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# Brazilian professional postgraduate studies: the development of a new form and a distinction from the existing degree

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## Abstract

With the establishment of professional doctoral degrees in 2017, Brazilian graduate studies now have a new subdivision between the academic and the professional. The objective of this paper, based on bibliographical research, is to analyze, from a Bourdieusian perspective, whether this opening of graduate studies to the professional field is configured in a dichotomous perspective, in the sense of privileging a certain area of knowledge within the academic field, to the detriment of another, incurring in a distinction (Bourdieu, 2007) between the traditional graduate degree in the academic field and the acceptance of the professional area. Since the state did not take responsibility for funding professional graduate programs, their character as professional training is subject to the financial guidelines of the agents involved in the research proposals. It is therefore necessary to separate the discourse coming from niches of resistance that favor academic master's and doctorates from criticism made through grounded and contextualized research, so as not to incur in discourse without foundation. Keywords: Professional master's and doctorate. Bourdieusian perspective. Graduation degree and distinction. Euphemisms of professionalization.

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## **A pós-graduação profissional brasileira: entre o desenvolvimento de uma nova vertente e a distinção da diplomação existente**

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### **Resumo**

Com a aprovação do doutorado profissional, em 2017, a pós-graduação brasileira passa a ter uma subdivisão consolidada em mais uma esfera, a acadêmica e a profissional. O objetivo deste trabalho, decorrente de pesquisa bibliográfica, é analisar, sob a ótica bourdieusiana, se esta abertura da PG ao campo profissional se configura em uma perspectiva dicotômica, no sentido de privilegiar determinada área do conhecimento dentro do campo acadêmico, em detrimento de outra, incorrendo em uma *distinção* (Bourdieu, 2007) da diplomação tradicional existente na área acadêmica em contrapartida à aceitação da área profissional. Uma vez que o Estado se desobrigou de financiar esses Programas, seu caráter formativo profissional fica sujeito às diretrizes financeiras dos agentes envolvidos nas propostas de pesquisa. Portanto, faz-se necessário separar os discursos advindos de nichos de resistência em favor do mestrado e doutorado acadêmicos da crítica realizada por meio de investigações embasadas e contextualizadas, para não se incorrer em discursos sem fundamentação.

Palavras-chave: Mestrado e doutorado profissional. Perspectiva bourdieusiana. Diploma e distinção. Eufemismos da profissionalização.

## **Estudios de posgrado profesionales brasileños: entre el desarrollo de una nueva vertiente y la distinción de diplomación existente**

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### **Resumen**

Con la aprobación del doctorado profesional en 2017, los estudios de posgrado brasileños tienen ahora una subdivisión consolidada en otra esfera, la académica y la profesional. El objetivo de este trabajo, resultado de una investigación bibliográfica, es analizar, desde una perspectiva bourdieusiana, si esta apertura del PG al campo profesional se configura en una perspectiva

dicotômica, en el sentido de privilegiar una determinada área del conocimiento dentro del ámbito académico, en detrimento de otro, incurriendo en una distinción (Bourdieu, 2007) del título tradicional existente en el ámbito académico en contraposición a la aceptación en el ámbito profesional. Una vez que el Estado se ha desobligado a financiar estos programas, su carácter de formación profesional queda sujeto a las directrices financieras de los agentes involucrados en las propuestas de investigación. Por lo tanto, es necesario separar los discursos surgidos de nichos de resistencia a favor de las maestrías y doctorados académicos de las críticas realizadas a través de investigaciones fundamentadas y contextualizadas, para no caer en discursos infundados.

Palabras clave: Maestría y doctorado profesional. Perspectiva bourdieusiana. Diploma y distinción. Eufemismos de profesionalización.

## Introduction

Postgraduate education in Brazil, at the *stricto sensu* level, and higher education in general, has been turbulent in recent years due to the scarcity of resources and attacks from conservative sectors allied to private initiatives, most strongly represented in the two post-impeachment governments of former president Dilma (2010-2016). Free education, civil servants' stability, and public universities' educational purpose are being questioned. The discourse is based on the assertion that the investment needed to fund and maintain academia would be excessive, and the return obtained would not justify an increase in the state's investment.

As postgraduate studies in Brazil are divided into two types, *lato sensu* and *stricto sensu*, each of these modalities has a specific function, according to its official founding document, Opinion No. 977/65 of the now defunct Federal Council of Education (now the National Council of Education). Specialization at the *lato sensu* level tends to be a course that prioritizes a specific type of practical knowledge to be transmitted quickly and not constantly due to the profile of the public served and the guiding principle of this modality, which consists of specific technical training to broaden the scope of action of the professional enrolled in it using a certificate.

The *stricto sensu* level, with master's and doctorate courses, has objectives aimed at providing the student with "[...] in-depth knowledge that allows them to achieve a high standard of scientific or technical-professional competence, impossible to acquire in the undergraduate context [...]," conferring an academic degree that must be accompanied by high scientific competence in a given field of knowledge (Brazil, 1965).

Thus, it is possible to see the intersection of the fields that postgraduate studies cover beyond the academic field (theoretical and practical). From this perspective, the economic field is a sector that has been highlighted in recent years, with the approval of the professional master's degree and, subsequently, the professional doctorate, given the possibilities for generating technologies and knowledge hitherto restricted to the academic field for the promotion of profitable proposals in the medium and long term, developed with the direct collaboration of niches in this productive sector, thus attributing its meaning to the term "professional" in the way it is presented in official legislation.

Thus, this paper aims to analyze, from a Bourdieusian perspective, whether this opening up of Brazilian postgraduate studies to the professional field is configured in a dichotomous perspective in the sense of privileging a particular area of knowledge within the academic field to the detriment of another, incurring in a *distinction* (Bourdieu, 2007) of the traditional graduation existing in the academic area in contrast to the acceptance of the professional area.

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### **Reconfiguration of Brazilian *stricto sensu* postgraduate studies: the natural evolution of the initial genesis or naturalization of the professionalizing origin?**

To understand the dynamics of the transformations in Brazilian postgraduate studies implemented due to the changes in the offer of postgraduate courses and programs by the ordinances that instituted the professional master's degree (CAPES/MEC Ordinance no. 80/1998; CAPES/MEC Ordinance no. 17/2009) and, subsequently, the professional doctorate (CAPES/MEC Ordinance no. 393/2017), it is necessary to understand the genesis of Brazilian postgraduate education and its developments over the years, along

with the transformations of the Brazilian state itself, especially about its managerial facet.

These transformations have affected how postgraduate courses work, from their objectives to their final research products, including a new prerequisite for implementing their proposals: a vocation for self-financing. This aspect contrasts with the attribution of social value to the public good that exists in federal higher education institutions.

Postgraduate studies in Brazil were established with the approval of opinion no. 977/65, authored by Newton Sucupira (1920-2007) on December 3, 1965, in the Federal Council of Education (FCE). The purpose of this opinion was to define postgraduate courses. In this institutional opinion, the objectives of postgraduate studies in Brazil are clear since one of its motivations was precisely to define its characterization, to differentiate itself from the specialization courses that had existed in the postgraduate sphere until then, and to establish the division into master's and doctoral degrees.

In terms of its structure, Brazilian postgraduate courses are divided into two levels: (i) *lato sensu* (Master of Business Administration – MBA, medical residency and specialization courses in the various branches of the sciences); and (ii) *stricto sensu*, made up of master's degrees (academic and professional) and doctorates (academic and professional). This text will look more closely at master's degrees and professional doctorates.

The master's degree is widely recognized for its in-depth research on a given subject and its preparatory nature for further study at the doctoral level. In this way, the master's degree trains the professional to work in higher education due to its quality training, a requirement to be part of the teaching/research staff of higher education institutions, especially public ones, recognized for their dedication to research, as well as teaching and extension, and also for entry into the doctorate, even though some postgraduate programs do not necessarily require a master's degree for entry into the doctorate, an aspect already pointed out in Opinion 977/65.

Although the term professional has appeared since the regulatory genesis of *stricto sensu* postgraduate studies in 1965, its conceptualization has changed over the years, from a broad and, at the same time, specific formative character for technical work in the area above of study, to a concept

coated with flexibility in the application of the proposal approved in 1998. Flexibility ranges from the final deliverables of the dissertation (which can be software, an application, a case study, the Pedagogical Political Project (PPP) of a school, etc.) to the teaching staff (professionals without *stricto sensu* training are accepted), including attempts to make the course's face-to-face workload more flexible (Capes, 2019).

We understand these flexibilizations as part of the downgrading of issues relating to the quality of the courses on offer and their operation since the 1990s; with the constant educational reforms, what we have seen, in a broad panorama, is a context of rapid and accelerated transformation under the general denomination concentrated in the term neoliberalism, driven, as a whole, also by the development of new information and communication technologies. This understanding is based on the recent global escalation in the form of government and economic actions against social protection policies, as well as attacks on labor guarantees with the advent of new government intervention practices, acting in favor of flexible capital accumulation under the discourse of administrative, labor, political, social and educational reforms, as responses to the demands of capitalism and the need for social and technological development (Harvey, 1993; Dardot; Laval, 2016).

Therefore, if production and accumulation are articulated in a flexible perspective, education, in turn, must also bow to this logic. Kuenzer (2016, p. 1) points out that another way of conceiving flexible learning would be linked to the result of an innovative methodology, combining “[...] technological development, the diversity of models that boost learning and interactive media.” The author also states that, in this case, “[...] flexibility is justified by the need to expand higher education to meet the demands of an increasingly demanding and competitive society.”

It is precisely this perspective that can be found in the Ordinance regulating the professional master's degree. The term 'competitiveness' appears in Article 4, which establishes the objectives of this program:

Art. 4 The objectives of the professional master's degree are: I - to train qualified professionals to exercise advanced professional practice and transform procedures to meet social, organizational, or professional demands and those of the job market; II - to transfer

knowledge to society, meeting specific demands and those of productive arrangements with a view to national, regional or local development; III - promote the integrated articulation of vocational training with demanding entities of various natures, to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of public and private organizations by solving problems and generating and applying appropriate innovation processes; IV - contribute to adding competitiveness and increasing productivity in companies, public and private organizations (Capes, 2009).

The Ordinance clearly defines that this level of specialization consists of training qualified professionals to exercise advanced professional practice, meeting not only the demands of the labor market but also social and organizational demands through the transfer of knowledge to society, aiming to solve its specific demands, “[...] contributing to adding competitiveness and increasing productivity in companies, public and private organizations” (Brazil, 2009, p. 20, emphasis added). As seen above, the development of postgraduate studies in Brazil, which was focused on teacher training, is now turning to the training of researchers (Kuenzer; Moraes, 2005), thus opening up a subdivision within itself for the professional side in order to solve the training demand imposed by capital through educational reforms via professional master’s and doctoral degrees. In addition to doubts about the type of professional who will be trained, the question remains: What concept of professional emerges from these proposals?

We start from the assumption that professionalization is beneficial and necessary for the construction of knowledge, the applicability of technology, and the development of society. In the educational sphere, the professionalization of teachers is a fruitful area for study and analysis from various points of view, such as the consolidation of the teaching profession, equating this work activity with all the others already recognized in the market and the situation of precariousness and intensification of teaching work from the perspective of diminishing the importance of their work.

We, therefore, understand the term “professionalization” from its modern conceptualization, from the point of view of the superimposition of technical rationality along the lines of the early socio-historical conceptualization of this term, where the priority was excellence in training, usually in the

long term, and the primacy of the search for the ability to resolve the various types of demands arising in society, with due regard for the specificities of the professional area of postgraduate study, in order to enable it to advance, to the detriment of the immediacy of the applicability of the necessary skills acquired for the one-off resolution of problems raised by today's society.

The term professional refers to previously established notions of competencies and capabilities acquired through specific training in a specific formal setting, when, at the end of this training, this professional will be differentiated by their ability to carry out certain types of activities (Paula Júnior, 2012). However, in the context of the educational reforms in Latin America, especially in Brazil, in the 1990s, this term acquired a euphemized conceptualization, emptied of its primary meaning (Shiroma, Moraes, Evangelista, 2007).

8 If before, to become a professional, the subject needed specific training for a certain period, usually a long one, now what is linked to this concept is the lightening of the training of this professional, this social individual, as defined by Marx (2008). Social individuals are also substantial in producing and reproducing capital since the production of socially determined individuals is the basis of capital, as is the production of determined forms of consciousness. In this line of reasoning, Bourdieu (2003) states that the state and, together with it, the market, have the power to exercise symbolic violence represented in the objective form of the social structure, with the production of structuring mechanisms that act on subjectivity and schemes of perception and thought.

Initially, this differentiation was also based on certification and the distinction of professionals by their diplomas. Workers saw the acquisition of a diploma and specialization in a profession as an opportunity to improve their quality of life, move up the career ladder, and distance themselves from more intense working relationships in terms of the exploitation inherent in the system's functioning. In line with this view, Laval (2019) notes that this relationship was not automatic:

[...] but it also had the characteristic of rising from a school sphere, which, due to its relative autonomy, had sufficient symbolic force to make it relatively independent of the immediate power relations in the professional world. This is particularly true of technical and professional diplomas, which allow employees to be independent of employers' unstable and arbitrary demands. The link between



a “good diploma” and a “good trade” appeared as a necessary relationship in a society of statutes. While technical education has been the object of relative contempt, mainly due to the social and technical division of labor, it has been a vector for recognizing qualifications. It has given many a sense of personal dignity and social usefulness, conditions for prolonged collective action (Laval, 2019, p. 17).

With the advance of neoliberalism in society as a whole and, specifically, in terms of its direct influence on public education policy proposals at the higher education level, even this distinction is being lost due to the new flexible professional that the market needs. Laval (2019, p. 16) adds that, in order to “[...] produce these adaptable wage earners, the school itself should be a flexible organization [...] in line with the labor market [...],” reciprocally meeting the needs of companies and workers.

The obstacle in this attempt to serve two masters is the loss of value of diplomas due to the urgency of implementing the flexible accumulation agenda characteristic of neoliberalism. Laval explains why:

The neoliberal period of capitalism tends to change the link between the diploma and socially recognized personal values, leaving it looser and lighter. This school and university qualification tends to lose its symbolic force at a time when knowledge is declared to be a ‘perishable’ product, and skills are themselves the object of permanent ‘creative destruction.’ As it expands, it is increasingly seen as a source of rigidity that no longer corresponds to the company’s new imperatives of permanent adaptability and immediate reactivity. This questioning must, of course, be linked to changes in the workplace. The salaried class has been atomized into multiple statutes, sub-statutes, and statutes without statutes. Mass unemployment and the growing instability of jobs and positions, of which wage earners are victims, weaken workers’ identities to and for work. Insecurity affects not only the job’s possession but also the job’s content, the nature of the tasks, participation in a company, and the qualifications one possesses in a more ‘fluid’ work organization. The weakening of diplomas’ symbolic value, the installation of skills assessment practices that are closer to professional situations, and companies’ greater influence in determining training content all contribute to this almost ontological insecurity of workers, the extent of which is shown by specific works on social ‘disqualification’ (Laval, 2019, p. 18).

At this point, the “diplomas” produced by professional programs begin to be questioned by academia, which is resistant to this modality and the market. Capes places the professional master’s degree between the *lato sensu* postgraduate program and the academic master’s degree in the National Postgraduate Plan 2010-2020. The postgraduate evaluation instrument continues to be applied in a format that favors the traditional academic model. For this reason, the semantic play of the term professional presents nuances that must be investigated to define this new paradigm in Brazilian *stricto sensu* postgraduate studies.

Another view of the process of leveling down professionalization is found in Cervero (1998), who sees this process as a way of meeting the demands of capitalist society in order to improve it through professional knowledge for solving specific problems, based on the assumption that professionalization is a worker’s competence for solving practical problems. This reductionist view of the concept of professionalization has been gaining ground in the documents drawn up by the hegemonic institutions of the (neo)liberal ideology, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank (WB), for example, which act in line with the discourses of the organic elites in the central countries and also in Brazil (Dreifuss, 1981; Sguissardi, 2008; Pereira, 2010).

Therefore, the supremacy of technique over theory in professional postgraduate programs tends to be more related to the devaluation of the real meaning of *stricto sensu* postgraduate studies, which from then on were configured in another formative perspective than to the original concept of the term “professional,” contained in the 1965 Sucupira Report. So, what moves did academia make to react to this novelty?

## **The diploma in the spotlight: Differentiation veiled by exclusionary academic resistance?**

Just as there have previously been questions about the validity of undergraduate degrees awarded via distance learning compared to face-to-face undergraduate degrees, the official bodies and higher education institutions

offering professional postgraduate degrees at the *stricto sensu* level emphasize, in their initial offers, that the degrees awarded in these programs are the same as any other academic programs, information that has been officially included since the first ordinance on professional master's degrees.

This needs to reinforce the legal/jurisdictional equality of degrees stems from the market's selectivity due to momentary novelty and ignorance of the particularities of each administrative sphere. However, one fact that justifies its continuity over the years is the transformation of the social structure, which, in turn, according to Bourdieu (2007), results – at least in part – from the transformation of the relationships established between diplomas and positions, which

[Indeed, in order to guarantee their reproduction, the fractions of the ruling class (industrial and commercial entrepreneurs) and the middle classes (artisans and merchants), who were more prosperous in economic capital, had to significantly intensify their use of the education system (Bourdieu, 2007, p. 123).

Although Bourdieu did not refer to postgraduate certification in this excerpt, the relevance of his point fits in with the perspective that the distinction in the training of highly qualified professionals<sup>2</sup> involves symbolic demarcations in the intellectual, professional, and personal fields. In a way, this factor is threatened by the extinction of an essential characteristic for the author about distinction: rarity.

Although Brazil has a minimal number of doctors, in proportion to the total population (0.2%), below the average for developed countries and OECD members (1.1%), the number of these “highly qualified” professionals is growing, especially after the approval of the professional master's degree in 1998.

However, given the immanent contention that exists at the intersections of multiple social fields, it is still too early to say that this growth will bring with it the scientific, academic, and professional development of the Brazilian postgraduate program established in 1965, mainly due to its still fluid nature and in formation, especially about the action (and/or omission) of the State, since the professional postgraduate program offered by the public administrative

spheres has no guaranteed budget link through the release of official funds and has a “vocation for self-financing” (Capes, 1998).

Allied to this absence of the state in terms of funding, financing, and investment, at the other extreme is the massive participation of the private sector, especially in the Multidisciplinary Area, which has seen its share jump from 3% in 1997 to 15% in 2020, placing it in a prominent position among the other areas, thanks to the concomitant growth in the participation of private, for-profit and non-profit higher education institutions and, more recently, large institutions, with their shares listed on the stock exchange, acting in the educational field as real players in the economic field.

As Bourdieu (1989) describes, the global social space is subdivided into fields (economic, social, educational, cultural, political, literary, etc.). In all these fields, there are disputes, with their forms, strategies, and laws of operation, around private interests, and the specific capital of each field has value in that field. What is more, only under certain conditions is this capital convertible into another kind of capital, which is why it is essential to follow these relationships between the fields involved in the academic game in order to anticipate the essence of their attacks and prerogatives, as well as their consequences for the construction of scientific knowledge, depending on their interests, because “[...] interest is the condition for the functioning of a field and a product of this functioning. There are as many interests as there are fields, and they vary in time and space” (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 131).

Bourdieu (2004) also states that fields are places where forms of power are experienced that refer to two types of scientific capital: a) temporal or political power, or institutional and institutionalized power (linked to the occupation of essential positions in laboratories and scientific institutions), complemented by power over the means of production (such as contracts) and reproduction (such as the power to appoint) that it ensures; b) power of a more personal nature, linked to prestige, which rests exclusively on recognition, whether objectified or institutionalized.

This conceptual approach by public bodies to the dictates of the capitalist market has consequences for free, quality public education, which is necessary for carrying out the objectives of the Brazilian public university as an institution with social obligations. A reality based on the pursuit of incessant

profits is not in line with the generation of social value through the triad of teaching, extension, and research on which the public university structure is based.

In this way, the terms “technological innovation, competitiveness, productivity, efficiency, and effectiveness,” found in the regulatory ordinances for professional masters and doctorates, are, in a way, more aligned with capital than with the social function of the public university, compromising the professional training character of the programs, subjecting them to the financial directives of the agents involved in the research proposals, since the state no longer must fund the programs. They have to look to society to raise funds for their existence, even if, for the time being, the state evaluates the programs from the same regulatory perspective as academic programs. This subjection to evaluation regulations means that managers find themselves in delicate situations from a managerial point of view. How can they do well in the evaluation instrument for professional programs if there is no budget for maintenance and expansion in the face of the new demand generated?

Capes (2005) credits the exponential growth of the Multidisciplinary area to two factors: I) the new configuration of postgraduate studies in Brazil, following the global trends of large research centers working in partnerships and agreements; and II) the creation of new postgraduate courses at smaller and developing universities, characterizing a new phase in Brazilian postgraduate studies. Finally, this area is made up of five assessment areas: Interdisciplinary, Teaching, Materials, Biotechnology, and Environmental Sciences. However, the private sector’s share of these courses has doubled since 1998, from 9% in 1998 to 19% in 2020 (Capes, 2022). It is understood that there is more at stake, and more research is needed to understand better the reality that permeates other aspects besides the multidisciplinary inherent in the area.

From this perspective, the transformation of the traditional academic *stricto sensu* postgraduate course, presented with the nickname “professional,” may be masking the real purpose of state action towards this level of education due to its distancing in terms of funding. However, its maintenance within the regulatory framework, since the lightening of training processes due to their flexibility, leveled down by the co-opting of the real meaning of the

term “professional,” combined with the purposeful scarcity of resources and the opening up to private initiative to guarantee these inputs, shows that the privatization of this sector – although not in the traditional way – is on the horizon as a real and concrete possibility today, more than ever imagined before.

Although Brazilian universities have been elitist since their inception and have remained so for the most part over the years, especially in courses with high social status and high competition for admission, it is notorious how much their public has diversified in recent years due to affirmative public policies. Even so, offensive speeches, delivered in public sessions held in legislative and administrative houses in the state sphere, reverberate over the discourse of part of the national elite, contrasting with the interests of fractions of the bourgeois class. These contradictions are highlighted by Fontes (2010), who states the origin of this bourgeoisie:

This Brazilian bourgeoisie reworks, results from, and promotes contradictions. In the rumination of old contradictions, it updates the legacies of previous forms of domination, of which it is the heir. [...] The Brazilian bourgeoisie directly results from so many other contradictions, starting with the double articulation pointed out by Fernandes, which connects deeply unequal native economic sectors to subordination to capital imperialism. The risk of fragmentation and reduction to a buffer bourgeoisie reappears today in various forms, for example, when it finds itself caught between the immediate greed of the subaltern but lucrative association in the exploitation of the immense pre-salt oil deposits and the fear of being reduced to a mere supporting player in a country reduced to a fuel exporter. Finally, it promotes new contradictions by taking its ambivalent situation of overbearing impotence to the extreme, with an enormous growth in the production of commodities suited to the subordinate position, alongside the stimulation and expansion of transnational companies, seeking to get closer to the dominant end of the imperial capital. The Brazilian bourgeoisie derives from the bed dug by imperialist capital. It must constantly adapt to it to maintain its national domination (Fontes, 2010, p. 312).

In this study, the author initially points out that the genesis of the Brazilian state took place in the sense of subjection to the formation of imperialist capital, with an intense concentration of capital accumulation stemming

from an advanced degree of industrialization, reasonable autonomy from external pressures, and an adequate capacity to stifle labor demands.

Although in a summarized and objectively more specific way, it is possible to see, after this explanation, that in order to establish a position of resistance and transformation of the university into something that meets its social purpose, however elitist it may be, feeding this contradiction inherent in its origin, the ordinances relating to master's degrees and professional doctorates need to be revised and directed towards the social, human and Humboldtian purpose (albeit with local-regional reservations) and not simply align with international capital, prioritizing competitiveness and productivity.

In this context, Bourdieu's (2007) argument about the need for rarity to guarantee the distinction of the dominant class can be counterpointed. If this "epistemological elite" is in charge of the knowledge produced, verified, and legitimized by the existing power of this fraction of the class, which is presented as the only valid knowledge, anything that comes into existence through alternative means is not immediately accepted as valid. On the contrary, the questioning and antagonistic arguments are aimed at discrediting and disqualifying this new knowledge in order to delegitimize it to the point where there is a reclassification of the level of these academic actors in the scientific stratum: Capes, in the National Education Plan (PNE 2010-2020), places the master's and professional doctorate between the *lato sensu* postgraduate course and the *stricto sensu* postgraduate course, now called academic.

In this way, the value of diplomas can be graded at different levels, according to their acceptance in the job market, both in the public and private spheres. In a recent public examination, a particular university in the center-west of Brazil specified in its public notice that candidates with professional master's degrees would not be accepted to join its teaching staff. This prerogative has no legal support since the Ministry of Education (MEC) has determined, in the ordinances concerning this *stricto sensu* training, the same degree of equivalence of degrees at the national level, as already mentioned. However, it is interesting to highlight, at this point, the impact of this resistance in terms of maintaining the rarity of "academic masters and doctors" by rejecting "professional masters and doctors" and, consequently, their perpetuation at the level of teaching and academic guidance in research in this direction.

Severino (2006) is emphatic in this sense when he states: Severino (2006) is emphatic in this sense when he states:

Despite all the precautions Capes took, expressed in its Ordinances, to guarantee criteria for the recommendation, monitoring, and evaluation of these courses, there will be no way to avoid their negative impact on the essential characteristic of *stricto sensu* postgraduate studies, which is research. There will undoubtedly be perverse effects on the academic master's degree, starting with the ambiguity of using the same nomenclature to designate two categories of postgraduate courses. The same rights will be claimed on the back of this identification, especially regarding teaching careers (Severino, 2006, p. 11).

16 From a remuneration point of view, from the perspective of public higher education institutions with statutory careers, since professional master's and doctoral degrees have the same validity when compared to academic degrees of the same level, the basic remuneration and bonuses for each level remain the same when a highly qualified professional enters under these conditions. However, Bourdieu (2007) points out that the distinction of the dominant class does not only refer to the economic aspect but also to what it does not objectively achieve, such as knowledge, although the symbiosis of the fields can legitimize this to a certain degree:

Cultural goods also have an economy, the specific logic of which must be well identified in order to escape economicism. In this sense, one must first establish the conditions in which the consumers of these goods and their tastes are produced and, at the same time, describe, on the one hand, the different ways of appropriating some of these goods considered, at a given moment, to be works of art and, on the other, the social conditions of the constitution of the mode of appropriation reputed to be legitimate (Bourdieu, 2007, p. 9).

In this sense, the analogy we are making here about the "illegitimacy" of degrees from professional programs lies in the non-acceptance by a large part of academia, which is imbued with the vestments of the ruling class to assume such a stance, even though it is clear that this academic field does not belong to the elite of the economic field. However, taking advantage of



the homology inherent in these fields, a certain fraction of this academic field uses a discourse of resistance to guarantee its superior position by making a distinction between academic degrees and professional degrees, placing the latter in an inferior position due to their professional nature and, therefore, not being a field of knowledge production regarded as legitimate.

By acting in this way, academic resistance converges in the sense of keeping the reliquary of knowledge intact within its walls, neutralizing actions to expand the academic universe into the professional sphere, which, even with the due reservations made in this work, in the sense of opening up to capital an aspect more geared towards the intellectual and human development of society, needs ventilation of its ideas, preserving the umbilical relationship between theory and practice, based on the tripod of teaching, extension, and research:

The instrument par excellence of the 'neutralization' of content that allows all academic reconciliations lies in the dissociation of form and content that is the common root of the purely literary cult of form, of anexionist 'humanism' – which, by reducing social and cultural differences to anecdotal differences of language, thinks of man in general, abstract and simple terms – and of logical formalism that may have no other function than to apprehend realities, claiming for itself the respectful distance (Bourdieu, 2015, p. 47).

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Given the objectives of professional postgraduate courses listed in their regulatory ordinances, it is possible to state that scientific and technological development is the primary target of the actions unleashed since their inception. Research in the area, although scarce in this expansion, shows that the supremacy of practice over theory is constant, from the name of the programs to the products presented as dissertations or theses to obtain professional degrees. It would be more productive to highlight the qualitative aspects of this production if it were possible to triangulate this data with the results of the evaluations carried out by the Capes Sucupira Collection (2013-2016 and 2017-2020). However, the instrument prioritizes academic aspects that have already been evaluated in the so-called "academic" modality, and it is not possible to make more precise inferences based on aspects of paramount importance, such as evaluation. In this sense, it is only a matter of time before

the instrument itself changes to keep up with the new reality of *stricto sensu* postgraduate studies in the country since, in the current format, professional postgraduate studies are generally not well evaluated.

However, even so, it is necessary to separate the discourses coming from niches of academic resistance, however strong and concentrated they may be, from the criticism carried out through grounded and contextualized research so as not to engage in what can be called “empty discourse.” We end with this analysis by Bourdieu:

We cannot advance and expand the science of the social world except by forcing the return of the repressed, neutralizing neutralization, and denying contestation in all its forms, the greatest of which is derealization through the hyperbolic radicalization of certain revolutionary discourse. Against a discourse that is neither true nor false, neither verifiable nor falsifiable, neither theoretical nor empirical, which, like Racine, was not talking about cows but calves, cannot talk about Smig or working-class T-shirts, but only about the mode of production and the proletariat or the roles and attitudes of the lower middle class, it is not enough to demonstrate, you have to show objects and even people, make them touch your finger – which does not mean show them with your finger, put them on the index – make them enter a popular bistro or a rugby pitch, a golf course or a private club, people who used to say what they think they think, no longer know how to think what they say (Bourdieu, 2007, p. 467). 467).

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In order to understand the real purpose of applying the term “professional” at this level of education, it is essential to go beyond the appearances of its immediate reality, based on the theoretical contributions of Marx (2017), when he states that the place of reality is made up of its multiple determinations and is the plane of manifestations of the concrete of the object. From this point of view, according to which the concrete presents itself as the locus of analysis of Brazilian postgraduate studies, the contradictions that the object presents and engenders are apparent and not fundamental contradictions. These reveal the object’s reality rather than the object revealing its reality.

It is precisely in the movement of this object, understood here in two distinct but congruent ways that it becomes possible to begin to glimpse its nature: firstly, in the fragmented and uncoordinated way in which the profusion

of regulatory ordinances on the professional master's and doctorate takes place; and secondly, with the movement of expansion and growth of this modality, mainly in the Multidisciplinary Major Area and in the private sphere.

## Final Considerations

Through this work, we have reflected on the issue of the professionalization of *stricto sensu* postgraduate studies in Brazil, specifically on the distinction of this level of training as a result of the developments since its genesis in 1998.

In this way, it was possible to understand the conceptualization of the term "professional" within reconfiguring Brazilian postgraduate studies and their consequent expansion via professional master's and doctoral degrees in certain aspects raised in this paper. More specifically, it can be said that academia's resistance to accepting this new professional aspect as a propagator of the academic legacy goes beyond the reverberations from the epistemological point of view of the relationship between work and education; it is also a strategy to guarantee the rarity of diplomas (master's and doctoral degrees) in order to perpetuate the distinction of this level, in the terms addressed by Pierre Bourdieu's praxeological theory, which is so inaccessible to a large part of the population, maintaining the status quo of this academic elite.

Although restricted to the scope of the initial proposition and stimulated by it, this study has contributed to understanding the factors involved in this relationship between capital and academia. Scientific analyses from other starting points than the relationship between Work and Education may not understand this to some extent. From the sociology of education's point of view, and with the contribution of the Bourdieusian approach that warns of social consecration, and, in this case, especially academic consecration, we can observe the presence of a diversity of capitals mobilized by postgraduate students, with decisive consequences for their paths in *stricto sensu* postgraduate studies. This finding, in turn, raises the level of commitment and zeal needed for new conclusions to be possible in the course of the research to be carried out over the next few years, breaking new ground and bringing the necessary

tools within the framework of this horizon to provide the indispensable criticism of this expanding movement in Brazilian public higher education.

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Received on 27 may 2024  
Accepted on 21 jun. 2024



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