

# A docência no ensino superior no contexto da pandemia da COVID-19

*Adelino FRANCKLIN*<sup>1</sup>

## Resumo

A implementação do Ensino Remoto Emergencial (ERE) provocou diversas consequências negativas para o trabalho docente. Nessa perspectiva, este artigo busca responder: quais foram as possíveis alterações nas práticas dos docentes da UEMG durante a implementação do ERE. Visa analisar as possíveis alterações nas práticas dos docentes da UEMG no contexto pandêmico. A pesquisa assume relevância acadêmica e científica, pelo fato de que ainda há necessidade de mais produções bibliográficas e dados analisados sobre as condições de trabalho dos professores universitários durante o ERE. A abordagem da pesquisa é qualitativa. É bibliográfica e também contou com entrevistas não estruturadas com sete docentes de uma das unidades acadêmicas da UEMG. O referencial teórico da pesquisa foram os conceitos de *habitus*, *campo*, *capitais* e *práticas* em Pierre Bourdieu. A precarização e intensificação do trabalho docente que já existia na UEMG, acentuou-se ainda mais no contexto da pandemia.

**Palavras-chave:** COVID-19. Ensino Remoto Emergencial. Trabalho Docente. UEMG.

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# Teaching in higher education in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic

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## **Abstract**

The implementation of Emergency Remote Teaching (ERE) has caused several negative consequences for teaching work. In this perspective, this article seeks to answer: what were the possible changes in the practices of UEMG teachers during the implementation of the ERE. It aims to analyze the possible changes in the practices of UEMG teachers in the pandemic context. The research assumes academic and scientific relevance, due to the fact that there is still a need for more bibliographic Productions and data analyzed on the working conditions of university professor during the ERE. The research approach is qualitative. It is bibliographical and also featured unstructured interviews with seven professors from one of the academic units of UEMG. The theoretical framework of the research was the concepts of habitus, field, capitals and practices in Pierre Bourdieu. The precariousness and intensification of the teaching work that already existed at UEMG, was even more accentuated in the context of the pandemic.

**Keywords:** Intensification. Precariousness. Mental health.

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### **Resumo**

A implementação do Ensino Remoto Emergencial (ERE) provocou diversas consequências negativas para o trabalho docente. Nessa perspectiva, este artigo busca responder: quais foram as possíveis alterações nas práticas dos docentes da UEMG durante a implementação do ERE. Visa analisar as possíveis alterações nas práticas dos docentes da UEMG no contexto pandêmico. A pesquisa assume relevância acadêmica e científica, pelo fato de que ainda há necessidade de mais produções bibliográficas e dados analisados sobre as condições de trabalho dos professores universitários durante o ERE. A abordagem da pesquisa é qualitativa. É bibliográfica e também contou com entrevistas não estruturadas com sete docentes de uma das unidades acadêmicas da UEMG. O referencial teórico da pesquisa foram os conceitos de *habitus*, campo, capitais e práticas em Pierre Bourdieu. A precarização e intensificação do trabalho docente que já existia na UEMG, acentuou-se ainda mais no contexto da pandemia.

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## 1. Introduction

The conditions of precariousness, intensification, and academic productivity may have been exacerbated during the Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) at UEMG, further increasing the health risks for faculty members. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, various reports were published regarding the implications of remote work in higher education. Each public or private university that had in-person courses adopted the strategy it deemed most suitable for its situation. These measures were made possible by the publication of Portaria N° 342 on March 17, 2020, by the Ministry of Education (AGÊNCIA BRASIL, 2020, online).

This research holds social relevance as the practices of faculty members at UEMG, Passos Unit, during the COVID-19 pandemic may have undergone changes that, in turn, could be related to the formation of their professional *habitus*. Therefore, reflecting on the data analyzed in this research could contribute to improving the working conditions of these professors.

The research also has academic and scientific relevance due to the ongoing need for more bibliographic productions and analyzed data regarding the working conditions of university professors in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The research problem guiding this study was: What were the possible changes in the practices of faculty members at UEMG, Passos Unit, during the implementation of ERT, and how might these changes affect the formation of their professional *habitus* in the long term from a Bourdieusian perspective?

This research aimed to analyze the possible changes in the practices of faculty members at UEMG, Passos Unit, during the implementation of ERT and how these changes might affect the formation of their professional *habitus* in the long term from a Bourdieusian perspective.

## 2. Methodology

The research is bibliographic. E-books, scientific articles, doctoral theses, and master's dissertations regarding teaching work in public higher education during the COVID-19 pandemic and Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) were consulted. The bibliographic survey was conducted through UEMG's digital collection, the SciELO journal website, and Google Scholar. According to Triviños: “the process of evaluating the bibliographic material that the researcher encounters will teach them how far other researchers have gone in their efforts, the methods employed, the difficulties

they had to face, what can still be investigated, etc.” (1987, p. 100).

The research also employs a qualitative approach. Regarding this approach, Ludke and André state:

A more balanced stance seems to be that of those who, recognizing the impossibility of separating personal values from the research process, suggest some special precautions to control the effect of subjectivity. One way to control this is for the researcher to disclose their biases, values, and assumptions so that others can assess their relative impact on the development of the study. As much as possible, the researcher should also reveal to the reader how they were affected by the study, specifying any changes in their assumptions, values, and judgments. It is important for the researcher to clearly state the criteria used to select certain types of data over others, to observe certain situations rather than others, and to interview certain individuals rather than others (1986, p. 51).

For data collection, unstructured interviews were conducted. In this approach, "the interviewer has the freedom to develop each situation in any direction they consider appropriate. It is a way to explore a question more extensively. Generally, the questions are open-ended and can be answered within an informal conversation" (MARCONI; LAKATOS, 2010, p. 180).

The theoretical framework of the research was based on the concepts of *habitus*, field, capital, and practice in Pierre Bourdieu (GRENFELL, 2018). Thus, the interpretation of the research data relied on these primary Bourdieusian concepts, which contributed to understanding the factors and dynamics affecting the possible changes in the practices of UEMG, Unidade Passos faculty.

Regarding the concept of *habitus*, it is understood as the:

[...] The concept of habitus is understood as a generating principle of objectively classifiable practices and, at the same time, a system of classification (*principium divisionis*) of such practices. In the relationship between the two capacities that define habitus—the capacity to produce classifiable practices and works, and the capacity to differentiate and appreciate these practices and products (tastes) the social world represented is constituted. In other words, habitus shapes the space of lifestyles. (BOURDIEU, 2007, p. 162).

Bourdieu's theory should be understood from a relational perspective. Another relevant concept in Bourdieu's framework is the concept of **field**.

Fields are understood as structured spaces of positions (or posts) in a synchronic view, where the properties of these positions depend on their place within the space. These properties can be analyzed independently of the characteristics of their occupants, although they are partly determined by these characteristics) (2003, p. 119).

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Regarding the Bourdieusian methodological perspective, Hardy (2018, p. 321) explains that it involves a commitment “to a relational, cyclical, and complex process, yet capable of providing a dynamic representation of human activity,” contributing to the understanding of the relationships between “objective structures and personal lived experiences.”

For the unstructured interviews, seven faculty members were selected and invited, one from each undergraduate program at UEMG, Unidade Passos. The research was submitted to and approved by the UEMG Ethics and Research Committee. Each participant received a copy of the Informed Consent Form (ICF), which was duly signed.

The names of the interviewed faculty members have been replaced with fictitious names for the presentation of excerpts from their statements in this article. The interviews were conducted in the second semester of 2021.

### **3. The Implications of the COVID-19 Pandemic for Public Higher Education**

Starting in March 2020, Brazilian universities, like various sectors of society, were caught off guard by the COVID-19 pandemic. Given that the virus SARS-CoV-2, or the novel coronavirus, was transmitted with unknown modes of transmission and symptoms at that time, there were no clear guidelines on how university activities could continue while adhering to social distancing and other biosafety measure.

State interventions aimed at mitigating the financial losses faced by businesses and workers due to the closure of establishments, such as emergency aid and credit lines, exposed the ineffectiveness of the neoliberal model in this health crisis context, which advocates for minimal state intervention.

Certain actions by public officials hindered the fight against the virus, such as the recommendation of unproven medications, the disregard for social distancing and mask use, and delays in acquiring and distributing oxygen cylinders to the state of Amazonas.

Swartz (2017) explains that for Bourdieu, the state holds a monopoly on physical force and symbolic power, which grants it the legitimacy of its actions. The state is a sort of metacampo, operating alongside the field of power, contending for state capital, which supersedes other forms of capital, such as economic and cultural capital. From this perspective, the COVID-19 pandemic saw a discursive struggle in the field of power involving state capital and scientific capital.

Among the solutions proposed for maintaining educational activities, the implementation of Emergency Remote Teaching (ERE) prevailed, also referred to as Non-Face-to-Face Teaching. This strategy for continuing school and academic activities is improvised and differs from Distance Education (EaD), which is regulated in Brazil (ARRUDA, 2020). In this context, teaching work became even more precarious and intensified, leading to emotional problems, exhaustion, musculoskeletal issues, and other health problems among educators (ALESSI et al., 2021).

Bernardo, Maia, and Bridi (2020) point out the differences between telework and remote work/home office. While telework is regulated by Law No. 13,467/2017 and defines it as the provision of services performed in locations distinct from the contracting company, using Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), without constituting external work, home office allows for hybrid execution of work, with or without ICTs. Another distinction is the requirement for a work contract registration for telework, whereas home office does not necessitate such formalization. During the COVID-19 pandemic, remote work was understood as a form of telework.

CNE/CP Opinion No. 5/2020, approved on April 28, 2020, established criteria for reorganizing the school/academic calendar and the possibility of counting non-face-to-face activities towards the minimum annual workload due to the pandemic context (BRASIL, 2020a).

Various Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) took advantage of Ordinance No. 2,117, of December 2019, which expanded the allowed workload for offering courses in the EaD modality, permitting up to 40% of the total workload of face-to-face courses. Thus, following the logic of HEIs offering EaD courses, they conducted mass layoffs and overburdened the remaining faculty, assigning a higher number of students per instructor and requiring the recording of video lectures. (ASSOCIAÇÃO DOS DOCENTES DA UNIVERSIDADE DE SÃO PAULO, 2020, on-line; FARAGE; COSTA; SILVA, 2021).

Through the analysis of a questionnaire applied to education professionals,<sup>2</sup>, mainly teachers, Bernardo, Maia, and Bridi (2020, p. 10) found that:

[...] The adaptation of these workers to the shift from in-person work to working from home led to increased intensification, difficulties in separating personal life from professional life, as all-time began to be considered work time. (BERNARDO; MAIA; BRIDI, 2020, p. 10).

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<sup>2</sup> For data collection, a questionnaire was administered via the Google Forms platform from May 5 to May 17, 2020. The questionnaire contained 37 questions. After organizing and categorizing the information, only those who declared themselves as belonging to the education sector were selected, as the survey was also answered by pedagogues and education managers in addition to teachers. A total of 262 respondents were counted, the majority of whom were teachers. (BERNARDO; MAIA; BRIDI, 2020, p. 11).

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The use of the WhatsApp application to address questions from faculty was useful in preventing student dropout during the ERE; however, receiving messages on weekends, holidays, and after working hours created a sense that work was present at all times. Likely, only a few faculty members managed to handle this situation effectively and address the demands from colleagues and students strictly within work hours and days.

Regarding time for lesson planning, Limeira, Batista, and Bezerra (2020, p. 10), based on data collected about faculty work during the ERE, found that.:

Regarding the daily time spent on lesson preparation and remote teaching, 30% reported spending between one and two hours, 30% between two and three hours, 28% more than three hours, and 12% up to one hour per day. This indicates that the time spent preparing remote lessons is similar to the time spent on in-person classes, although this differs for practical classes, where the time dedicated tends to be greater.

Classes that were initially prepared for in-person instruction had to be adapted to a virtual format, requiring educators to learn and familiarize themselves with the new teaching and learning platforms adopted by universities. Making lessons interactive under these circumstances and contributing to the learning of students facing particular issues due to the COVID-19 pandemic and internet connectivity problems demanded additional planning time.

Through data analysis during the pandemic, Limeira, Batista, and Bezerra (2020) found that a significant portion of students from a public higher education institution in Ceará lacked access to various digital platforms, highlighting the need for public policies to democratize access to technological resources.

Research activities continued during the health crisis, with requirements similar to those before the pandemic. Thus, academic productivity also contributed to the intensification of teaching work and negatively affected the health of university professors during a time of loss and uncertainty. Academic and scientific research cannot be produced in a rush, as its quality requires careful consideration, reflection, and maturation (MOURA; CRUZ, 2020).

According to 87.5% of the respondents, remote activities led to increased work for various reasons, such as combining domestic and professional work, remote meetings at any time, etc. (BARBOSA, 2022, p. 12).

The number of meetings among faculty increased significantly, possibly due to the perception that remote meetings were more flexible and eliminated the need for travel to universities. However, the necessity to keep one's eyes on screens for extended periods each day led to greater mental fatigue compared to in-person meetings.



Mancebo (2020) notes that remote work not only impacts personal life but also disrupts class solidarity. As a result, educators faced challenges in uniting their profession to advocate for rights, defend against attacks on their peers, and support colleagues who were struggling during these unusual times.

According to Silva e Silva (2021):

[...] If teaching work was already precarious (due to excessive workloads and lack of permanent positions, among other issues), the hasty implementation of Emergency Remote Education (ERE) serves neoliberal interests—interests that increasingly undermine both labor and lives (p. 40-41).

The insecurity and discomfort experienced by some educators during the Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) were due to the recommendation or requirement to record their remote classes and also to produce video lessons for posting on YouTube channels. While some educators are comfortable with and even enjoy these activities, others, for various reasons, do not feel at ease with recording. Dissatisfaction with class recordings stemmed from the possibility of their intellectual production being used without proper credit in adverse situations and from the potential for editing or cutting of their speeches, which could harm the educator if shared out of context.

A study by Anacleto, Alvarenga, and Ferreira (2021, p. 29) revealed that “most educators reported psychological issues resulting from the lack of social contact, with the most common being insecurity, anxiety, insomnia, constant fear, and stress.”

Farage, Costa, and Silva (2021, p. 235-236) on public higher education institutions in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic state that:

In public educational institutions, whether federal or state, due to the stability of professors, most of whom are public servants, there were no layoffs. However, other atrocities and attacks on labor rights occurred, such as: I) the termination of contracts for substitute teachers; II) the non-renewal of contracts for substitute teachers who, amidst the pandemic, had no means to seek other employment; III) the suspension of transportation aid for teachers; IV) the suspension of salary supplements; V) the interruption of qualification scholarships as soon as the project's term ended, regardless of the completion of the work; and VI) the responsibility placed on teachers for providing their own home infrastructure for remote work (internet, computers, desks, chairs, electricity, among others).

In this scenario, there was a judgment from part of Brazilian society that teachers were receiving salaries without working, taking advantage of the sanitary crisis. In reality, teachers experienced cuts, intensified work, and increased their expenses by using their own material resources to carry out their teaching, research, and extension activities. On the other hand, state and federal

Teaching in higher education in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic governments saved on expenses for universities, such as payments for electricity, maintenance of physical structures, transportation, and other demands essential for the operation of the higher education institutions' tripartite functions.

Despite the state's negligence, inadequate ongoing training, and various consequences of the health crisis, teachers continued to perform their duties from their homes, using their own equipment and striving to learn new teaching methodologies for virtual formats (ANACLETO; ALVARENGA; FERREIRA, 2021).

#### 4. UEMG in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic

On March 18, 2020, the University of the State of Minas Gerais (UEMG), in accordance with the Government of the State of Minas Gerais (MG) Decree No. 47,886 of March 15, 2020 (MINAS GERAIS, 2020), suspended in-person classes as a measure to prevent and combat the pandemic caused by the SARS-COV-2 virus, which transmits COVID-19. The initial suspension was until March 22, but following further recommendations from the MG state government, a new notice was issued extending the suspension of in-person classes indefinitely.

Given the impossibility of continuing in-person classes due to the global health crisis, in March 2020, the UEMG rectorate published Ordinance No. 034 of March 17, 2020, which established the activities that professors would continue to engage in during the pandemic. Article 1 of this Ordinance established:

**Art. 1º** As long as the public health emergency situation persists in the State and in-person classes are suspended at the University of the State of Minas Gerais, faculty members shall fulfill their teaching responsibilities by carrying out other activities inherent to their function, such as:

I - Teaching support, including student assistance, pedagogical planning, preparation of teaching materials, curricular enrichment activities, supervision of theses, dissertations, and other extra class activities;

II - Conducting scientific research;

III - Bibliographic productions, such as:

a) Complete articles for journals;

b) Books and chapters;

c) Texts in newspapers or magazines;

d) Abstracts and complete articles for conferences, symposia, etc.;

e) Musical scores;

f) Translations.

IV - Technical, artistic, and cultural productions;

V - Extension activities, including curricular enrichment programs, cooperation and exchange programs, and community-oriented activities, respecting the limits set for gatherings of people;

VI - Academic management, including direction and vice-direction of units, course coordination, research, extension, internships, and department leadership (UNIVERSIDADE DO ESTADO DE MINAS GERAIS, 2020a, on-line).

The authorization for remote work allowed for the continuation of many administrative activities, as well as the execution of research, extension projects, and management, as long as it was feasible while maintaining biosafety measures and social distancing.

From the second half of March until July 27, 2020, students at UEMG were without classes. However, other activities inherent to academic work at the university continued, such as Course Board meetings, supervision of Theses and Dissertations, preparation of Work Plans and Teaching Reports, and development of research and extension activities that were possible virtually. One activity that many faculty members began to implement was organizing and conducting live sessions for students.

On June 4, 2020, the University Council (CONUN) of UEMG approved the implementation of Emergency Remote Education (ERE) at the university (UNIVERSIDADE DO ESTADO DE MINAS GERAIS, 2020b, online). This decision may have been considered late, given that since March 19, 2020, there had already been a decree from the Ministry of Education (MEC) authorizing ERE for public higher education in Brazil (BRASIL, 2020b).

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, UEMG had been using the Moodle platform for offering courses in the Distance Education (EaD) modality. However, this learning platform would not allow for synchronous classes, that is, real-time classes for students. For this reason, the university began using the Microsoft Teams platform as well, which was intended for synchronous classes and could also facilitate asynchronous activities, which occur without the need for real-time virtual meetings.

The continuation of the first semester of 2020 began only in July, which caused a significant mismatch between the academic calendar and the civil calendar. Many Academic Centers and students mobilized to express dissatisfaction with the implementation of ERE, as it was considered quite exclusive due to academic inequalities at UEMG. However, the protests by students and some professors were not enough to prevent the continuation of classes in this new format.

In the first academic semesters, each course could have between 25% and 50% of its total workload taught synchronously, with a later requirement of at least 50% of this workload. The UEMG Rectorate's guideline was for synchronous classes to be recorded, so that students could watch them when they could not attend in real-time (SANTOS et al., 2021, p. 2).

Some faculty members, during the pandemic, began to work in person as well, following biosafety protocols. These exceptions occurred for teachers who taught practical courses, mainly in health-related fields (BRASIL, 2021).

Most faculty members who continued with remote work and teaching in the ERE format had their transportation allowances removed from their payroll. In a context of increased expenses with Internet, notebooks and computers, mobile phones, and electricity, this led to a reduction in salary (ASSOCIAÇÃO DOS DOCENTES DA UEMG, 2021, on-line).

#### **4.1 The Expansion of Instability and Precariousness for Contracted Teachers**

In the initial months following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, various obstacles arose for conducting medical assessments, which adversely affected the hiring of temporary teachers. In a period of uncertainty, financial difficulties, and various other challenges, the temporary teachers at UEMG were again negatively impacted.

In some instances, between 2021 and 2022, there were hostile interactions between some tenured faculty members and some contracted teachers, such as through the holding of Simplified Selection Processes (PSS) for new teacher appointments and requests for changes in placement. Conflicts were exacerbated in virtual meetings and also in WhatsApp groups of faculty members.

The PSS notices issued at the beginning of 2022, such as Notice No. 27/2022 (UNIVERSIDADE DO ESTADO DE MINAS GERAIS, 2022, online), also created significant divisions between tenured faculty (members of selection committees) and contracted teachers (those applying for positions). Some of the contracted teachers felt that members of the selection committees might have acted contrary to the principle of impartiality, assigning lower scores than deserved to candidates for certain positions and favoring others. This discomfort was primarily due to the fact that the examiners were from the same UEMG unit where the vacancies were being allocated. Thus, the relationship among UEMG faculty, already strained by social distancing, was further worsened by the atmosphere of suspicion and offenses that occurred at this time.

The concept of the “cordial man,” used by Sérgio Buarque de Holanda in his work *Raízes do Brasil*<sup>3</sup>, helps to understand the actions that UEMG faculty should avoid. The “cordial man” is

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<sup>3</sup> The book *Raízes do Brasil* was published by Sérgio Buarque de Holanda in 1936. One of its chapters deals with the concept of the “cordial man,” which has become a widely discussed concept in sociological perspectives.

essentially a public agent who does not distinguish between the public and private realms, who acts based on personal relationships rather than impersonal criteria, and who predominantly operates through emotion rather than the rationality found in modern bureaucracy (HOLANDA, 1995).

From this perspective, it would not be appropriate if any contracted teacher sought or requested information from members of the PSS selection committee about scoring criteria, deadlines, interpretations of the notice items, etc., through WhatsApp groups or other informal means. Similarly, it would be inappropriate for a selection committee member to act out of personal interest or share information about the PSS with friends or groups, given that all evaluators signed a confidentiality agreement.

Another dispute occurred during a meeting of the Course Coordinators' Collegiate, where requests from tenured faculty from other UEMG units for relocation to the Passos Unit were considered (UNIVERSIDADE DO ESTADO DE MINAS GERAIS, 2021, online). While relocation requests are rights of tenured faculty (OFÍCIO CIRCULAR UEMG/GABREITOR, 2021; ASSOCIAÇÃO DOS DOCENTES DA UEMG, 2021b, online), the instability for contracted teachers increases since they can be replaced at any time during the academic year by tenured faculty from other units. The criteria for handling relocation requests became a subject of discussion again in 2022.

These events affected the contracted teachers and caused conflicts between temporary and tenured faculty, within the context of a pandemic, with remote and later in-person classes.

## **5. FACULTY NOTES FROM UEMG, PASSOS CAMPUS ON ERE**

The academic community at UEMG was divided in the first semester of 2020 due to both support for and objections to the implementation of Emergency Remote Education (ERE). With no forecast for the creation and distribution of effective vaccines against the SARS-CoV-2 virus and uncertainty about how long the pandemic would last, the decision to adopt ERE prevailed.

“[...] The results were much more positive than negative considering the whole context, and if we had stayed without classes since March of last year [2020], we would certainly have had much greater losses” (Marilena, emphasis added); “[...] especially because there were many students in the process of graduating” (Dorina). Since the interviews were conducted in 2021, the interviewed faculty had a different perspective compared to when the discussions took place in the first semester of 2020. Certainly, many faculty and students changed their positions on the adoption of ERE over time, as they realized that the pandemic would not last just a few months. In this perspective, “the field, as

Teaching in higher education in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic part of the continuous contexts in which we live, structures *habitus*, while at the same time *habitus* is the basis of the understanding that actors have of their lives, including the field” (MATON, 2018, p. 77).

Faculty who were appointed in the week prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in Brazil were still familiarizing themselves with UEMG's reality. They had many doubts regarding institutional norms, administrative activities, physical infrastructure and material resources, and did not know the professionals working at the university. “[...] us professors who started in March, everything was very new, everything was a surprise” (Magda).

From the perspective presented about the concept of field, it is understood that faculty who were appointed as tenured at UEMG, except for those who were already designated/appointed at the university before passing the public exam, were in a novice position in the field, as opposed to the established ones. These positions began to shift during subsequent semesters, with new Simplified Selection Processes (PSS), appointments, and approvals of requests for removals of tenured faculty, resulting in a renewal in the faculty and reducing the number of established figures in the field.

UEMG already had experience with Distance Education (EaD), but most faculty may not have had experience with this teaching modality. Using Moodle, Microsoft Teams, among other technological resources, was likely new for most. “[...] Another important concern is that we did not have the technical conditions to obtain a stable platform, resources that would allow us as teachers to perform our activities [...]” (Joaquim); “[...] People barely have computers and sometimes have to follow via cell phones; I had TCC (course completion project) students who did the entire TCC via cell phone [...]” (Magda); “[...] Problems, mental issues are worsening, financial issues are worsening, economic issues, labor issues [...]” (Dorina).

Unlike students who enroll in EaD courses and have the means to complete them, at UEMG most courses are in-person, and approximately 80% of students come from public basic education schools. A significant portion of UEMG students face financial difficulties and live in vulnerable situations. In this context, interviewee Marilena expressed the following concerns she had in 2020:

[...] Will there be many classes streaming at the same time? Won't it crash? Won't it drop? Will the students be able to access it? Do the students have the means to access these classes? Time issue, internet—this was a major concern as well. Do they have computers to complete the activities? Will it be done via cell phone? Do they have wifi or will they use mobile data? [...].

These questions were pertinent, as dropout rates increased despite the flexibility and sensitivity of teachers in not marking absences for students missing synchronous classes, recording classes and video lectures, allowing late submissions, and conducting asynchronous activities.

The need to maintain social distancing, the loss of family and friends, fear, and insecurity likely harmed the mental health of many teachers. "[...] So, I think I noticed that anxiety is one of the things that occurred a little, and this anxiety leads to some things, so you start to abuse alcohol" (Joaquim). The excessive consumption of alcoholic beverages reported by Joaquim may have affected teachers due to the pandemic's impact on mental health, such as feelings of loneliness, anxiety, anguish, stress, depression, and burnout syndrome.

"[...] Not having teams on Teams, teams being formed, this level of access, what should have been ready with some experience but wasn't, made me very anxious [...]" (Bertha). Anxiety may have been one of the biggest problems affecting teachers' health during the pandemic. For example, Bertha mentioned the delays in creating classes for each subject on Microsoft Teams and Moodle. This delay hindered the start of classes for certain subjects and the planning of lessons by teachers.

The training courses for using Microsoft Teams and Moodle were not well-received by the teachers. "[...] I was somewhat dissatisfied with the course available from the university" (Jacqueline). One reason for this could be that the course offered was rushed and close to the start of remote classes.

In the months following the implementation of ERE, many teachers organized live sessions. However, the lack of technical knowledge, such as using Streaming Yard for streaming on YouTube, led to the need for assistance from students who were more familiar with these resources. In this regard, Bertha stated: "[...] I think it would be important for UEMG to consider providing us with a course on video editing, a course on how to stream on YouTube, because what we get in the course is from the academic center [...]". The academic centers assisted teachers in various situations related to the use of technological resources.

In this sense, the practices of agents in the academic field, that is, teachers during ERE, may have undergone changes or adapted to the needs of the context, as they needed to acquire new teaching strategies, technologies, and formats.

Regarding preparation for working during ERE, Joaquim stated: "[...] I feel prepared to teach in this system because I believe that we can overcome these difficulties with creativity when we do what we like". Joaquim's statement relates to Bourdieu's concept of *illusio* (2001), where the agent has an interest in staying in the field amid disputes for different types of capital, even if they are in a dominated position.

Contrary to Joaquim, the interviewee Dorina feels that there is a greater difficulty in covering all the content of subjects in a remote format: “[...] I can say that I will not be able to cover the syllabus as well as I would have if I were in face-to-face teaching”.

Teachers incurred expenses for purchasing and maintaining technological equipment, changing their internet plans, and increased electricity consumption at home. “I had to buy a digital tablet, which was an expense that didn’t come back [...]” (Dermeval); “[...] I had to spend money I wasn’t planning to spend this way, but I had to buy a good desktop computer [...]” (Magda); “[...] The ideal would be to have some form of support from the university, either for these expenses we have to cover or for the maintenance of our equipment” (Bertha).

Bourdieu uses a metaphor about the State, referring to the right and left hand. The right hand refers to higher-level officials aligned with market logic, while the left hand represents lower-level employees, such as teachers, who advocate for social justice (LAVAL, 2020). Based on Bourdieu’s conception of the State, which presents a duality between welfare or cultural capital and financial or economic capital (SWARTZ, 2017), it is assumed that in this pandemic context, the State’s right hand not only ignored the left hand but also prevented any action it could have taken to assist teachers. Thus, the COVID-19 pandemic was beneficial for the State in some respects, as it transferred many expenses from universities to teachers, who had to cover them with their own salaries.

As stated by Laval:

[...] The neoliberal era is characterized by the fact that economic capital functions simultaneously as both material and symbolic power in the economic field and as the principle of maximum domination over all forms of capital, particularly political, media, and cultural capital. These forms of capital find legitimacy only by serving, justifying, and even glorifying the accumulation of economic capital (2020, p. 232).

In this perspective, economic capital is fundamental for acquiring other forms of capital within the neoliberal context. The increased expenses that UEMG faculty faced during the pandemic might have implications for obtaining other types of capital, such as cultural capital.

Among the challenges faced by faculty during the ERE, they commented:

“Challenges, organizing a routine was a challenge, excess of online meetings, it takes up a lot of time...” (Joaquim); “[...] you need to attend a door, you have barking dogs, you have a neighbor’s construction...” (Joaquim); “[...] I was teaching and I live in an apartment building, and I’ve encountered situations where an apartment in the building was under renovation, it was noise that I couldn’t control...” (Dorina); “And I have quite a bit of myopia, I realized that staying 10/12 hours in



front of that computer was very difficult...” (Magda). These circumstances may interfere with the agents' habitus, given that from the Bourdieusian perspective, “it is an expression of a ‘structured structure,’ a corporeal history of patterns of appropriation, treatment, and processing of reality dependent on social position and based on the differentiated structure of unequal living conditions and socialization” (BAUER, 2017, pp. 184-185).

Dorina also faced a significant challenge due to the ERE: “I was never a person who exposed myself on social media, I never made videos, so that was a big challenge for me, you know?” Thus, understanding that “only those who incorporate the habitus appropriate to the field are capable of playing the game and believing in its importance” (LAHIRE, 2017, p. 32), Dorina, like other UEMG faculty, had to adopt new practices and adapt to the constant use of social media, video recordings, and other trends to maintain or achieve a position as competent professionals.

Marilena lamented the reduced interaction of students during synchronous classes: “The participation of our students, the cameras all turned off, the class becomes very expositional, expositional, expositional, and when asked if there are any doubts, students do not respond...” This situation was likely a complaint among faculty throughout the ERE period. In addition to the stress of rapidly learning to use new technological resources, faculty probably felt distressed not knowing why students' cameras remained off and the reason for the constant silence during classes (FARAGE; COSTA; SILVA, 2021).

While turned-off cameras could signify students' disinterest in synchronous classes, they could also reveal embarrassment that many wanted to avoid by hiding the image of their homes or workplaces. Certainly, many students used the flexibility of class schedules and ERE to work, as absences were not counted against them, and if they joined the class, they did not need to prove they were actually present.

It is understood that the world of science “is a social field like any other, with its power relations and monopolies, its struggles and strategies, its interests and profits, but where all these invariants take on specific forms” (BOURDIEU, 1983, p. 122). Thus, faculty taught their classes without knowing if many students were actually attending, as most were not participating actively. Giving up and feeling frustrated by the limited success of the classes would not solve the problem, so they continued teaching remotely with the expectation that this phase would soon be overcome.

The ERE involves a greater number of unforeseen events and situations that require improvisations. “[...] Things for tomorrow, so you have to submit a report for this week, very, very

Teaching in higher education in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic quickly, very quick demands, which required a lot of preparation and work without prior notice...” (Marilena). In the same perspective, Bertha confided:

I think what bothered me the most about remote teaching, and I’m not just talking about the calendar, is this lack of planning. Things happen at the last minute, they happen urgently, because they are demands that arise, and we end up responding to demands that were not anticipated, that didn’t even seem to exist [...].

“Whenever we talk about work intensity, we start with the analysis of who is working, that is, the worker. They are required to do something more, a greater effort, whether physical, intellectual, or psychological, or some combination of these three elements’ (ROSSO, 2008, p. 20). In this sense, Bourdieu also criticized what is known as fast-thinking (LAVAL, 2020), to which many researchers, such as the UEMG faculty, are subjected in the current context.

The overload and intensification of teaching work was one of the implications of the Emergency Remote Education (ERE). The teaching work at UEMG, which was already marked by precariousness and intensification, was further exacerbated by the adversities of the pandemic context. ‘[...] Another issue, which is no less important, is the fear of exhaustion; our workload noticeably increased during remote teaching. We start very early and go late into the evening; classes are held at night’ (Bertha); ‘Another challenge is that I believe I worked many more hours than before, so excessive working hours is one of the realities of remote teaching, at least from what I’ve seen with various teachers’ (Joaquim); ‘[...] because you always have that feeling that you didn’t fulfill all the demands of the day [...]’ (Dorina); ‘[...] I think that both teachers and students, I don’t know if it’s a personal issue or being at home somehow made us more overloaded. We worked three times more, but I know that students had three times more work [...]’ (Dermeval).

The neoliberal policy, which seeks to manage public services as in the private sector, adopting the discourse of efficiency (LAVAL, 2020), has caused exhaustion and various emotional disturbances among workers.

To refute criticisms from part of society, who, due to a lack of understanding of university teachers' work, believe that teachers work only during class time, Magda explained: ‘[...] as I said, classes started in July, but since March we were in many meetings, we didn’t stop working, we just stopped teaching students [...]’.

The flexibility provided by not having to commute to UEMG may have contributed to the excess of regular and extraordinary meetings of Course Collegiate during the pandemic. Regarding this excess, Magda comments: ‘[...] Sometimes we schedule meetings that last three, four, five hours, and everyone sits through the entire time, so that’s terrible. I get up in the middle of the meeting, I

turn off the camera, and take a little walk [...]'. This strategy adopted by Magda may have helped reduce the risks that constant exposure to screens of laptops, computers, and cell phones pose to teachers' health, such as body aches and myopia (BARBOSA, 2022).

There are many cases of depression, tendinitis, thrombosis (due to lack of exercise and long hours at the computer), cystitis, migraines, insomnia, and other health issues resulting from the intensification of remote work. (FARAGE; COSTA; SILVA, 2021, p. 235-236).

Bertha also understands that the actual working hours of UEMG teachers exceeded what is foreseen in the work regime:

[...] So you end up working much more than eight hours a day, so you fulfill much more than forty hours a week, which is guaranteed in our employment contract, to handle producing digital materials, responding to students' assignments, making corrections, providing guidance, managing all the university bureaucracy, and attending many meetings [...].

The demand for academic productivity continued, even during the periods of highest daily death rates from COVID-19. There was no time to fully grasp all the consequences of the global health crisis (MOURA; CRUZ, 2020).

However, Anacleto, Alvarenga, and Ferreira (2021, p. 28) point out that the pandemic exposed various obstacles and inequalities that exist within the university:

It is urgent to consider that the pandemic more acutely exposed the reality experienced by university professors in their daily lives, including the lack or absence of equipment, outdated and insufficient laboratories, the shortage of administrative support staff, and especially the inefficacy of educational public policies that do not meet the minimum demands for educational equality for students, who are excluded from the digital world, thus infringing upon their constitutional right to access education.

The sensitivity and solidarity that should have grown during this time of crisis did not intensify as much as the time spent on work, the exposure of the teachers, or the mental health issues affecting a significant portion of the Brazilian population.

## Final considerations

The implementation of remote emergency education (ERE) at UEMG was a necessary evil. There was no solution to maintain the quality of teaching as desired. While the ERE exposed academic inequalities and inadequate training for the use of digital resources in education, it also allowed for the continuation of classes, enabling students to complete their courses and teachers to

Teaching in higher education in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic fulfill one of their many responsibilities, which is to teach

The precariousness and intensification of teaching work, which already existed at UEMG, was further exacerbated for both tenured and adjunct/appointed faculty. The excessive number of meetings, the constant filling out of spreadsheets and documents related to the ERE, the organization of learning platforms, responding to students' questions via WhatsApp and emails, and participating in live sessions added to the other responsibilities that teachers had before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Teachers' practices were likely altered during this ERE period. They had to adapt classes from face-to-face to remote formats. Some teachers purchased digital tablets, whiteboards, and markers to create makeshift classrooms in their homes. Others learned to use apps like Mentimeter, video editing programs for editing lessons, and Streaming Yard for YouTube broadcasts. These and many other changes in teaching activities occurred in a short period, directly affecting the practices of UEMG teachers. It is possible that these altered practices will also lead to long-term reconfigurations in the professional habitus of these agents.

The ERE left a gap in the academic training of many students, which will be difficult to overcome in the coming years. For UEMG teachers, the exhaustion resulting from the intensification of teaching work during the ERE still has its effects, with various impacts on their mental health. Finally, this period should not be forgotten, as it is crucial that discussions and studies occur to create public policies for the ongoing training of teachers, the recognition of these professionals, and the adoption of appropriate teaching strategies in case a new pandemic context or another wave of COVID-19 arises

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