

Teaching Practicum: voices from students and alumni of a Graduate Program in Education

ARTICLE

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Abstract

The paper aims to present reflections on the Teaching Practicum in the Postgraduate Program in Teaching (PosEnsino), established through a broad association between three Higher Education Institutions located in the state of Rio Grande do Norte (UERN, UFERSA and IFRN). The production and, consequently, the analysis of the data are based on the experiences of master's students and graduates of the program who experienced this formative stage at different times and in different contexts in Higher Education. A total of 26 participants collaborated with the research. It was concluded, among other things, that the Teaching Practicum is essential for understanding teaching and planning in this teaching modality; it makes it possible to experience, in some way, the tripod that drives Higher Education – teaching-research-extension; it contributes to the progress of the research being carried out in the master's program; and, when well mediated by the internship supervisor, it allows for the construction of a reflective posture, critical analysis and continuous improvement of teaching practice in Higher Education.

Keywords: Higher Education. Teacher Training. Teaching Practicum. Teaching.

Estágio de Docência: experiências de discentes e egressos de um Programa de Pós-Graduação em Ensino

Resumo

O texto objetiva apresentar reflexões acerca do estágio de docência no Programa de Pós-Graduação em Ensino (PosEnsino), instituído por meio da associação ampla entre três Instituições de Ensino Superior circunscritas no estado do Rio Grande do Norte (UERN, UFERSA e IFRN). A produção e, conseqüentemente, a análise dos dados partem das experiências de mestrandos e egressos do programa que vivenciaram essa etapa formativa em diferentes tempos e contextos no Ensino Superior. Ao todo, 26 participantes colaboraram com a pesquisa. Concluiu-se, entre outros aspectos, que o estágio de docência é essencial para

entender a docência e o planejamento nessa modalidade de ensino; possibilita vivenciar, de algum modo, o tripé que move o Ensino Superior – ensino-pesquisa-extensão; contribui para o andamento das pesquisas que estão sendo realizadas no curso de mestrado; e, quando bem mediado pelo professor orientador de estágio, permite a construção de uma postura reflexiva, a análise crítica e o aprimoramento contínuo da prática docente no Ensino Superior.

Palavras-chave: Ensino Superior. Formação Docente. Estágio de Docência. Ensino.

1 Introduction

We understand that the supervised internship constitutes a field of knowledge and is not limited exclusively to an isolated instrument of practice within the path of teacher education (Fortunato, Araújo, and Medeiros, 2023). In this sense, it allows professional practice, combined with theory, to engage in a concurrent dialogue within the practical process of acquiring teaching knowledge. Despite this general definition, several other concerns arise regarding the experiences of student-teacher-researchers in higher education: Is the internship a field of training? Of professional practice? Of decision-making? Of research? In this regard, if we undertake a brief theoretical and conceptual review, we find that the literature defines the supervised internship through all these questions, even adding further meanings to it.

Given its polysemic nature, the teaching internship becomes essential in teacher education programs, extending from undergraduate to graduate studies. However, we observe that *stricto sensu* graduate programs tend to materialize with a primary focus on scientific research, which consequently leads to less attention to the teaching dimension itself (even though we consider this domain a *locus* of research). In any case, this scenario fosters restlessness, stimulates inquiry, and reinforces the need to construct new investigations, or at the very least, contributes to perspectives aimed at understanding how internship experiences are being shaped within *stricto sensu* programs.

Recognizing the plurality that this discussion may assume, the contribution that this text can offer to new graduate students, and the need to view this field not merely as an institutional requirement, this paper analyzes the teaching internship in higher education

within the Graduate Program in Teaching (*PosEnsino*) at the State University of Rio Grande do Norte (UERN), in broad association with the Federal Rural University of the Semi-Arid Region (UFERSA) and the Federal Institute of Education, Science and Technology of Rio Grande do Norte (IFRN), through the perceptions of students and alumni who experienced this educational and formative stage.

The experiences of the research participants (as constructed during data collection) support reflections on how the teaching internship has been materializing within *PosEnsino/UERN/UFERSA/IFRN*. Nevertheless, it is important to maintain precision and openness to dialogue with theoretical frameworks and formative stages from other institutions, in order to undertake analyses at a macro level, considering the context and particularities that characterize each case.

For data production, we designed a questionnaire using Google Forms, which was answered by 26 participants (both students and alumni) who completed their teaching internship in higher education within *PosEnsino*. Thus, beyond this introduction and the final considerations, the text is organized into three additional sections. The first discusses the study's methodology, the second addresses normative issues related to the teaching internship, and the third presents the analysis of data based on the questionnaire responses from students and alumni of the Master's in Teaching program (*PosEnsino*).

2 Methodology

In seeking to reflect on the teaching internship within *PosEnsino*, through the perceptions of students and alumni who experienced this educational and formative stage, the study adopted a qualitative approach. The participants included current and former students who held scholarships while enrolled in the Master's in Teaching program. In order to reach all (former) scholarship holders, we initiated contact through WhatsApp, Instagram, and email with those closest to the researchers. Additionally, a request was made to the program for a list of students who had completed the teaching internship, which allowed our outreach and communication network to expand to all potential participants.

With this information in hand, we identified that 65 master's students or graduates had completed the teaching internship in the program between 2016 (the year of the program's creation) and 2024 (the year of this study). However, only a portion of them had received scholarships. Therefore, we established specific criteria for the feasibility of the research. These were: to have been or to be a student of *PosEnsino*, to have completed the teaching internship, and to have held or currently hold a scholarship in the program. Based on these parameters, 30 master's students or graduates were eligible for invitation.

Invitations were sent to all participants who met the selection criteria, although some limitations were encountered. The following table summarizes the participant selection process.

Table 1 – Participant selection process

Participants	Quantity
Participants who completed the teaching internship in <i>PosEnsino</i>	65
Participants who did not meet the selection criteria	35
Participants who met the selection criteria	30
Participants who were unavailable	2
Participants who did not respond to contact attempts	2
Participants who contributed to the research	26

Source: Research data (2024).

Participants who did not meet the selection criteria were master's students or graduates who were not scholarship holders in *PosEnsino* but had only completed the teaching internship, as well as the three authors of this article. Participants listed as unavailable were those who initially agreed to take part but did not complete the questionnaire via Google Forms, along with two individuals from whom we received no response after contact attempts.

Thus, excluding those listed in the previous table, 26 master's students and/or graduates participated in the study. The collaborators completed a questionnaire via Google Forms, in which they provided their name and email address. The questionnaire contained six identification questions and four open-ended questions directly aimed at understanding their experiences, totaling ten questions. It is important to highlight that all participants received, upon agreeing to participate, the Free and Informed Consent Form (*Termo de Consentimento Livre e Esclarecido* – TCLE), through which they authorized the use of their information for research purposes.

Following the data collection process, we proceeded with the analysis of the material produced, aiming to meet the central objective of the research, namely, to present reflections on the teaching internship in *PosEnsino*.

3 Organization of the teaching internship: normative guidelines and training possibilities

As described in the *PosEnsino* Master's Program Pedagogical Project (PPC), the teaching internship is a mandatory requirement for students who receive funding from research support agencies (such as CAPES, CNPq, and FAPERN), which provide scholarships to ensure continuity, encouragement, and feasibility of scientific production. However, despite this requirement for scholarship holders, the opportunity to engage in higher education teaching, in the form of an internship, may also be extended to regular students who wish to experience this practice (Federal Institute of Education, Science and Technology of Rio Grande do Norte, 2016).

With a total workload of 45 hours (3 credits) and to be completed during the second or third semester of the program, the internship represents an essential opportunity for master's students to experience and integrate into teaching practice within public higher education institutions (Federal Institute of Education, Science and Technology of Rio Grande do Norte, 2016; State University of Rio Grande do Norte, 2022).

The program's requirement aligns with Ordinance No. 76, dated April 14, 2010, issued by the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES), which regulates the teaching internship in graduate programs nationwide and establishes additional provisions. Furthermore, at the time this study was completed, the program only offered a master's degree, which, according to the regulation, implies that the internship stage cannot be waived for master's students:

Art. 18. The teaching internship is an integral part of graduate student training, aiming to prepare them for teaching and to improve undergraduate education. It is mandatory for all scholarship holders in the Social Demand Program, and must follow these criteria: I – for programs offering both master's and doctoral levels, the requirement applies only to doctoral students; II – for programs offering only a master's level, the internship requirement applies to the master's program (Brazil, 2010, p. 32).

This regulation seeks to strengthen the pedagogical training of master's students, enabling them to experience and reflect on the challenges of higher education in different contexts. It promotes the interrelation of pedagogical theories and teaching methodologies and serves as a space for developing strategies aimed at improving graduate student learning. The teaching internship also fosters closer interaction between undergraduate and graduate levels, encouraging the exchange of knowledge and experiences between teachers in training and experienced instructors. This interaction contributes to forming teachers who are more critical, ethical, and committed to public education (Federal Institute of Education, Science and Technology of Rio Grande do Norte, 2016).

It is important to note that teaching internship activities must align with the research area of the graduate program in which the student is enrolled (Brazil, 2010). In the case of *PosEnsino*, its area of concentration is Teaching in Public Schools, with the objective of training the teacher-researcher in and for public education. This formation integrates technologies, disciplinary knowledge, and content through an approach that seeks to transcend disciplinary boundaries.

Regarding the overcoming of disciplinary boundaries, we understand that the program aligns with what Tardif (2000, p. 19) once described: "disciplinary logic is guided

by questions of knowledge and not by questions of action. In a discipline, to learn is to know. But in a practice, to learn is to do and to know by doing.” From this perspective, the teaching internship within *PosEnsino* seeks to transcend the restricted dimension of disciplines and foster the articulation between theory and practice.

It should also be highlighted that students enrolled in the teaching internship must complete three documents. The first is the teaching internship completion request. The second, the internship report, must be submitted immediately after the completion of the internship for review by the program committee and for curricular validation. This document contains basic information such as student identification, details about the internship (course, discipline, and supervising professor), syllabus, course content, methodology, evaluation process, activity schedule, and the advisor’s comments.

The third document is the activity report template for scholarship holders (CAPES/CNPq/FAPERN) in the program, to be submitted at the end of the scholarship period. This document is more extensive, as it covers the entire experience of the participant during their scholarship tenure. Its organization is described as follows:

[...] the first section addresses the activities carried out by the scholarship holder throughout each year, such as courses, participation in events, meetings with the advisor, publications, among others. The second section requires the scholarship holder to present the partial and final results of their research, so that the work conducted during the period is made evident” (Scholarship Activity Report, 2018, p. 1).

It is recommended that this document be developed progressively from the beginning of the scholarship period, given the breadth of information required. Moreover, it is important to note that the program does not currently have a specific regulatory document governing the teaching internship, which justifies its absence from this discussion. We emphasize the need to formalize such regulation through a dedicated resolution that takes into account the particular characteristics of *PosEnsino* itself.

4 Teaching Internship Experiences: Perceptions of *PosEnsino* Students and Alumni

The supervised internship was established in 1942, conceived as an activity to be carried out by the student under the supervision of a teacher. However, its introduction into graduate education was only observed in 1999, which generated considerable debate (Joaquim, Vilas Boas, and Carrieri, 2013). In this regard, it is not uncommon to find among undergraduate students the perception that theory and practice are dichotomous dimensions of teacher education (Pimenta and Lima, 2005/2006). Such interpretations arise from the difficulty of associating what is experienced at the university (in theory) with what occurs in the classroom (in practice).

These issues are fueled by numerous factors, some of which stem from the understanding that “[...] teacher education programs [...] are completely disconnected from the professional field in which future graduates will work” (Pimenta and Lima, 2005/2006, p. 6). Students’ own interpretations are often shaped throughout their formative process, alongside the inevitable realization that theory is not a recipe, students are not ingredients, and there is no single type of school. From this perspective, these reflections lead to longstanding epistemological discussions that could inspire further research, although such debates fall beyond the scope of this study.

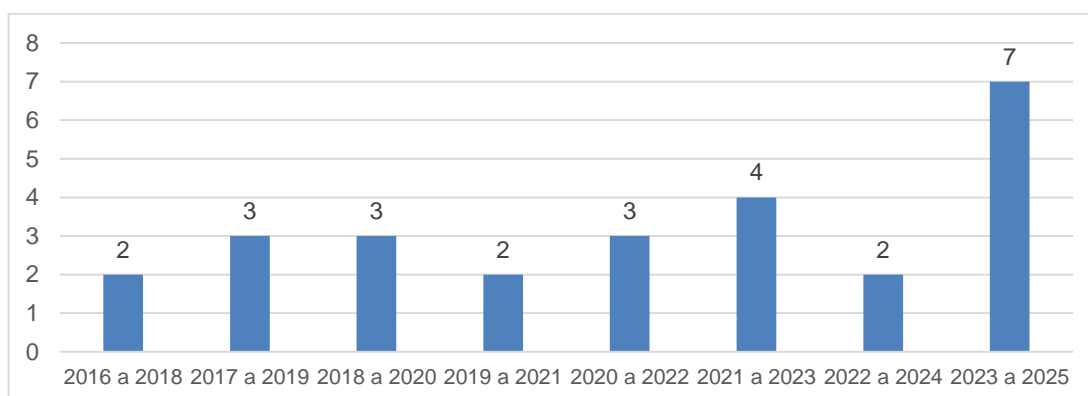
Nonetheless, a certain shift in perspective can be observed when it comes to teaching internships at the graduate level, particularly regarding the research on this subject and the limited literature addressing experiences in this context. The following subsection presents the analysis of the data generated in this study, which contributes to the growing body of knowledge about teaching internships within *stricto sensu* graduate programs.

4.1 Characterization of the experience

In an effort to better understand the perceptions of *PosEnsino* students and alumni regarding their teaching internship experiences, this subsection presents the analysis of data collected through the Google Forms questionnaire. We begin by situating the time

frame during which participants experienced the Master's in Teaching program (*PosEnsino*).

Graph 1 – Period of enrollment in the PosEnsino Master's in Teaching program



Source: Research data (2024).

Among the 26 respondents, participants were identified from the program's inception in 2016 up to the most recent cohort, in 2024. The main indicators in the chart reveal a growing number of internships in recent years (with the exception of the 2022 cohort). This trend may be explained by the increased number of scholarships available during this period, since the teaching internship is mandatory for scholarship holders. Another point worth noting regarding the significant scholarship availability is that the master's program results from a broad association among three institutions (UERN, UFERSA, and IFRN), allowing each of them to offer scholarships and receive financial support both individually and collectively through the program.

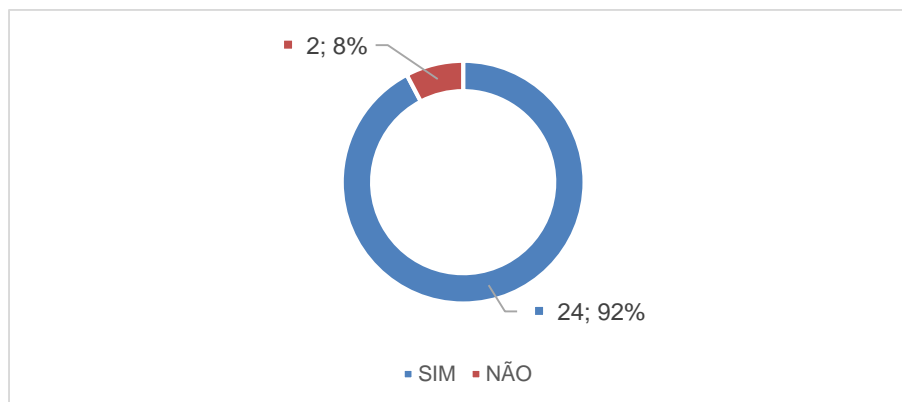
We observed a period of stagnation in the early years of the program regarding the number of students who completed the teaching internship, particularly between 2016 (the year of establishment) and 2020—only two students in 2016 and two in 2019. In relation to scholarship holders required to complete the internship, some factors may explain this low number, such as the lack of institutional encouragement and the political instability Brazil experienced during that time (from the 2016 impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff to the rise of a far-right government in 2019). The executive administrations within that period

drastically reduced investments in education, in addition to cutting and failing to maintain publicly funded research, which may justify the small number of students who completed the internship (Ferretti and Silva, 2019).

The year 2023 recorded the highest number of *PosEnsino* students participating in teaching internships, with a total of seven. It is important to highlight that some participants who indicated 2023 as their year of participation had not yet completed the program at the time of this study. Furthermore, two participants who entered in 2018 and one in 2019 did not indicate their completion date, leading us to infer that they concluded their studies in 2020 and 2021, respectively, following the typical two-year timeframe established by the program (except in cases of formal extension or temporary suspension).

Next, we sought to identify whether students had participated in undergraduate research or other formative programs. On this point, the data reveal an almost unanimous pattern among participants:

Graph 2 – Participation in undergraduate research and/or formative programs



Source: Research data (2024).

Of all respondents, 24 reported having participated in some type of research project or formative program, representing 92% of participants—an expressive figure. In contrast, only two (8%) reported no such experience. It is well known that engagement in research or formative programs during undergraduate studies is a key factor influencing students'

continuation into graduate studies, whether *lato sensu* or *stricto sensu* (Fava-de-Moraes, 2000).

In line with these findings, Fava-de-Moraes (2000, p. 75) argues that “in general, all students who participated in undergraduate research programs perform better in graduate selection processes,” since they engage with the teaching-research relationship as a formative channel during their undergraduate trajectory. There is, therefore, a strong advantage for those who experience such programs in their initial education.

Pereira (2009) points out, however, that in Brazil, many barriers persist in this regard. In her view, few higher education institutions maintain a consistent and formative connection between research and teaching. Thus, despite formal inclusion in curricular guidelines, such as in Pedagogical Course Projects (PPCs), and the existence of significant programs like the Institutional Program for Scientific Initiation Scholarships (PIBIC), student participation in research is often hindered by a lack of funding and by limited faculty engagement—since excessive workloads and insufficient incentives discourage educators from such activities. Overall, the author concludes that most higher education institutions in Brazil operate primarily as teaching universities rather than research universities.

Continuing the analysis, we also identified the subjects in which scholarship holders carried out their teaching internships, as shown below.

Table 2 – Courses in which teaching internships were carried out

Courses	Total
New Technologies Applied to Education	1
Curriculum	3
Differential and Integral Calculus A	1
Didactics	3
Didactics of Geography Teaching	1
Philosophy and Environment	1
Fundamentals of Philosophy	1

Fundamentals of Research in Chemistry Education	1
Instrumentation for Chemistry Teaching	1
Children's Literature	1
Textual Linguistics	2
Methodology of Chemistry Teaching I	1
Methodology of Chemistry Teaching II	1
Methodology of Scientific Work	1
Integrative Pedagogical Practice III	1
General Chemistry I	1
Teaching Profession	3
Technologies and Education	1
Seminar on the Development of Educational Practices and Teacher Training IV	1

Source: Research data (2024).

We identified courses primarily related to research, educational foundations, technology, didactics, curriculum, linguistics, and teaching. Less frequent were subjects related to literature and integrative pedagogical practices. Within the data, three courses – Curriculum, Didactics, and Teaching Profession – appeared most frequently, aligning with the program's research lines.

Another point of interest concerns the chemistry-related courses (five in total), which collectively exceed the frequency of any individual course listed above, although some are directly tied to the field of chemistry education.

It is evident that most courses in which teaching internships were conducted belong to undergraduate teacher education programs and focus on producing knowledge related to pedagogical theories. This may be linked to the fact that most teaching internships occurred at the State University of Rio Grande do Norte (UERN), an institution with a strong tradition in teacher education programs.

According to the 26 participants, the teaching internships took place across the three institutions that comprise the *PosEnsino* association, with the following distribution, showing a clear predominance of UERN:

- Universidade Federal Rural do Semi-Árido (UFERSA): 6 participants.
- Universidade do Estado do Rio Grande do Norte (UERN): 12 participants.
- Instituto Federal de Educação, Ciência e Tecnologia do Rio Grande do Norte (IFRN): 8 participants.

General interpretation:

As previously noted, **UERN** was the most representative institution, accounting for nearly half of the participants. This may reflect a greater number of internship opportunities or a stronger partnership with the teacher education program. It is worth noting that, according to the State Council of Education of Rio Grande do Norte (CEE-RN), approximately 90% of basic education teachers currently working in the state's interior were trained at UERN.¹

UFERSA, in contrast, recorded the smallest number of participants, representing one quarter of the total, which may indicate fewer available positions or a focus on other forms of academic training. **IFRN**, with eight participants, emerged as an interesting option, standing out as an important institution for the implementation of teaching internships.

We understand that several factors may explain this distribution pattern. Below are some possible explanations:

- **Institutional partnerships:** the stronger concentration of internships at UERN may be justified by specific agreements or collaborations between this institution and teacher education programs. Moreover, most of UERN's undergraduate programs are *licenciatura* (teacher training) courses. UFERSA, by contrast, does not have a

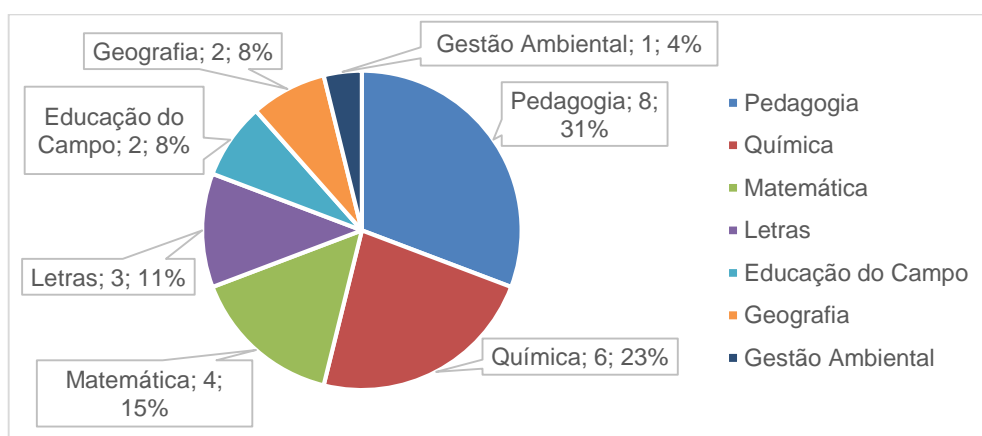
¹ This information can be found on the website portal.uern.br.

strong tradition in offering teacher education programs, with only seven on-campus *licenciatura* courses across its four campuses.

- **Institutional profiles:** while UERN and UFERSA are universities focused on different areas of higher education, IFRN offers a more technical and practical perspective. This characteristic may attract participants interested in technical-vocational training and professional education.
- **Availability of positions:** the number of participants per institution may be related to the institution's capacity to accommodate interns, the geographical proximity of participants, or the number of available positions each institution allocates for *PosEnsino* students.

These findings reveal moderate diversity in the selection of institutions, with a clear concentration in UERN. This suggests that although participants had multiple options, there is a tendency to prioritize institutions with greater tradition or specific resources for teaching practice. Such data are important for understanding how future teachers experienced their teaching internships in different institutional contexts. The following section presents the undergraduate courses in which these internships took place.

Graph 3 – Undergraduate courses in which teaching internships were carried out



Source: Research data (2024).

The 26 participants in the study were distributed across various undergraduate courses, with the following proportions: 8 participants in Pedagogy (31%), 6 in Chemistry (23%), 4 in Mathematics (15%), 3 in Languages (11%), 2 in Rural Education (8%), 2 in Geography (8%), and 1 in Environmental Management (4%). Thus, Pedagogy (31%) and Chemistry (23%) together accounted for half of all participants.

This predominance may reflect a higher demand for teaching practice in these areas or the academic profile of the students who participated in the research. Conversely, courses such as Environmental Management, with only one participant, showed the lowest participation, suggesting either a smaller number of students in that field or fewer researchers addressing related topics within *PosEnsino*.

Moreover, the data indicate that most teaching internship experiences occurred in **licenciatura programs**. This finding is expected, considering that these programs directly qualify students for teaching practice. The high concentration in Pedagogy underscores the importance of teacher education for basic education, while areas such as Mathematics and Languages reflect the specific demands for teacher training in particular disciplines. *PosEnsino* is a graduate program in the field of Teaching that has received a heterogeneous audience in terms of academic background, encompassing students with initial training in different undergraduate programs. This diversity is reflected in the data obtained through the research.

Contrary to expectations, **a program that can be characterized as Technical or Interdisciplinary**, such as Environmental Management, although not traditionally associated with teaching, appears as a field for internships, indicating diversification in the areas where the internship takes place. This may result from interdisciplinary teaching initiatives or strategies aimed at preparing professionals to work in multiple educational contexts.

In addition, possible explanations for the data presented may stem from the **educational context's demand**. The prominence of Pedagogy and Chemistry may be related to the higher need for professionals in these fields. There is also the matter of **student interest**, since the concentration of teaching internships in certain courses is

4.2 Experiences with the teaching internship: analysis of the open-ended questions

Continuing with the analysis, this subsection focuses on the open-ended questions. As an initial observation, when examining the 26 responses, it became clear that, in most internships, there was a **relationship between the course taught during the teaching internship and the respondents' master's research projects**. Several considerations emerged from the analytical process: 15 responses indicated a direct connection between the discipline and the research topic; 5 reported a partial relationship, with indirect contributions; and 6 participants stated that there was no connection, although they highlighted the acquisition of pedagogical or methodological knowledge during the internship. In this regard, the main themes identified include critical education, technologies, and teacher education:

1. Direct and affirmative responses (Yes):

- Many participants stated that the discipline was directly related to their research proposal. These reports frequently mentioned thematic or methodological continuity between the content taught in the discipline and the focus of their dissertation research.

2. Partial responses (Yes, in part):

- Several participants noted that although the discipline was not fully aligned with their research project, there were articulations between the two. Examples included conceptual or theoretical connections, such as the discussion of cross-cutting themes or the use of methodologies that complemented their research. The mention of authors and perspectives that broadened their critical understanding was recurrent.

3. No direct connection (No):

- Some responses indicated that the discipline was not directly related to their master's research topic. However, these respondents still reported indirect contributions, such as the strengthening of pedagogical knowledge, understanding of academic norms, or expansion of their theoretical repertoire within the context of the internship.

4. Specific contributions by area (Yes, detailed):

- More descriptive statements explained how the discipline contributed both practically and theoretically, citing examples of dialogue among themes such as rural education, teacher education, scientific literacy, critical teaching, and the use of technologies in education.

Qualitative highlights:

- **Interdisciplinary discussion:**

Many participants mentioned that, even without a direct connection, the teaching internship opened avenues for reflection on pedagogical practices that could be developed or were related to their research topics.

- **Connections with the pandemic context and social issues:**

The COVID-19 pandemic and themes such as critical education, human rights, and educational technologies emerged as significant contemporary influences that shaped participants' understanding and the dialogue between teaching and research.

- **Pedagogical practices and teaching methods:**

Some responses emphasized the use of innovative methodologies and their classroom experiences, linking the theoretical framework of their dissertations with actual teaching practice.

The analysis reveals that, for most participants, there was a degree of articulation between the discipline taught during the internship and their master's research proposal.

The experience of teaching the discipline contributed not only to consolidating theoretical knowledge but also to developing practical and critical competencies that enriched their academic and professional trajectories.

Participants were also asked to describe the methodology used for lesson planning and instruction. The responses consistently highlighted cooperation with the supervising professor in constructing the discipline, from reviewing the General Course Syllabus (*Programa Geral da Disciplina* – PGD) to conducting final evaluations. Notably, several accounts referred to the pandemic context, mentioning remote teaching practices and the various methodologies employed during that period. Among them were virtual classes via Google Meet, attendance tracking through Google Forms, and the use of interactive online applications, among others.

Another important aspect concerns the number of students who completed their teaching internships under the supervision of their master's advisor. This is a common practice within the program, though not a mandatory rule. There were also cases in which students carried out their internships in other teaching contexts under the supervision of different professors, often justified by geographical convenience related to where they lived.

In addition, variation was observed regarding the degree of autonomy students had in conducting classes. Some reported the continuous presence of the supervising professor throughout the process, while others mentioned greater independence in leading pedagogical activities. There were also accounts of shared or alternating instruction, in which teaching responsibilities were divided between the professor and the master's student/intern.

As Tardif (2000) points out, classroom work in the presence of students demands a wide range of skills and competencies. Based on participants' accounts, we identified several teaching moments and methods employed during the internship process, including reading and systematization of ideas, document analysis, interactive discussions, group studies and seminars, presentation dynamics, reflective journals, participation in pedagogical conversations with professors, expository sessions with slides, text

discussions, debates, film screenings, short films, quizzes, case studies, and the development of mind maps.

Emblematic questions, such as how to teach in higher education, were mentioned by several participants. Although many of them had already experienced this educational stage and, at times, even taught in the same programs where they were once students, they did not fail to recognize teaching as something far more complex than in other educational settings. It is understood that factors such as the level of complexity, student autonomy, and the preparation required to teach at this level of education must be considered. In this regard, it is important to highlight that teacher education programs include the possibility of professional practice and continuing education (at the graduate level). However, their primary focus remains the preparation of teachers for basic education, which adds to the teaching intern's perception of higher education as an unfamiliar and, consequently, challenging environment.

As mentioned earlier, the complexity surrounding higher education tends to reinforce the notion of this environment as a restricted space, especially when it comes to teaching. Therefore, it cannot be overlooked that, despite current ideas of access facilitation and universalization, there are still “filters” that separate those entering higher education and, subsequently, graduate programs. This does not dismiss the inherent selective nature of the admission processes within higher education institutions.

Within this context of selectivity, the student body itself is often perceived as a challenge. According to the participants' reports, one respondent mentioned that their ability as a teaching intern was questioned by the class. This suggests that the higher education environment is composed of individuals who are more autonomous and independent, with greater freedom—students who may leave the classroom without permission, go to the restroom without prior notice, or even leave the university premises at their discretion. It is important to note that these reflections do not constitute criticism of this educational stage but rather distinguish and enrich the understanding of the different teaching dynamics and student profiles between higher education and basic education.

In any case, Freire (1996) and Pimenta and Lima (2005/2006) remind us that teachers leave lasting impressions on us. At times, we may choose to follow those who inspired and welcomed us, using them as references when it is our turn to teach. Yet, at other times, we may reproduce their practices uncritically. Therefore, critical awareness must be a fundamental element in this process, since we are both products and producers of education – formed and forming. This calls for careful consideration of our actions in teaching practice, whether during the internship or in our professional teaching careers.

Despite the challenges identified in the analysis of the participants' open-ended responses, the overall tone of their statements was positive. The conclusion of the process either met or exceeded participants' expectations, as illustrated in the following statement:

My expectations before starting the internship were high. I was eager to live this experience, especially since I had been a student in the same program and had taken the Didactics course. Returning to the program as a teacher was wonderful, as I was able to share what I had learned and, at the same time, learn from the students at every meeting. The experience exceeded all my expectations, it was gratifying, and it contributed greatly to my professional and personal growth (Participant, Mossoró, 2024).

In addition to this testimony, another aspect was also viewed positively. According to some participants, completing the internship under the guidance of their advisor, who also served as the course instructor, or working with an engaged professor contributed significantly to the process, especially in lesson planning, problem-solving, and learning how to become a teacher.

Finally, in continuing to reflect on the participants' experiences, the last question aimed to understand whether the teaching internship contributed to *PosEnsino* students, and in what ways. The responses revealed unanimous agreement that this experience was essential within the program. As several participants pointed out, such contact with the classroom environment is often absent at the undergraduate level. Moreover, since the program is a master's degree in Teaching, direct engagement with classroom practice, particularly in higher education, is considered fundamental.

The reflections provided by the participants lead us to consider the potential need for the teaching internship to become a mandatory discipline, rather than remaining an elective, as currently outlined in the Pedagogical Course Project (PPC, 2016) and the Program Regulations (2022). Furthermore, by organizing the participants' reflections into a synthesis of the analytical process, we can identify the main reasons why the internship emerged as an essential element in their accounts: i. it improves the ability to manage and solve problems related to teaching; ii. it contributes to understanding classroom dynamics and lesson planning in higher education; iii. it enables students to experience the triad that sustains higher education, namely teaching, research, and outreach; iv. it supports the development of the research conducted during the master's program; v. under the mediation of the internship advisor, it fosters a reflective stance, critical analysis, and continuous improvement of teaching practice; and vi. it promotes the construction of a collaborative environment within *stricto sensu* graduate training.

These reflections are closely aligned with what can be considered formative opportunities inherent to the internship experience, regardless of the educational level in which it occurs. According to Tardif (2008, p. 38), teachers “[...] give meaning and significance to their actions and experience their function as a personal journey [...]”. Although the author's statement refers specifically to the school context, we believe this applies equally to other educational levels, such as higher education. Accordingly, the participants' statements reveal a process of knowledge construction that is essential and transformative for both teacher education and professional development.

From this perspective of strengthening teacher education through internship experience, some responses stood out for recognizing not only the importance of this learning process but also the significance of a collaborative and formative internship advisor. One participant expressed this view as follows:

Yes, I believe the teaching internship can be a powerful tool for learning and professional experience for PosEnsino students. However, for that to happen, methodological decisions and lesson planning must be well aligned between the master's student (intern) and the professor responsible for the discipline at the institution. It may happen that, even with great enthusiasm and openness to new

teaching methods, the supervising professor is not willing to engage in this process (Participant, Mossoró, 2024).

According to Joaquim, Vilas Boas, and Carrieri (2013), the teaching internship requires the presence of a mediating professor and should not be perceived merely as a preparatory space but as a formative one. Thus, the relationship between intern and advisor should be reciprocal: the professor must guide, plan, and actively participate throughout the entire process, while the student should demonstrate commitment through reading, preparation, listening to feedback, exercising autonomy, and completing all stages within the established timeframe.

Finally, we highlight the statement of another participant, who emphasized not only the significance of the internship but also the importance of scholarships as a means of supporting research and ensuring students' permanence in the program:

The internship contributes greatly to our education. Before this experience, I had never taught a class. Having a scholarship also helps a lot because it allows us to focus on both research and teaching activities. I come from a humble family, and without the opportunity provided by the scholarship and the internship, I would not have been able to live in Mossoró and complete the master's program (Participant, Mossoró, 2024).

In conclusion, we hope that this study contributes to the ongoing debate about the role of the teaching internship within graduate education. Experiences of this nature remain scarce, and it is our expectation that this work serves as a reflective tool for discussing the teaching internship and its implications for professional formation in *stricto sensu* programs.

5 Final considerations

The development of this research made it possible to understand, within a specific time-space context, the importance of the teaching internship in the education of the teacher-researcher. Considering the experiences within *PosEnsino*, the data align with the theories of both classical and contemporary authors, who have already emphasized that professional formation arises from a horizontal, dialogical, and non-dichotomous

relationship between theory and practice, since action alone becomes activism, and reflection alone becomes verbalism.

In summary, this study identified a growing number of master's students undertaking the teaching internship, a result associated with both its mandatory nature and the increased availability of scholarships in graduate education in recent years. Another noteworthy finding is the high proportion (92%) of participants who had previously engaged in undergraduate research programs or other formative initiatives. Furthermore, the program's strong alignment with institutions offering *licenciatura* programs—particularly UERN—was evident, as was the formative interaction between advisors and graduate students.

The analysis revealed that participants began the internship with high expectations and, despite recognizing the complexity of higher education teaching and the lack of such experience during their undergraduate studies, the experience was regarded as positive and essential. It enabled them to better understand classroom management dynamics in higher education and to deepen their reflective capacity regarding concepts derived from both their initial education and ongoing master's research. Moreover, participants consistently emphasized the importance of mentorship and guidance from more experienced professors throughout the process, advocating for a participatory approach that encompasses the entire internship experience from its initial planning to its conclusion.

The teaching practices experienced in the classroom by master's students are fundamental to the realization of *praxis*. Indeed, the purpose of this study is not to attribute to the teaching internship the sole role of theoretical-practical teacher training. On the contrary, our position advocates for its relevance as a formative space that enables qualification, improvement, and reflection on new possibilities for action, aligned with theory, within the broader process of continuing teacher education.

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