ARTICLE

Affectivity in higher education:
a case study

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to understand how affectivity can influence the relationship of a university student with studies in higher education. Genetic Psychology was adopted as a theoretical reference, based on a case study and content analysis of the written records of the learning orientation sessions held with the student. Analysis categories were established, created due to the student's recurrent and common statements. The data indicate that affective conflicts can hinder the student's relationship with his studies, with the teachers, with the institution, and with the establishment of professional goals. Such a situation can result in low academic performance and feelings of demotivation that influence the desire to learn. It was concluded that the affective element cannot be neglected in higher education, and it is important to create institutional mechanisms and faculty training to help students deal with conflicts.

KEYWORD

affectivity; learning; higher education; Genetic Psychology.

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AFETIVIDADE NA EDUCAÇÃO SUPERIOR: UM ESTUDO DE CASO

RESUMO

Este estudo teve como objetivo compreender como a afetividade pode influenciar a relação de um universitário com os estudos no ensino superior. Adotou-se como referencial teórico a Psicologia Genética, a partir de um estudo de caso e da análise de conteúdo dos registros escritos dos atendimentos de orientação à aprendizagem realizados com o aluno. Foram estabelecidas categorias de análises, criadas em decorrência das afirmações recorrentes e comuns do estudante. Os dados indicam que conflitos de ordem afetiva podem dificultar a relação do aluno com seus estudos, com os professores, com a instituição e com o estabelecimento de objetivos profissionais. Tal situação pode resultar em baixo desempenho acadêmico e sentimentos de desmotivação que influenciam o desejo de aprender. Concluiu-se que o elemento afetivo não pode ser negligenciado no ensino superior, sendo importante a criação de mecanismos institucionais e de formação docente para ajudar os estudantes a lidarem com conflitos.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

afetividade; aprendizagem; ensino superior; conflito psíquico; Psicologia Genética.

AFECTIVIDAD EN LA EDUCACIÓN SUPERIOR: UN ESTUDIO DE CASO

RESUMEN

Este estudio tuvo como objetivo comprender cómo la afectividad puede influir en la relación de un estudiante universitario con los estudios de educación superior. Se adoptó como referencia teórica la Psicología Genética, a partir de un estudio de caso y del análisis de contenido de las reuniones de orientación del aprendizaje. Se establecieron categorías de análisis, creadas debido a las declaraciones recurrentes del estudiante. Los datos indican que los conflictos afectivos pueden dificultar la relación del estudiante con sus estudios, con los profesores, con la institución y con el establecimiento de metas profesionales. Esta situación puede provocar un bajo rendimiento académico y sentimientos de desmotivación que influyen en el deseo de aprender. Se concluyó que el elemento afectivo no puede ser descuidado en la educación superior, siendo importante la creación de mecanismos institucionales y la formación del profesorado para ayudar a los estudiantes a afrontar los conflictos.

PALABRAS CLAVE

afectividad; aprender; enseñanza superior; Psicología Genética.

INTRODUCTION

Although affectivity is relevant in the teaching and learning processes, little has been addressed in the higher education segment. When searching for studies on the subject, there are almost no publications. This topic is usually researched, discussed, and developed primarily in the school environment with children and adolescents, which justifies the performance of this study in the context of higher education.

It is common to think that, if young people or adults have managed to enter the university, they are ready to attend it. They are able to face all the challenges of academic life and will not present difficulties in their learning process, as such would have already been manifested and overcome during the previous school period. Furthermore, it is common to consider that difficulties that interfere in learning in higher education would only be related to the lack of proper instruction. Such statements are at least simplistic, because there are several factors that can intervene in the learning of university students beyond the syllabus and the attended course. Studies, such as those by Blando (2015) and Dias *et al.* (2019), present difficulties that are faced by students that can interfere both in their learning and in their academic journey, such as: disappointment with the disciplines and curriculum of the course; disappointment with professors (due to qualification or didactics); lack of motivation to study or attend classes; unsatisfactory performance in disciplines; difficulty in relating the syllabus to the professional practice, feelings that the course does not prepare them to the labor market; perception that the course is not essential for the activity to be professionally performed; unsatisfactory experience of internship or work; difference in beliefs and values in relation to classmates and professors; incompatibility between the course structure and their lifestyle; difficulties in acquiring necessary books or materials; and so on.

In addition, factors that are linked to the relationships between the student and professors, classmates and the institution stand out. Problems that interfere in these affective relations can influence learning, contributing to academic failure and endangering the students' permanence in the university. Affective difficulties, caused by psychic conflicts, can cause social and academic inadaptations as well as behavioral disturbances. Laplanche and Pontalis (2001, p. 89, our translation) explain that psychic conflict occurs

> [...] when contrary internal requirements are opposed in the individual. The conflict can be manifest (between a desire and a moral requirement, for example, or between two contradictory feelings) or latent, and it can be expressed in a deformed way in the manifest conflict and be, in a designated way, translated into the development of symptoms, behavioral disorders, character disturbances, etc.

We understand that these psychic conflicts, in the university context, can be translated into aspects that interfere, for example, in the students' motivation

to study and learn, and they can lead to disengagement from academic activities, poor academic performance, and fails. In addition, they can lead to increased levels of stress, feelings of loneliness and non-belonging to the university and, in turn, to evasion, whether of the course, institution, or the higher education system (Ristoff, 2014).

Therefore, affectivity is a component that must be considered when it comes to learning, as it constitutes a fundamental factor of socialization. It is composed of feelings (pleasure, displeasure, sympathy, aversions, emotions, and drives) and energy elements (interests, efforts, motivations, will, and moral feelings) that sustain actions (Wadsworth, 1996; Piaget, 2014).

According to Genetic Psychology, affectivity plays a key role in intellectual development. Nevertheless, intelligence and affectivity are of different natures, in which affective and cognitive development simultaneously occur. Piaget (2014) establishes this parallel between the intellectual and affective aspects of development, supporting the idea that intelligence and affectivity are distinct elements, yet inseparable in every conduct. There is no pure affective state without cognitive elements. Cognitive factors play a role in feelings and "[…] are increasingly interrelated with intelligence." (Piaget, 2014, p. 40, our translation).

> Such *affective structures* are, in fact, isomorphic with intellectual structures and can, for example, be translated in terms of relationships. Are they not, precisely, the product of an intellectualization? Only the energy source remains purely affective: as long as there is a structure, there will be intellectualization, and ambiguity can arise from the fact that structure and functioning and affection and intelligence remain constantly inseparable in the conduct. Cognitive and affective elements are closely interpenetrated in the most varied situations. (Piaget, 2014, p. 50, highlights from the original, our translation)

There is no cognitive mechanism without affective elements, because they always intervene in intelligence. Piaget (2014) clarifies that affectivity is not only restricted to feelings and emotions, but rather comprises tendencies, wills, and motivations.

> For a student to solve an algebra problem or a mathematician to discover a theorem, there must be intrinsic interest, extrinsic interest, or a need at the beginning. While working, states of pleasure, disappointment, eagerness, as well as feelings of fatigue, effort, boredom, etc., come into play. At the end of the work, feelings of success or failure may occur […]. (Piaget, 2014, p. 39, our translation)

Considering Piaget's example, it is evident how much affective issues can serve as a stimulus or disturbance, influencing cognitive development and, in turn, the subject's learning process. Nevertheless, affectivity cannot create cognitive struc-

tures nor modify them, even if it constantly intervenes in the contents of interest. Affectivity is a necessary condition for the constitution of intelligence; however, affection alone is insufficient for the development of cognitive structures.

Piaget (2014) states that, for intelligence to develop, an engine is necessary — which is affectivity. Individuals will never solve a problem if it does not interest them. Interest, affective motivation, will be the engine that will drive the subject to act. According to Marques (2005), the motivation is structural, not being external to the subject, and will depend on structures already established, which must be fed. For example, motivation is what will sustain students' willingness to devote themselves to studies. Piaget (2003, p. 56, our translation) clarifies that the will can be "[…] reduced to the mere manifestation of energy available to the subject.". For Freitas (2003), the expression that would best translate the word will, in the sense attributed by Piaget, would be willpower. For instance, the will would take place when the individual feels torn between a tempting pleasure and duty, choosing to perform the duty.

Sometimes, the very methodology and type of evaluation adopted by the teacher may be crucial with regard to students' motivation. Thus, teachers ultimately assume an important role in the learning of their students. According to Becker and Marques (2001, p. 60, our translation),

> […] learning involves a very intense affective ambivalence: a feeling of accepting that one does not know [something], that what one knows is incomplete or inaccurate, perhaps wrong, and, on the other hand, the pleasure of discovering, creating, inventing, and finding an answer to what one is looking for.

Thus, the teacher can facilitate or hinder the learning process as well as the relationship of students (who intend to learn) with their own knowledge.

Taking this into consideration, in this study, we aim to understand how affectivity, expressed in psychic conflicts, can influence the relationship with studies in higher education. To this end, we sought to discuss the relevance of affectivity in the learning process in higher education based on Genetic Psychology. The methodology, of a qualitative nature, is based on the case study of a student seen at a support service provided to university students of a Brazilian higher education federal institution.

METHOD

The present study, of qualitative approach, is classified as a single case study conducted at a support service to university students of a Brazilian federal university. This service aims to provide undergraduate and graduate students with experiences of psychosocial development, having as main focuses learning orientation and career counseling. Overall, the interventions aim to help university students develop and improve their skills and competences seeking to provide them with a better academic experience. The case of the present study was a student seen in the modality of learning orientation. This type of service aims to assist students

in their difficulties related to studies, seeking to place them as protagonists of this process, considering the affective, cognitive, and social aspects involved towards the development of their autonomy. The learning orientation service is not prescriptive regarding the study process, as it is necessary to understand the situation of each student in relation to their difficulties, based on their own reality. This modality does not have a number of defined meetings, but it is understood that this is a relatively brief process. With regard to this study, the authors approached the case by presenting and discussing, in a theoretical-practical way, the influence of affectivity on learning in the university context.

According to Godoy (1995), the case study is characterized as research of a unit that is analyzed in depth, as it aims at the detailed investigation of an environment, of a particular situation. As highlighted by Yin (1989), the case study is considered as a way of conducting empirical research to investigate contemporary phenomena within its real-life context, in situations in which the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clearly established.

The object of analysis is based on the service provided to a student throughout 2018, totaling 15 meetings that took place weekly, with an average duration of 50 minutes each, in the individual modality. The authors sought to understand, in an integrated way, the student's specific demands related to career or learning. To participate in these meetings, students make a prior registration on the website and, subsequently, they are invited to attend an initial interview that seeks to understand why they have sought the service. Then, students are referred to effectively start attending the meetings.

Data collection was based on the written records of each meeting. As a qualitative data analysis technique, the content analysis proposed by Bardin (2006) was employed, establishing categories. These categories were created due to the student's recurrent and common statements. It is worth highlighting that no category was previously defined, in such a way to avoid influences on the interpretation and analysis of the collected data, even considering that the focus is on conflicts experienced by the student. The established categories were:

1. pleasure and duty: the conflicting relationship between studies and leisure;
2. studies and professional goals: the conflicting relationship between present and future; and
3. the university environment: the conflicting relationship between the study and professors.

The case, the analysis categories, and the results are presented next.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Maurício,[1] 28 years old, Engineering student, sought the individual modality of the service because he was dissatisfied with his poor academic performance.

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1 We changed the student's name to preserve his identity.

A first interview was conducted to clarify his initial request. Maurício mentioned his lack of motivation and difficulty studying, indicating that he had already failed in several disciplines. We also identified that he did not anticipate his transition from university to the labor market, and he was unable to think about his professional future. The case was referred to individual learning orientation, in addition to focusing on career counseling, because, although the student had not reported interest in planning his career, we raised as an initial hypothesis that his difficulties in studies were also related to a lack of perspective on the future.

In the first meetings, Maurício complained about the course and professors, stating that the final stage was more complicated, there was a high level of demand, the subjects were more complex, and professors showed little didactics and did not care about the students' learning. He reported that he felt mentally exhausted, he tried to force himself to study, but failed to do so. Moreover, he pinpointed that he felt discouraged from not achieving results in his studies. He believed that he was wasting his time studying, as he was forced to reduce leisure time.

CATEGORY 1 — PLEASURE AND DUTY: THE CONFLICTING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STUDIES AND LEISURE

In order to better understand difficulties related to the study process, Maurício was asked to answer a questionnaire about time management and to survey activities carried out throughout the week. Based on his answers, we identified that Maurício did not manage his time well: he studied only on the eve of the tests, did not plan his activities, took time to start doing the tasks, and often left studies and academic papers to the last minute. Maurício also managed to identify that he devoted a lot of time to leisure and little to his studies. His little involvement in the studies seemed to be related to a lack of interest and motivation in performing academic tasks, leading him to perform more pleasurable activities instead of studying.

Motivation is understood as one of the factors that sustains individuals' willingness to dedicate themselves to study activities. This can be identified, for example, when the student, feeling torn between a tempting pleasure and a duty, ends up opting for the later. The will appears when there is this conflict between two tendencies (one stronger than the other), and the choice for one of them is due to the desires and values of the subject (Piaget, 2014; Blando, 2015). Piaget (2014) exemplifies this type of conflict when describing a hypothetical situation of a student thinking about solving a problem or writing a text, when, at one point, he/she realizes that the rays of sunlight touching the table and the good weather are inviting for a walk. Thus, the Swiss biologist (2014, p. 243, our translation) asks: "[…] how to resist the temptation of the sun and keep performing the duty?". These are dilemmas that affect college students when they need to study.

Maurício's will to enjoy leisure time without having to worry about the demands of university life — which implies having to devote himself to academic tasks — was strong, making him unable to sustain his desire to study and perform the tasks. This will, which may be better translated into a need to pass the

disciplines, only manifested itself near the deadline for performing the academic tasks. By procrastinating the studies devoting himself to leisure activities for a long time, Maurício sought to obtain an immediate satisfaction of his pleasure without thinking about the long-term consequences, indicating a certain trait of immaturity. Moreover, he seemed to lack a desire to study, that is, something that mobilized him to act towards a goal, because "[…] it is not enough 'to be able' to perform an action, it is necessary 'to want' to accomplish it." (Brenelli, 2007, p. 106, our translation).

To better understand Maurício's relationship with studies and leisure, he was asked to represent in a circle, as in a pie chart, the time he effectively used for performing different life roles (student, worker, son, spouse/partner, time dedicated to leisure and to household chores, citizen, etc.) and how would he represent his ideal life structure. From the understanding of the current life structure, it is possible to identify the roles played and their prominence in terms of dedication and importance in relation to the others (Lassance and Sarriera, 2009). We discussed with the student the three most significant life roles for him: worker (the engineering internship he was taking), student, and the one related to spare time, in this case, specifically leisure (hanging out with friends, watching television shows, watching videos on the internet, etc.). Maurício did not seem to give so much importance to the role of student, considering college only as an obligation for entering the labor market. Based on this, we inferred that he had frustrated expectations about the role of student, because abdicating a time that could be invested in leisure seemed to require great effort, especially to achieve results that were not immediate, such as passing the disciplines, the degree in Engineering, a good job, etc.

When asked about plans for the future after college, the student emphasized only leisure, stating that he would like to take the time to watch movies, hang out with his friends, and travel. Considering this answer, we perceived how much he did not consider the other life roles in his perspective of the future, besides believing that he would find the fulfillment of his desires only in leisure.

CATEGORY 2 — STUDIES AND PROFESSIONAL GOALS: THE CONFLICTING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PRESENT AND FUTURE

The following meetings were proposed to make the student reflect on the causes and consequences of his lack of motivation with studies, seeking to establish reflections about his future. We noticed that Maurício was able to reflect on his behavior: "*I am ignoring the harm that the lack of study does to me*" (*sic*). He seemed to be gaining awareness of how much his practices as a student would directly influence his academic and professional background. However, Maurício continued to claim that he was exempt from other roles in his life due to the role of student, failing to enjoy leisure moments and declining invitations from friends to dedicate himself to studies. The aversion to the role of student is evidenced by Maurício. His conflict with student activities was a burden for him, he found no desire in study and learning, so he could not commit to it. Brenelli (2007, p. 107, our translation) points out that "[…] it only makes sense to perform an action if there is a lack, a

desire, whose satisfaction is pursued. In the absence of value, strength, or desire, the performance of the action ceases to make sense.".

In attempting to relate his demotivation with studies to his future, Maurício said that he did not really imagine himself in or worried about a long-term future. He reported that he focused only on the present, he wanted to complete the course, but did not have a clear purpose and did not plan his professional insertion after doing it. Piaget (1978) states that the idea of the future alone cannot play a role in the goals sought after by individuals, but rather their desire to achieve, in this future, a result that can be anticipated in the present. In other words, by being able to anticipate what they want, subjects can guide their actions in the present.

> Individuals must be able to anticipate in the present the result of what they want to achieve in the future, understanding the necessary steps and the involved context, as well as the possible results they can achieve, in order to reach what they want. It will serve as a guide to the actions of the individual in the present. (Blando, 2015, p. 33, our translation)

Maurício's lack of motivation with studies seemed to be related precisely to his lack of involvement with the course and the profession, that is, he had no interest in the studies because he did not have a clear purpose of what he wanted with the engineering degree. According to Freitas (2003), the individual's actions will be dictated by an interest that, when aimed at a certain purpose, will assign a value, because it involves desire. One can understand desire as the expression of lack, that is, one desires what one does not have. The individual who desires has gaps, and one way to fill these gaps derives from desire (Fernández, 2001). Maurício had difficulties incorporating the desire to be a university student (which implies performing duties, such as studying) into his life.

Considering that, on Maurício's part, there was no actual desire to be a university student, his values were ultimately unclear. Values will regulate the students' interest in terms of the goals they pursue, determining their actions. Blando (2015, p. 88, our translation) states that "[…] for subjects to have clarity about what underlies their value system, it is necessary to have an awareness of the career objectives they aspire to achieve.". This awareness on the part of students of their professional goals may mobilize them, among other aspects, to study for a test, for example. This means that the students' actions in the face of their learning process and their way of relating to their studies will be motivated by their objectives. In Maurício's case, he was unclear about what his objectives were with the undergraduate course beyond obtaining a higher education degree.

Considering this context, he was questioned, in the meeting, whether would it not be easier to drop out of the course or, then, why would it be worth staying. Maurício said that what motivated him to continue in college was the time already invested, the internship, and the importance he attributed to having a higher education degree. The student agreed that he did not identify himself with an engineer professionally. His goal with the course was mainly to be more likely to get a job. Despite verbalizing this, Maurício could not incorporate this into his life as a desire,

in fact, nor relate it to his career goals. Here we can observe the affective conflict between having more chances to getting a job (something future) and taking a higher education course (something present), which requires effort and dedication, which did not give him satisfaction.

CATEGORY 3 — THE UNIVERSITY ENVIRONMENT: THE CONFLICTING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE STUDY AND PROFESSORS

Throughout the meetings, we noticed that, for several moments, Maurício mentioned his relationship with his classmates and professors of the course and that this was something important for him. The student confirmed that, in his own words, it really "*hit him hard*" the issue of starting to think about what to do after college. He asked some friends what they thought about doing when completing the course and had vague answers, with no clear goals and some especially emphasizing leisure (examples: living in another city, traveling, watching movies, etc.). In another moment, when we resumed the post-college issue, the student said he had even forgotten about it, that it was no longer something that was worrying him. Maurício said he felt relieved to realize that his friends were in the same situation as him, without even thinking about planning the professional future. We perceived that Maurício felt supported by his friends, coming to the conclusion that it was perhaps not so important or necessary to think about the future at that moment, as a form of denial to avoid suffering. Sometimes, some university students adopt this passive stance in the face of their learning at university. These students prioritize passing the disciplines only seeking to obtain the undergraduate degree. Overall, in these cases, it seems that there is no clarity about what is intended with the academic degree, which is considered as an obligation and a mere extension of school (Blando, 2015).

Maurício considered the undergraduate course as an obligation, which made him demotivated and uninvolved in his studies. Thus, he felt that he had the duty to pass the disciplines, without worrying about whether or not he had learned from them. In those moments, when he ended up forcing himself to study, he reported that he could count on classmates to clarify doubts about exercises and academic papers, he had access to old tests from other semesters and notes of the classes and resolution of exercises made available by students who had already attended such classes. In turn, he mentioned that the professors were not available to assist the students. Hence, Maurício found support in his classmates and not in the professors, which seemed to contribute to his demotivation with his studies.

Throughout the meetings, Maurício constantly complained mainly about the professors and the lack of infrastructure of the university for preparing reports of practical disciplines. He complained that there were often unforeseen events that impaired the performance of experiments such as lack of materials, little time available for data collection during classes, the materials required for the experiments disappearance, etc. He also said that the professors did not have much didactics, were not available to clarify any doubts about the subjects, and

seemed little concerned about the difficulties reported by the students concerning the practical experiments. In addition, he stated that some professors were not open to classroom dialogue and were sometimes rude when asked about questions. According to Becker (2012), to the extent that teachers think that the students' speech — which has a pedagogical meaning — is a waste of time, they will be failing to conceive these subjects as capable of producing knowledge. Students who speak, question, dialogue with their teachers are learning not only the content, but also developing their ability to understand or increasing their ability to learn. Thus, these attitudes on the part of teachers end up frustrating the students' speech, inhibiting curiosity, the pleasure of discovering, the initiative and the desire to find answers — therefore, the desire to learn. Maurício reported how frustrated and unmotivated these situations made him, even to the point of thinking about dropping out of the course.

The relationship between teacher and student was shown to lack affection in Maurício's reports, he did not find, in the figure of the teacher, someone who was meeting his expectations and bringing solutions; on the contrary, it seemed to him that the teacher did not care about his difficulties. In turn, it is necessary to consider that the student seemed a little immature, considering that he presented difficulties playing the role of a university adult and perhaps could expect from his teachers a parental or maternal affection. In any case, this feeling that he was misunderstood by the professors and that he could not dialogue with them can impair his willingness to study and even to learn, leading the student to fail tests and to academic failure. Thus, their frustrations and anxieties lead to beliefs, such as the inability to learn and to deal with academic demands, which can contribute to students experiencing a feeling of non-belonging to the university environment (Blando, 2015).

Becker and Marques (2001) state that academic success is essential for the student to feel safe. Poor performance, in turn, would affect the students' relationship with themselves by generating feelings of failure. However, difficulties that interfere in the learning process cannot be merely considered as a problem of the student, professors, and the academic institution, but rather of the relationship established between the subject and the environment. Therefore, we deem that not only organic and inherent causes in the subject (which place the responsibility of failure only in the student) explain the learning difficulties, but there are also explanations of an interactional nature (Saravali, 2005).

CONCLUSION OF THE MEETINGS

Throughout the meetings, we sought to help Maurício reflect on his involvement in the studies and on his professional goals, based on the identification of behaviors that could be changed to deal with conflicting situations in his academic life. Initially, the student felt frustrated by having to reduce his leisure hours to dedicate himself to studies, but these factors were dissipated during the meetings as a result of a greater awareness of the future and the experienced conflicts.

Upon approaching the last meetings of the service, Maurício said he understood how much his behavior had changed, presenting the studies as a more frequent habit throughout the week compared with the first meetings, in which he studied only on the eve of the tests and left academic papers to the last minute. In addition, he said that he had decreased the time dedicated to leisure, especially the hours he spent watching videos on Youtube. He said he was "hoarding" videos, realizing it was something he was not missing. We emphasized to the student the difference between his speech in relation to the first meetings. Maurício would probably report this same situation with regret for not being able to have more time for leisure in the first meetings. We evaluated that, at this moment of closure, Maurício showed a greater desire to assume his role as a student and to dedicate himself to his studies, despite still having difficulties thinking about his professional future and having emotional issues that were not addressed in the meetings and that seemed to interfere in his learning. Hence, we recommended for him to search for psychotherapy.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

From the case study, it was evident that psychic conflicts experienced by Maurício became barriers that influenced his relationship with his studies, his academic performance, with professors and the institution, and even with the development of his career.

In various situations of Maurício's life, his central psychic conflict was between the present and the future. He knew he needed to complete his course to get a college degree, but having to be a college student with all its burdens — living in the present — was difficult, and waiting for that future made him suffer. Maurício's desire was mostly aimed at leisure, as he considered study as a mean to obtain a degree to have a well-paid job — which would allow him to satisfy his desire for leisure. This generated a series of psychic conflicts, interfering in his way of relating to studies. His personal satisfaction derived from leisure and not from studying, which was experienced as a painful obligation. Therefore, dedicating himself to studies became something very unpleasant. This was also reflected in his relationship with classmates and teachers. As for professors, the lack of preparation to understand what is happening to their students has served (and this is clear in Maurício's case) to reinforce the somewhat childish relationship between teacher and student, which does not help overcoming the model of school relationship of distance and submission.

The provision of the service for undergraduate students has shown that there are academics, such as Maurício, who enter the university, but do not place value on higher education for their lives. In general, these students have difficulties envisioning their professional future, which reinforces the importance of higher education institutions being aware of these issues, in such a way to help students by offering services focused on psychopedagogical and career issues.

The learning process is influenced by relationships of affection, but also by the students' willpower to experience and overcome difficulties that arise in their university journey to find a balance between academic, professional, and personal demands. Moreover, affective difficulties may not only be reflected in poor academic performance, but also in psychic suffering. By experiencing a feeling of non-belonging to the academic environment due to their difficulties, pursuing studies can become increasingly difficult, putting at risk their stay at university and their professional future.

From this case study, we conclude that, among the many factors involved in the teaching and learning process, the affective element cannot be overlooked. It is not simply a question of promoting harmonious relationships, but of creating institutional and teacher training mechanisms to welcome and help students deal with their conflicts rather than simply postponing them or trying to make the university a space of false neutrality.

Quality higher education presupposes an active behavior marked by commitment, autonomy, dedication, and focus on the future. To this end, students must go beyond the conflicting adolescence, but they shall not do it by themselves. The institution as a whole (agencies and individuals) should be responsible for collaborating to the development of this new attitude.

Therefore, the role of affectivity in higher education is fundamental, both in the relationship between students and professors and in the relationships with their peers and the university. The existing research gap in this area is a challenge to be overcome by the academy.

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