is a concern of both accredited bodies and the academic community, as the lack of quality in the delivery of courses also affects the labor market. A survey was carried out through a British consultancy that evaluated 650 higher education institutions to rank the 500 best in the world in terms of employability - QS Graduate Employability Rankings 2019 – the six Brazilian universities that are in the ranking are public: Universidade de São Paulo (USP) 67th position, Universidade Estadual de Campinas (UNICAMP), and the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ), in the range 251-300; Universidade Estadual Paulista Júlio de Mesquita Filho (UNESP), Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (UFMG), and Universidade Federal de São Paulo (UNIFESP) were between 301-500.

Another British survey evaluated the best institutions in the world, The World University Ranking 2019, 36 Brazilian universities are among the thousand classified universities, of which the private universities are: PUCRJ, PUCRS, PUCPR, and UNISINOS, the same ones that promote greater employability are the best evaluated in this ranking too, with the Universidade de São Paulo being in the range between 251-300; UNICAMP, 401-500, and the others above the 600^o position, an interval where the private universities are also found (*Top Universities 2019*). These international indexes reflect the panorama of national public and private universities and the lack of an educational system that can indeed compete globally. Considering that the greatest academic productions come from public universities that have been experiencing great difficulties regarding the budget, but that have managed to maintain themselves and find their place through the quality of the scientific productions presented. Therefore, it is essential to highlight that the CAPES has played an important role in the task of safeguarding the quality of courses, but what is intended is to point out the urgent need to requalify this level of education as relevant to the qualification of human resources.



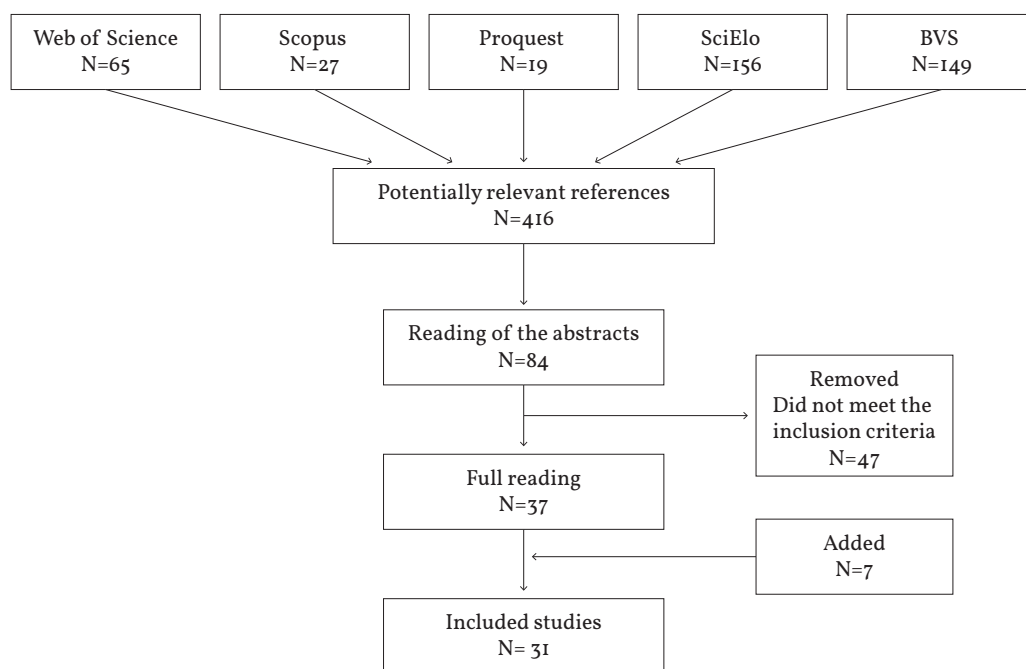
The authors, Fonseca and Fonseca (2016) warn that requalifying graduate specialization education is “redefining the design of courses and the form of supervision of competent bodies responsible for the accreditation and evaluation of educational institutions”, the authors say that it is necessary to establish which intuitions have academic conditions for offering courses. In this sense, there seems to be a new possibility of regulation based on the recent Resolution n°. 1, of April 6, 2018 of MEC/CNE/CES published with the intention of regulating the prohibition on the offer of graduate specialization courses by HEIs that are not duly accredited by the MEC (MEC 2018). In view of the losses that education has suffered on the issue of massification of courses, this rule was recently published, which can act as a way of containing “the sale of certificates”, therefore, from this regulation, only HEIs can offer courses in the specialization modality.

For there to be means in the qualification of the offer of graduate specialization courses, the evaluation appears as a tool that identifies the possibilities, guides, justifies, has the decision-making power of choice regarding the profile of the desired course and its relevance in the insertion of students, in addition to implementing the assessment, it is necessary to monitor the graduates as part of the strategies for improving the quality of teaching (Fonseca & Fonseca, 2016). The CAPES has an evaluation system that acts both in the implementation and in maintenance of courses to ensure that the required quality is maintained with a view to social, economic and organizational development. The results of this indicator are used to improve the subsequent versions of the same course and to improve the instructional system, evaluating from the needs analysis to the learning assessments, running through the assessment system based on TD&E (Mello, 2017; Martins et al., 2019). With the intention of containing this uncontrollable number of graduate specialization courses, and prioritizing the minimum quality required of public universities, the CAPES, in contrast to the numerous graduate specialization courses, developed a new *stricto sensu* graduate modality, the so-called professional master’s and doctoral degrees. There were many challenges for the creation of professional master’s degrees and one of the arguments in the implementation of a new type of master’s/doctorate was to preserve the quality levels already achieved by the CAPES system and to preserve the evaluation of courses to maintain a good level of productivity and qualification (Hostins, 2006; Barreto & Domingues, 2012).



Method

To map the existing production, we opted for a narrative review of the literature, where we find the first approach to the field to be studied, the current literature favoring its contributions and identifying its existing gaps (Vosgerau et al., 2014). The selected databases were Web of Science, Scopus, Proquest, BVS, SciELO. The Web of Science, Scopus and Proquest were chosen because they are major international indexers. The BVS and Scielo compile mostly studies from Latin America, so the choice of databases was aimed at reaching a large number of researches related to the theme. The period investigated initially would be the last five years in the search for theoretical and empirical production of national and international studies, however, in the initial investigation on the theme, the relevance in expanding the scope of the studies found was perceived, thus investigating the period from 2000 to 2019. The search was carried out in February 2019 and updated in September 2020. The keywords were defined based on the search for terms related to the revision in the Vocabulary of Terms in Psychology, registered in the Virtual Health Library - Psychology (BVS-Psi), thus, the keywords were used: Postgraduate Postgraduation, MBA, Specialized Courses, Graduate Courses, Quality, Employability/Employ* and their correlates in Portuguese and Spanish, using the Boolean operators AND and OR, crosses between the keywords so that it could contemplate the studies found. In the search process, the titles, abstracts and studies in full were sequentially analyzed, as shown in Figure, below:



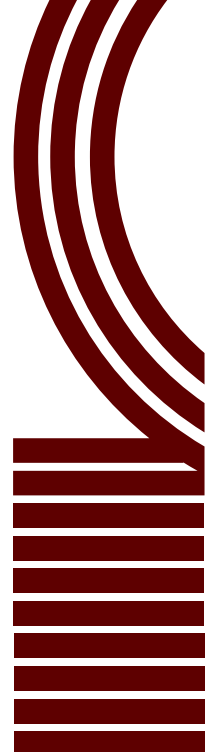
Source: elaborated from the authors (2020).

Figura 1. Search control of the review

The inclusion criteria adopted were: studies published between the periods 2007 to 2018, scientific articles, articles published in Portuguese, English and Spanish, empirical studies, development and/or validation of instruments, systematic assessment models, quality of literature review, open access and download available. The exclusion criteria adopted were chapters and books, theses, dissertations, *stricto sensu* studies, studies on professional master or doctorate.

Results and Discussion

Of the studies recovered, 83 % (n = 26) were published in Portuguese, 13 % (n = 4) in English (Vazquez & Ruas, 2012; Lima et al., 2015; Tavares et al., 2016; Marino et al., 2019); and 3 % (n = 1) in Spanish (Rivero et al., 2017). Regarding the location of the productions found, 93,5 % (n = 29) are from Brazil and 6,5 % (n = 2) are from Argentina. The areas of knowledge involved with the productions are: 38,7 % (n = 12) of Administration, 19,3 % (n = 6) of Education, 12,9 % (n = 4) of Nursing, 9,7 % (n = 3) of Medicine, 9,7 % (n = 3) of Health (Multidisciplinary) and 3,1 % (n = 1) Accounting, Environmental Education and Psychology, contributed respectively. The years of greatest production were: 12, 9 % (n = 4) in 2009



followed by 9,6 % (n = 3) in 2016 and 2015, respectively; 6,4 % (n = 2) in 2012, 2010, 2006, 2005, 2004, 2003, and 2000, it is noted that the highest incidence of studies is after 2012, when the records of the Higher Education Census stopped producing official data. As for the affiliation of the first authors, knowledge production is concentrated in the States: 19 % (n = 6) Rio Grande do Sul, 16 % (n = 5) São Paulo, 16 % (n = 5) Rio de Janeiro, 9,7 % (n = 3) Distrito Federal, 9,7 % (n = 3) Paraná, 6,4 % (n = 2) Espírito Santo, in the southeast and south of Brazil are the states with the highest rates schooling, higher per capita income and higher employability rates. The institutions are listed in table 2 below:

■ **Table 2.** Affiliation of the first authors

%	Nº. of studies	Affiliation institutions
9,7	03	Faculdade de Economia, Administração, Contabilidade e Atuária (USP)
9,7	03	Universidade de Brasília (UnB)
9,7	03	Universidade Federal de São Paulo (UNIFESP)
9,7	03	Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS)
6,4	02	Fundação Getúlio Vargas (FGV)
6,4	02	Fundação Oswaldo Cruz (Fiocruz)
6,4	02	Universidad Nacional del Centro de la Provincia de Buenos Aires
3%	01	Centro Universitário La Salle-Unilasalle
		Escola de Enfermagem de Ribeirão Preto (USP)
		Faculdade de Enfermagem e Obstetrícia da Universidade Federal de Pelotas (UFPel)
		Faculdade de Educação (UNICAMP)
		Fundação Instituto Capixaba de Pesquisas em Contabilidade, Economia e Finanças (FUCAPE)
		Universidade Estadual de Londrina (UEL)
		Universidade Federal do Paraná (UFPR)
		Universidade de Sorocaba
		Universidade de Caxias de Sul (UCS)
		Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro (UERJ)
Universidade Federal do Espírito Santo (UFES)		

%	Nº. of studies	Affiliation institutions
3%	01	Universidade Federal do Estado do Rio de Janeiro (UNIRIO)
		Universidade Federal do Estado do Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS)
		Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ)
100	31	

Source: elaborated from the authors (2020).

Of the studies found, three ($n = 3$) are literature reviews published in this period, a systematic review produced by Marino et al. (2019) in Argentina, the authors sought to understand the impact of the MBA on professional career development. The literature review by Boff, Closs, Sagaz and Rodrigues (2018) that mapped the Brazilian scientific knowledge about the last fifteen years of MBA courses, both from the perspective of management theories focused on the area of Administration. The study by Morales (2009) which aimed to map specializations in the area of environmental education. Theoretical essays produced were four ($n = 04$) in the educational area that point in the direction of historical contexts, regulations and critical analyses (Saviani, 2000; Fonseca, 2004; Pilati, 2006; Fonseca & Fonseca, 2016). A study in the educational area focused on a Multiprofessional Health Program (Rosa & Lopes, 2016), and a theoretical essay refers to human resources professionals, adopting favorable perspectives on the training and career of this segment (Lima et al., 2012). Table 3 below shows the exploratory and descriptive studies, their area of knowledge and the research approach, 32 % ($n = 10$) being quantitative, 29 % ($n = 9$) being qualitative and 3% ($n = 1$) mixed study.

■ **Table 3.Characteristics of retrieved studies**

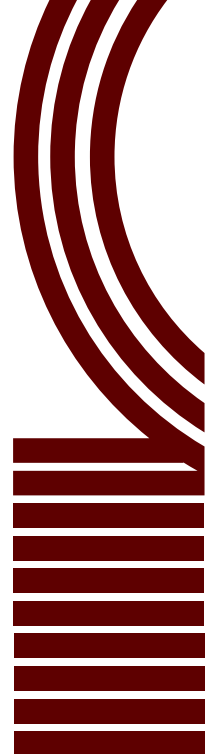
Area of Knowledge	Approach	Studies
Administration	Qualitative	Wood Jr. and Cruz (2014); Karawejczyk (2015); Rivero, Dabos et al. (2017).
	Quantitative	Fandiño and Souza Maciel (2008); Tauil and Mainardes (2015).
	Mixed	Eberle et al. (2010)
Accounting	Quantitative	Frezatti and Kassai (2003).

Area of Knowledge	Approach	Studies
Organizational and Work Psychology	Qualitative	Vasquez and Ruas (2012).
Health Sciences	Qualitative	Rosa and Lopes (2016); Tavares et al. (2016).
	Quantitative	Meireles and Scarpi (2005); Maciel et al. (2010); Silva-Júnior et al. (2011); Thuler et al. (2013).
Nursing	Qualitative	Olschowsky and Silva (2003); Oliveira et al. (2009); Lima et al. (2015).
	Quantitative	Barros and Michel (2000).
Education	Quantitative	Marquezzine and Tramontina (2006).
Environmental Education	Quantitative	Morales (2009).

Source: elaborated from the authors (2020).

Graduate Specialization Courses (GSC) have suffered many criticisms and questions regarding their format and the effectiveness of the learning offered (Boff et al., 2018). The unbridled increase in this teaching modality has been raised by scientific publications, because the implications are being observed directly in the labor market. In 2017, more than 6,000 courses with an MBA title were surveyed at the e-MEC (Boff et al., 2018). In the last two decades of production and analysis of the effectiveness of GSC, both in terms of specializations and MBAs, there has been a timid advance in terms of real advances in this field.

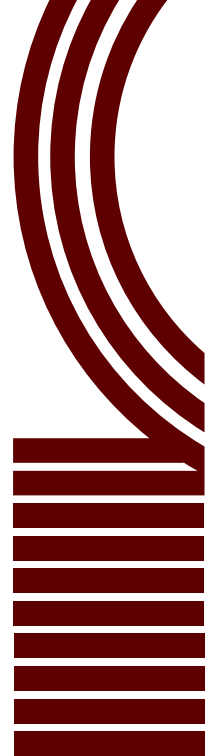
The MBA programs have a character of managerial performance, promote the acquisition of skills for acting in this field, their main characteristics are management skills (leadership and teamwork, for example) and tools that assist in this function (Karawejczyk, 2015; Rivero et al., 2017; Marino et al., 2019). The MBA provides a more global view according to the report of students from different countries (Marino et al., 2019), MBA courses abroad can be full-time, while here in Brazil they are partial and with reduced hourly load. Specializations are diverse in all areas of knowledge. The structure formed by MBA and specialization as similar proposals has been heavily criticized by the literature (Fonseca, 2004; Wood Jr. & Paula, 2004; Pilati, 2006; Wood Jr. & Cruz, 2014), considering that the proposals differ in terms of delivery course offered.



Since the early 2000s, studies have presented the same criticisms both in the area of managerial training, the focus of MBAs, and in the areas of health and education. Many criticisms point to the distance from the practice and the real needs posed by the labor market (Boff et al., 2018). In this sense, Wood Jr. and Paula (2004) presented studies developed on GSC, with a focus on executive training, the biggest challenges outliers were outdated content, intensive use of imported material; widespread use of the same materials regardless of courses; misalignment between disciplines and teaching materials.

Bertero (2007) provokes us to reflect on the question whether the content offered in the graduate specialization courses are considered commodities, and even without attending the course the student obtains his/her certification, that is, the commercialization of specialization education insert individuals into the labor market without having acquired specific skills and abilities for such performance, what justifies this statement is the large number of courses without any quality, without instructional planning in line with the appropriate result objectives and an effective evaluation (Bell et al., 2017; Martins et al., 2019), this discussion that places GEC as a form of performance in the current market, fosters the debate on the effectiveness of the courses offered (Karawejczyk, 2015). The course participant sometimes agrees with this system, because his/her main objective does not seem to be to seek critical reflections and analyses, because the content provides little theoretical and scientific depth, but just obtaining the certification seems to be sufficient (Pilati, 2006; Lima et al., 2012).

According to the interesting contribution made by Fandiño and Souza Maciel (2008) in raising market questions about the model of GEC, these courses are being reactive both in relation to the market as to the students' immediate needs, and the structuring of the programs has taken place according to the interest of the institution. The study by Karawejczyk (2015) questions this perspective that the certification that a graduate specialization program would generate greater employability for the managerial workforce and points out the need for global indicators of the country's economy so that this analysis can be deepened. On the other hand, from the graduates' point of view, GSC increase employability, because these courses expand the network of professional contacts and puts them at an advantage in the competition for a position (Maciel et al., 2010; Rivero et al., 2017), the graduates of an GSC in Occupational Health believe that GSC valued and favored qualification and helped the professional to enter the labor market (Silva-Júnior et al., 2011). The study by Rivero et al. (2017) brings a

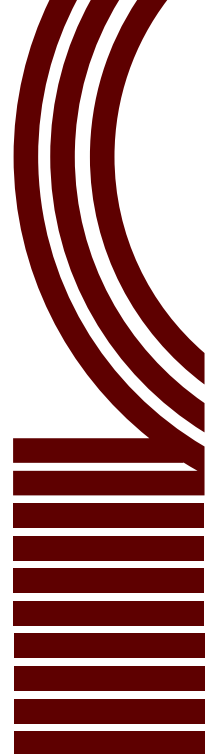


data that deserves to be highlighted, in Latin America a survey was carried out in 2015, 75 % of the consulted employers sought to hire professionals with MBA, thus increasing the demand for this training.

Research in this sense should be conducted so that there is more assertive information regarding the employability of these individuals, in addition to ensuring the need for a systematic assessment of the GSC so that there is theoretical-methodological and practical quality of the educational objectives linked to the real need of the labor market. The difficulty between theory and practice revealed by GSC have been pointed out in studies from different areas of knowledge, both in management areas and in health areas (Olschowsky & Silva, 2003; Maciel et al., 2010; Tavares et al., 2016; Lima et al., 2015) and education (Marquezine & Tramontina, 2006).

According to the literature, the primordial motivation of individuals in the search for a graduate course is anchored in the possibility of entering professional life, leveraging or redirecting their careers, and, for this, they invest in education (Wood Jr. & Paula, 2004; Rivero et al., 2017; Boff et al., 2018; Marino et al., 2019). The positive impact on salary is also considered one of the reasons that lead professionals to choose training, the belief that graduate education is one of the most effective means of achieving this goal, linking the successful professional trajectory to specialized training in the acquisition of technical skills (Torres, 2010; Lima et al., 2012; Karawejczyk, 2015). This fact is corroborated by the study by Fandiño and Souza Maciel (2008), where 50 % of the interviewees managed to increase their salaries and 40% associated promotions with the fact that they had taken an MBA, as well as studies in the health area such as the study by Maciel et al. (2010) point out that 95 g% of the graduates said they did not have a salary difference after completing the course.

From the point of view of behavioral competencies called soft skills, studies point to increased self-confidence and professional self-esteem (Rivero et al., 2017), increased satisfaction with the career (Marino et al., 2019), expansion in the professional contacts has also been a positive point listed by these professionals/students (Frezatti & Kassai, 2003; Lima et al., 2012; Rivero et al., 2017), international studies listed in the literature review by Marino et al. (2019), also point to this perception. Of the most technical competences and skills, the development of leadership skills, technology management, information analysis, skills related to the area of finance, strategic planning and marketing



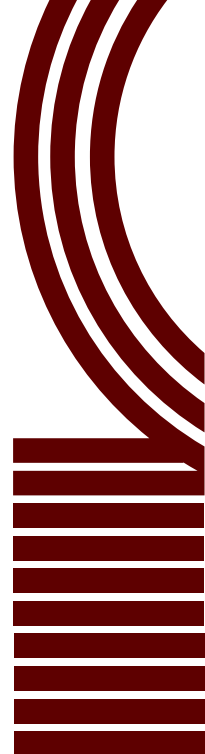
(Marino et al., 2019) were pointed out, which, despite their relevance to training, still raise questions about the skills acquired by these training courses.

Health professionals have also shown dissatisfaction with the Multiprofessional Residency Programs, as they believe that the practice and theoretical-conceptual training has not favored the necessary skills for their daily activities (Lima et al., 2015; Rosa & Lopes, 2016). An interesting variable raised in the literature review by Marino et al. (2019) is cultural value generated by the conclusion of an MBA course, the prestige of the course directly affects and can explain one of the factors of career success, because, having the title of a renowned school positively influences the possibility of accessing a career, better salaries, promotions and more prominent positions, as well as impacting the individual's psychosocial conditions.

In this survey of studies, it is noted that several areas of knowledge such as Administration, Accounting, Nursing, Medicine, and Education have produced on the theme of graduate specialization courses, however, in this search, Organizational and Work Psychology (OWP) produced only one study. OWP is a consolidated and robust scientific field with many contributions to add on the theme, whether from a psychosocial point of view or to list the necessary skills that must be considered in the training of professionals.

The gap between the curricular structure and the practical training required by the labor market is a concern not only in the national scenario but also in international studies (Marino et al., 2019). Therefore, the educational system as a whole need to be aware of to what is taught and the applicability of this knowledge in the labor market, because what is the need for knowledge if it does not fulfill its primary function of transfer to the labor market. The deficiency of guiding and methodological references for assessing the effectiveness caused by the graduate specialization courses training may be the cause of the low quality of higher education offered, and this causes a concern for both the accredited bodies and the academic community, as the lack of quality in the delivery of courses directly affects the labor market.

In view of in Europe and the United States, the implementation of an agency based on the CHEA systems would bring to education in Latin America a new format in the training of professionals, bringing greater global competitiveness. Define a system that evaluates of the quality of the education offered with indicators,

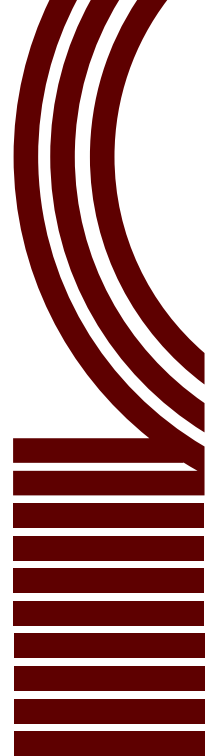


offers a data collection that characterizes the student's profile and could mark out the skills and abilities required by the job market, in addition to promoting transversal competences as has been happening in Europe. A partnership between government institutions and specialized private institutions would be ideal to fill this gap in the assessment system.

The limitation of the study may be caused by the chosen databases Web of Science, Scopus, Proquest, BVS, SciElo, other databases could be investigated; despite the international scope of the *lato sensu* databases, it is an expression only used in Brazil. The choice of keywords may have limited the number of studies retrieved, given that the international and Brazilian terms when dealing with the same theme are different. Future studies can benefit by adding words such as skills, professional training, continuing education, which can expand the scope of studies by increasing the sample. This study aims to bring new discussions and new notes to this field of study, from the point of view of psychology and its contributions with regard to the world of work and its implications.

Final Considerations

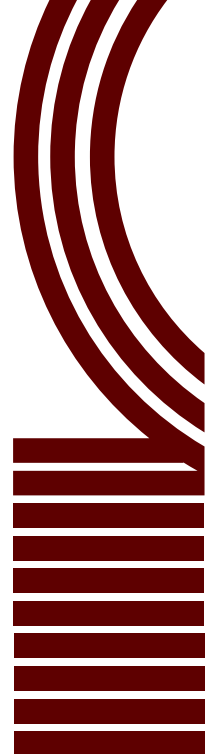
Organizational and Work Psychology (OWP), mainly from the perspective of TD&E, has a lot to contribute to the discussion on postgraduate courses, with work being its main object of study and all the issues that permeate it. Preparation, training, updating to improve and expand the individual's skills for the job are extremely pertinent and relevant issues in this area of activity. Permanent or continuing education is imperative nowadays, self-improvement and the search for personal and professional skills potentiated the search for knowledge, skills and attitudes (Maciel et al., 2010). A fact pointed out by Pilati (2006) in the debate on the relevance and place of postgraduate courses in the age of knowledge, emphasizing that all knowledge produced is valid as a way of improving or updating the individual, recovering the deficit left in his/her training. Many variables can be raised in future studies to clarify, identify and evaluate the conditions, students, teachers and the course. Despite encountering several educational and marketing challenges, GSC have contributed to the acquisition and maintenance of competences and should be a more explored field in future investigations.



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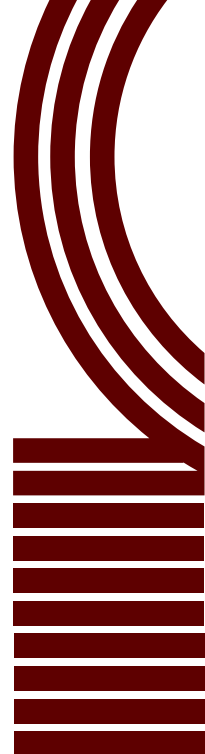
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