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WORKSHOPS ABOUT CURRICULUM PREPARATION AND BEHAVIOR IN INTERVIEWS

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to describe the experience of five workshops about curriculum preparation and behavior in interviews done with college students from a public university. The article describes the proposed activities and participants' involvement in the discussion about the issue. Workshops aimed to offer information about how selection processes work and to explain the function of curriculum and interviews during this process. The participants were 49 undergraduate and graduate students from different courses. They had questions about which information they should write on their curriculum and showed feelings of insecurity about taking part in admission interviews because of their previous bad experiences. The workshops were an opportunity for students to understand the purpose of a selection process and share their questions and experiences about this subject. This report may be useful to professionals that intend to do similar activities and can help students who seek this kind of information but do not find them.

Keywords: college students, selection processes, curriculum, admission interview.

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INTRODUCTION

Joining an undergraduate or graduate course, getting internships and jobs are part of life. These situations frequently involve engaging in selective processes that include a set of specific methods and techniques for strategic people management (BANOV, 2015, MIRANDA; PELLÓN; PÉREZ, 2004). Recruitment (i.e., means of finding and attracting candidates to available positions in organizations) and staff selection practices are essential in an organization. Currently, they are intended to hire professionals connected to the strategic needs of the company, not only seeking the simple filling of a position, as it did in the early days of these processes (BANOV, 2015; CHIAVENATO, 2014). The era of knowledge demands greater capacity for innovation, agility, and flexibility, what makes working positions more complex and requires that the human capital of organizations is represented by the quality of their talents (FREITAG et al., 2014). Managers guide their practices with this philosophy (SOUZA; BASTOS, 2008).

In general, the selection process seeks to map knowledge, skills, attitudes, personality characteristics and other factors of the candidate's personal, professional and academic life, which are linked to the possibilities of adapting to the organization and to the future position to be filled. Many organizations differ in complexity and structure of their selection systems since they vary according to the identity of the promoting organization and the qualification of the selecting professionals (or team). However, selection processes usually use the following techniques: curricular analysis, psychological tests, situational tests, group dynamics, interviews (BANOV, 2015, FRANÇA, 2009, KESSLER; STRASBURG, 2013, PONTES, 2014) and, recently, using online social networks is a tendency. Although human contact is not replaced by this technology, it can be used as additional information to the selection stages, and it is costless, has a wide range and provides quick information (GOMES; SCHERER; LOBLER, 2012). On the other hand, analyzing the Curriculum Vitae (CV), i.e., the resume, and conducting interviews seem to be the most used techniques by organizations to hire professionals available in the labor market or to select trainees (FRANÇA, 2009, MIRANDA; PELLÓN; PÉREZ, 2004).

The CV is one of the most important documents in a professional's life. Regardless of the individual's job option, this document is the cover letter that will offer the selector important information about one's professional and educational history. In addition, it is through the CV that the selector identifies the candidate's professional goals and seeks to align it, when possible, with the strategic business objectives. The correct elaboration of the CV, its organization, level of detail, clarity, and relevance of information, among other factors, will influence the selection process. The importance of the CV explains the number and variety of guidelines found in different Human Resources websites and in scientific articles in Administration and Psychology fields (KESSLER; STRASBURG, 2013, MIRANDA; PELLÓN; PÉREZ, 2004,).

The interview is another important technique in the selection process. During the interview, the selector will evaluate the candidate's qualification, potential, and motivation to join the organization. It can be performed more than once and by more than one professional selector, whenever it is deemed necessary to collect or clarify information about the candidate. Different types of staff selection interviews are used to obtain information from candidates and this variety characterizes the range of possibilities around strategic management (KESSLER; STRASBURG, 2013; PONTES, 2014).

Due to the complexity of the selection process and the myths that involve this moment of entry into a new organization, the candidates tend to experience different expectations and doubts. Questions concerning what to write in the CV, what to say in the interview, what to ask

and how to dress up are common. Individuals sometimes feel disoriented and may or may not seek help. In fact, França (2009) notes that many of these issues result of ignorance or a distorted view of reality that involves the process of selecting people in their most varied contexts. This happens because information and discussions about career planning, entering the labor market, its characteristics and the possible challenges to be faced are not present or are fragile in the curriculum of basic education (MARINHO-ARAÚJO, 2010) or higher education (BRASIL et al., 2012).

The support offered to students by the undergraduate curriculum is often insufficient to prepare for the entry into the labor market (TEIXEIRA; GOMES, 2004). Often, higher education focuses on the transmission of theoretical and technical knowledge to students, especially linked to their areas of training. Some higher education institutions may not offer adequate support for the development of other interpersonal skills that are necessary, for example, in pursuit of an internship or postgraduate programs (MELO; BORGES, 2007). The student can be oriented, or at least be offered the experience of a thoughtful process on how internship, research and extension experiences can be aligned with professional, academic, and/or labor market demands. The construction of a professional profile that is coherent and able to face the competitiveness of the labor market or academic (post-graduate) begins during the undergraduate course (CARVALHO et al., 2013).

In order to help students of a public university in the state of Rio Grande do Sul/Brazil to understand some characteristics of the selection of personnel, the extension project "Professional Orientation and Career Planning Workshops" offered workshops entitled "curriculum and interview behavior" to the students. The workshops provided information and suggestions to participants on the preparation of CVs and tips on the purpose of hiring interviews, the role of the interviewer, the role of the candidate, and other demands that appeared in the meetings. The workshops did not seek to give infallible formulas for curriculum development or behavior in interviews, but to support reflection on these processes and facilitate the construction of their CV and performance in interviews. This is because knowing how selective processes function can help to reduce the anxiety of candidates in those moments since they will be better prepared to know what to expect from the selection situations. Thus, this study reports on the experience of conducting these workshops, the proposed activities and the involvement of the participants in the discussion on the theme.

METHOD

The extension project “Professional Orientation and Career Planning Workshops” is linked to the Postgraduate Program in Psychology of a university in the state of Rio Grande do Sul/Brazil. The project was conducted between the years 2011 and 2014, offering workshops on different matters related to professional orientation and career planning for high school students and undergraduates in the municipality where the institution was located (OLIVEIRA et al., to be published; OLIVEIRA et al., 2014). The schools and the university evaluated the offered workshops and picked the workshop(s) that they considered best suited to their demands and the public. The workshops’ arrangements (day, time and place) were agreed between facilitators, management and local teachers. The aim of the workshops was to facilitate reflections and the development of skills and competencies in professional orientation and career development for the participants.

This paper describes the information about five workshops for “curriculum development and behavior in interviews”, which took place in the year 2012 (one workshop), 2013 (two workshops) and 2014 (two workshops). In total, 49 students from different undergraduate and graduate courses from a public university located in the state of Rio Grande do Sul/Brazil participated in these activities.

The activity was conducted in partnership with the student support department of the institution in which the project was carried out. This department announced the workshops through the University portal on the Internet and the department’s page on Facebook. Entries were made through a virtual form. Only 20 students per workshop were enrolled, as this was the maximum number of participants allowed each time the activity was developed. This limit was set to ensure the effectiveness of the proposal and to allow room for public participation and answering of questions. Those interested students who could not enroll due to lack of spots were invited to attend the next workshop held on the same theme. This invitation occurred by e-mail.

All workshops were held in the University’s premises, in meetings lasting about one hour and thirty minutes each (between 5:30 and 7:00 p.m.). We chose this time interval because both students of day courses as students of evening classes tended to not be involved in Semester tasks during this time gap.

The workshops were elaborated and performed by undergraduate and graduate students in Psychology from the same public university to which the project was linked. These students were supervised by a professor of the Psychology Department at the University. Facilitators used a PowerPoint presentation to guide the workshops. The topics and activities for the workshops were constructed from the literature on the matter. Videos were also used as an auxiliary tool to the discussion. These videos were chosen according to the theme to be worked on and accessed from a free public access website. Table 1 lists the topics covered in the workshops, the purpose of each topic and the activities carried out in order to achieve those objectives.

Table 1- Workshop topics, objectives, and activities

Topic	Subtopic	Objectives	Activities
Selective process	What it is	Present the aim of selective processes	Explaining the theme.
	How it works	Demonstrate the stages of a selective process, from the job vacancy to its closure with hiring.	
CV Resume	What it is	Explain the utility of a CV	Elaborate own CV to raise questions about how to do it, which were answered by facilitators. Exhibition of the video: "Dicas para um currículo campeão" (Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jl7KYtdN23Q).
	What should be on it	Explore which items should be on a CV and how they should be presented	
	What should not be on it	Reflect on common mistakes when preparing a CV	
	How to send the CV	Think about ways for sending the CV to the selectors	
Interview	What it is	Clarify the process and objectives of interviews	Exhibition of the video: "A temível entrevista de emprego" (Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dcCLIRvoXUc).
	Common questions	Discuss what is commonly asked during interviews so participants may reflect on possible answers.	
	Proper clothing	Give advice about the personal image at interviews	

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Most of the students enrolled in the workshop presented an initial expectation related to the elaboration of curriculum and the behavior in interviews in a context predominantly linked to the graduate courses (masters and/or doctorate). These students asked for guidance on the elaboration and maintenance of the Lattes Curriculum and strategies for the reduction of anxiety during the interview with the Professors. Participants reported some doubts about the Lattes Curriculum and related some anxiogenic experiences related to interviews for graduate courses. The students indicated they hope that the University would offer training on these subjects, since, commonly, it encourages the continuity of the studies (research and extension) but does not prepare the student behaviorally for the competition of vacancies in a competitive environment of graduate courses. The facilitators acknowledged the importance of the demand presented by the students but clarified that the purpose of the workshops was to discuss and provide guidance on the main selection techniques for labor recruitment (internships and/or formal jobs), such as analysis of curriculum and interview (FRANÇA, 2009, MIRANDA; PELLÓN; PÉREZ, 2004). The facilitators indicated that they would inform the demand for the sector that had requested the workshop so that, if possible, some strategy could be promoted to accommodate the interest of the students.

The first topic addressed in the workshops was the conceptualization of staff selection, as well as the current trend of valuing people in the organizational context and the competitiveness of the labor market (CHIAVENATO, 2015). Reflections on the obstacles that permeate the transition from the University to the labor market have characterized the discussion. Among these obstacles is the greater demand for professional qualification, greater competitiveness in the search for jobs and difficult entry into the labor market (complex selection processes that

seek the best professional profiles for a diversity of profiles and business positions) (MELO; BORGES, 2007).

Entering the labor market presents evaluation methods and techniques that seek to identify the candidate's professional profile (cognitive, technical, behavioral and performance potential) and competencies that are in accordance with the profile of the open position (FRANÇA, 2009). The alignment between these profiles increases the probability of better performance and professional growth within the organization because the motivation for work covers the aspects of the organizational situation: the individual, the work and the organization (NARS; FERREIRA; FISCHER, 2013). The tendency to search for harmony between the profile of the candidate and the profile of the position highlights the importance of the selection process, since this can help to identify the candidate who meets the characteristics and demands of the position and who is the most appropriate for the organization (PASSOS; CARVALHO; SARAIVA, 2011; FRANÇA, 2009; PIERRY, 2007).

It was emphasized during the workshop that the selection process does not always seek people who reveal knowledge, skills or abilities at their highest rates. The selection of personnel prefers people who present a profile that relates to the position's profile (knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes) and the organization's profile (culture) (CHIAVENATO, 2015; CORADINI; FRANÇA, 2009; MURINI, 2009; PIERRY, 2007). Currently, there is a business trend of valuing people. Organizations are built by groups of people (a set of diverse knowledge, skills, and competencies) that constitute their intellectual capital and function as engines for their development (FREITAG et al., 2014). In this sense, human behavior is equally valued as technical knowledge, since for the company to function, people with flexible behaviors and attitudes are as important as people with a high technical knowledge. The technique is possible to be taught and trained. On the other hand, human behavior and flexible attitudes constitute the professional's personality and, therefore, are more difficult to be shaped by the organization (CHIAVENATO, 2014; FRANÇA, 2009).

It was discussed with the group of students that staff selection is a broad process that uses different techniques to capture the profile of the candidate and identify their potential to adapt to the position and to the company's profile. The selection process must be ethical and responsible (SANCHÉZ, 2012). The process of analyzing the profile of the candidate is carried out by compiling all the information collected and the evaluation is commonly expressed in a written opinion. In this document, the candidate is considered, at the time of selection, as "indicated" or "not indicated" or "fit" and "not fit" for the function. The choice by the "ideal" candidate is sometimes decided by the interviewer himself or another person in the organization, usually the manager, who receives the written opinion and makes his decision (FRANÇA, 2009; GODOY; NORONHA, 2005). During this moment in the workshop, the students recognized the complexity of the process of entry in the labor market and had doubts about the stages and the evaluation criteria used by the selectors. These questions were illustrative and allowed facilitators to describe the main steps involved in a selection process: recruitment, curriculum analysis, interviews, groups, specific knowledge tests, and psychological tests.

The first reflection was related to the fact that the stages of the selection process do not have a static order and vary according to the characteristics and culture of the organization's people management. The selection process can include stages of interviews (individual and/or group), tests (specific knowledge, situational and practical), group dynamics and application of psychological tests (personality or specific skills) (CHIAVENATO, 2014; CORADINI; MURINI, 2009; RITOSSA, 2009). However, in all organizations, regardless of the culture of people management,

the selection process begins before the first face-to-face contact between candidate and selector, through recruitment activities (internal, external and/or mixed) (CHIAVENATO, 2015; CORADINI; MURINI, 2009).

It was explained that recruitment is the initial phase to fill a vacancy in which candidates are searched to fill the company's necessity. (MARRAS, 2004). This search may occur in the company's databases (internal recruitment), outside of it, through search and advertising in other companies, universities, technical courses, companies specialized in (re)placement in the market (external recruitment) or both (BOHLANDER; SHERMAN; SCOTT, 2010; CHIAVENATO, 2014; CORADINI; MURINI, 2009; FRANÇA, 2009). During this process, the CV is an important tool, since it portrays the professional profile of the candidate and allows the selector to identify characteristics that may be in accordance with what the company seeks (BOHLANDER; SHERMAN; SCOTT, 2010).

The workshop continued with discussions about drafting and submitting a CV. It was suggested to the participants that the main topics of the CV were: identification data (full name, nationality, date of birth, address, telephone, and e-mail), description of academic background, professional and internship experience, as well as the description of events and publications. The workshop facilitators said that the main elements and the construction of the CV depended on the intended selective process. For example, a CV for the selection for a master's degree course could differ from the one presented for obtaining a job in an organization. At that time, it was also discussed with the participants about the presentation and layout of this document. It was pointed out that the CV can be understood as the gateway to the organization, as it is one way for personal and professional presentation for a position and is often the only material available for a first screening (BOHLANDER; SHERMAN; SCOTT, 2010; RITOSSA, 2009; SECO et al., 2009). Participants were advised that it is in this document that the interviewer will identify whether the candidate meets the minimum requirements of the company and the position (BOHLANDER; SHERMAN; SCOTT, 2010; RITOSSA, 2009). Thus, the candidate must identify in his/her academic/professional trajectory the experiences that are closest to the tasks, characteristics, and knowledge required by the position for which the candidate will compete (FRANÇA, 2009).

It was discussed with the participants that the curriculum should be presented objectively, clearly and without grammar errors. The topics that should be included in the curriculum are usually personal data, contact possibilities, objectives, schooling/academic trajectory, professional and/or academic experiences, languages and extra courses. The CV can be sent by e-mail, mailbox, or even delivered to the company by the candidate himself. However, it is necessary to know which of these possibilities of receipt the company works so that the material is well received by the organization (FRANÇA, 2009; RITOSSA, 2009).

A common question among workshop participants concerned professional experience. The students said they did not know what to put on the CV when they are going to apply for a job in which they do not have any proven professional experience that relates to the characteristics of the position. The participants were advised by the facilitators to focus on a good presentation of the curriculum, with clear and objective information about the academic formation and participation of curricular and extracurricular activities related to the position or activities that presented similar tasks to what was being requested by the company. For example, it was recommended to print the CV on white paper; it was also suggested careful handling and presentation (not wrinkling) so that it could give the best possible impression to the selector. In addition, it was suggested to organize the content in items instead of using cursive text to facilitate the identification of the information by the selector (CHIAVENATO, 2014).

The participants were oriented to include technical and superior education, as well as graduate courses, indicating the respective institution where they were studied and the year of beginning-completion. It was also suggested to include activities such as participation in junior companies, in internships, in research or extension projects that were related to the desired position. It was observed that the participants frequently presented doubts and anxieties when approached this last item since they believed that because they did not have professional experience in the desired function, they would hardly be selected. It was discussed with them that internship experiences and participation in curricular and extracurricular activities related to the intended function could indicate to the selector the level of practical knowledge of the candidate, as well as his level of commitment and engagement with the training (CHIAVENATO, 2014).

All the information given about CV during the workshops was recapitulated through a practical activity. One of these activities consisted in the elaboration of the CV itself. Each participant received a sheet and was instructed to organize the information about his or her professional career, according to what had already been presented in the workshop so far (organize in items: identification data, academic training, professional activities, etc.). This activity raised questions about “what” and “how” to mention certain activity of one’s experience. These doubts were discussed with the group, in order to raise different opinions and promote a reflexive process among participants. For example, questions such as “What does this experience communicate?”, “How does it relate to the intended job?”, “What can I talk about it in an interview?” could help in this process of reflection. At the end of this activity, students took home a sheet with suggested topics for organizing information. The other activity was based on the discussion of videos about interviews with professionals specialized in the recruitment and selection of staff of large companies.

The facilitators made clear to the candidates that although the curriculum is an important tool for the applicant’s initial analysis, it does not carry enough information to provide a true view of the candidate. Therefore, curricular analysis tends to be combined with another important technique of the selection process: the interview (CHIAVENATO, 2015; CORADINI; MURINI, 2009; RITOSSA, 2009). The hypotheses generated during the analysis of a curriculum are confirmed by the interviewer in the interview (BOHLANDER; SHERMAN; SCOTT, 2010). The interview is the main tool used during a selection process and the exchange of information provided at that time is largely responsible for the hiring decision (CORADINI; MURINI, 2009; GODOY; NORONHA, 2005; KESSLER, 2013; MARRAS, 2004; SECO et al., 2009). Interviews may occur individually or collectively (FRANÇA, 2009), and focus on the candidate’s skills (knowledge, abilities, and attitudes) (PASSOS; CARVALHO; SARAIVA, 2011; PIERRY, 2007). The main areas investigated during a selection interview are: career development, professional relationship, family environment, personal interests, social relationships, future expectations and expectations regarding the company and the position (FRANÇA, 2009; KESSLER, 2013; LEVASHINA et al., 2014, RITOSSA, 2009).

Participants were reminded of the importance of collecting information about the organization they are looking for before the interview (on the Internet or with people working at the institution) and of showing the interviewer their knowledge about the company. Knowing some information about the company, its mission, vision, and values can indicate a real motivation to join the specific institution (CHIAVENATO, 2015). This search for information is related to image management during the selection process. It can demonstrate levels of commitment, interest, and motivation for the job and the company. This behavior may make a good impression on the interviewer (GRISCI; CARVALHO, 2004).

During the discussions about interviews, some participants reported previous negative experiences during job interviews. The main reports were the presence of several interviewers

who guided the moment as an inquiry; interviewers who did not have an organized interview structure; lack of clarity about the stages of the selection process; absence of return and disregard of the interviewer for the candidate's anxiety and expectation. These reports were welcomed by the facilitators through the discussion about the technical and behavioral weaknesses of some interviewers. Once again, the role of the interviewer was explained, which is to select a competent candidate through relevant questions, according to the position, and to provide information about the organization and the job, so that the candidate may evaluate whether it meets his/her personal and professional expectations (DAVIS; HERRERA, 2013). Any conduct that deviates from this focus, such as the situations mentioned by the participants, may denounce lack of ability of the selector and ethical fragility in the selective process (CHIAVENATO, 2014; SANCHÉZ, 2012).

After hearing the frustration demand of some participants regarding the experiences of previous selections, the facilitators worked on the importance of physical appearance and verbal and corporal language and how this appearance impacts the interviewer's impression of the candidate. The participants reported experiences in which they could observe colleagues who presented inappropriate postures during selective processes (delay, improper clothes and accessories, slurred speech, among others) and the poor impression formed of these people. The facilitators showed the participants that the impressions generated on them could also be the interviewer's impressions and explained how this could harm the candidate's image.

Image management is the process through which people provide others with some information about themselves by observable behavior and language (GRISCI; CARVALHO, 2004). During a selection interview, it is expected to offer clear and objective answers so that the interviewer can understand the candidate's personal and professional trajectory. Also, it is important to sit and speak with proper posture to present responsibility, professional commitment and respect to the moment of evaluation (GRISCI; CARVALHO, 2004; NAIM et al., 2015; RITOSSA, 2009).

Another relevant aspect is the physical appearance (RITOSSA, 2009). It is necessary to be careful with clothes, accessories, skin care, hair and nails, personal hygiene and makeup (RITOSSA, 2009). In the organizational context, care with clothing can represent an investment in the career (GRISCI; CARVALHO, 2004). However, attention should be paid to the flexibility of these tips, since the style of clothing, accessories, hair and nails color, for example, may vary from company to company (RITOSSA, 2009).

It is common for candidates to seek information and image management strategies (clothing and behaviors) to apply in selection interviews. This search often occurs on the internet and in some specialized literature. However, it is important not to reproduce these behaviors at any cost through decorated and supposedly perfect speeches. It is necessary that the candidate offers reliable information about his/her lifestyle since after hiring, the company expects the professional to meet the expectations created during the selection process. If this does not occur, his/her professional and career development may be compromised (GRISCI; CARVALHO, 2004).

The facilitators then offered participants some tips on using clothes, accessories, skin care, hair and nails, personal hygiene and makeup. After all, there is evidence that the first impression actually interferes with the overall assessment of the candidate in the interview (NAIM et al., 2015). However, the participants were given flexibility regarding these tips, since the style of clothing, accessories, hair and enamel color, for example, may vary according to the situation and business identity (RITOSSA, 2009). Participants cited examples of local businesses and specific professions that require classic styles and others that require casual clothing. This opens space for flexibility of the personal image according to the position and style of the organization and the demystification of styles considered right and wrong.

After the presentation of the planned ideas for the workshops, the facilitators clarified to the participants that the hiring decision is based on the analysis of the information gathered during the entire selection process. The participants also responded to an evaluation form to identify the opinion about the workshop and the main benefits brought by the discussions. Participants reported that the workshop was able to address relevant points of CV writing and interview behavior. They suggested the creation of workshops with an extended duration so that the issue may be addressed in a more detailed way since they perceive the lack of this type of information in the University.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The workshops described in this paper were designed to provide basic information on the operation of a staff selection process, as well as on the elaboration of CV and behavior in interviews in the context of the labor market. Participants' reports indicate their insecurity in evaluation situations, especially when qualification and professional experience are at stake. Unsuccessful experiences in previous selective processes of students or close people seem to contribute to a fear of this type of evaluation and the consequent desire to know the right answer during an interview or the "recipe" of being selected to a job. The workshops did not offer these answers to the participants, because they do not exist. However, they have fulfilled their role of demystifying some selection techniques by explaining their functioning rather than by providing behavioral models. According to feedback from the participants, the workshops offer greater clarity about the selection process and the guidelines that guide practice, reducing prejudices and taboos that characterize staff selections.

Like any proposal, the realization of the workshops described also has limitations. One of these limitations refers to the duration (approximately 90 minutes) of each workshop. This period was sufficient to address specific information on selective processes and two of the main techniques used in the selection of personnel, as well as student participation. However, it did not allow an in-depth discussion of other techniques, such as tests, group dynamics and the use of social networks, also common in internship and employment selections.

The handling of participants' expectations regarding the content that would be discussed in the workshops was another limiting aspect. The students were from different phases of university education and had varied experiences and objectives regarding selective processes, such as admission to graduate courses, research teams, and internships. Thus, the content offered by the workshops was not fully in line with the interests of the participants. However, it was sought, as far as possible, to link the content discussed to the demands of the group and it was reassessed how the workshop was being offered and advertised to the target audience of the University. Likewise, the facilitators sought to return this information to the University so that the institution could try to meet this expectation.

Although this initial divergence of expectations existed, the workshops were a space for university students to understand the functioning of a selection process, as well as to share doubts and experiences about the insertion in the labor market, a subject that often interests and concerns academics of different courses and majors. It is not common for universities to offer this type of activity to students. In that case, this discussion and orientation is the responsibility of the teachers' initiative. So, this experience report can be useful for professionals who intend to carry out similar actions, or even for students who do not find options for activities like this and seek more information about this subject.

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