

UNIVERSITY MANAGEMENT DURING THE PANDEMIC PERIOD: STRATEGIC ACTIONS

GESTÃO UNIVERSITÁRIA DURANTE O PERÍODO PANDÊMICO: AÇÕES ESTRATÉGICAS

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ABSTRACT

On March 12, 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic was announced worldwide, and as a result, universities had to adapt to the new reality. There were several difficulties faced in the adaptation process, both by professors and students. Universities took restrictive measures and adapted the teaching model to the online modality, as social isolation proved necessary. For decision-making to be assertive, educational institutions relied heavily on strategic planning in order to ensure the continuity of the educational cycle. Thus, the general objective of this research is to identify which strategic actions were adopted by federal universities in the Center-West region of Brazil in 2020 during the Covid-19 pandemic period. Methodologically, the descriptive and qualitative study was based on documental analysis of the management reports of the UFMS, UFMT, UNB, UFG and UFGD universities for the year 2020. The main results show that there was a reassessment of management, adapting its strategic planning to the in the context of the pandemic, in the studies found, the similarity of the actions taken is evident. It is concluded that there was a special care, by all universities, with students, from the release of financial resources to mental health. There was also a look at the teaching staff and servers, in which resources and training were made available so that they could carry out their activities.

Keywords: Strategic Actions. University Management. Universities. Covid-19.

RESUMO

Em 12 de março de 2020, foi anunciado a nível mundial, a pandemia Covid-19, e em decorrência, as universidades tiveram que se adaptar à nova realidade. Várias foram as dificuldades enfrentadas no processo de adaptação, tanto por parte dos docentes quanto dos discentes. As universidades tomaram medidas restritivas e adequaram o modelo de ensino para a modalidade on-line, visto que o isolamento social se mostrou necessário. Para as tomadas de decisões serem assertivas, as instituições de ensino embasaram-se fortemente no planejamento estratégico a fim de garantir a continuidade do ciclo educacional. Deste modo o objetivo geral desta pesquisa é identificar quais ações estratégicas foram adotadas pelas universidades federais da região Centro-Oeste do Brasil no ano de 2020 no período da pandemia Covid-19. Metodologicamente, o estudo descritivo e qualitativo baseou-se em análise documental dos relatórios de gestão das universidades UFMS, UFMT, UNB, UFG e UFGD do ano de 2020. Os principais resultados evidenciam que houve uma reavaliação da gestão, adequando seu planejamento estratégico para o contexto da pandemia, nos estudos encontrados é evidente a similaridade das ações adotadas. Conclui-se que houve um cuidado em especial, por todas as universidades, com os discentes, desde a liberação de recursos financeiros à saúde mental. Houve também um olhar para a equipe docente e servidores, na qual foram disponibilizados recursos e treinamentos para que pudessem dar andamento em suas atividades.

Palavras-chave: Ações Estratégicas. Gestão Universitária. Universidades. Covid-19.

1 INTRODUCTION

The federal universities have adopted a management model strongly based on the strategic planning aimed at the evaluation of results to analyze the efficiency in their actions, reaching out the excellence in the service provision to the community in order to contribute to the growing of the country (SOARES, 2018). One used the Institutional Development Plan (PDI) as tool to define the guiding guidelines of the institution actions, which are made of aims, goals and indicators that will convey the process of development of the university for a certain period.

In addition to the daily necessities of management decisions should be timely in a pandemic scenery so as to suit the planning and to belittle the the impact of the results. On march 12th, the World Health Organization (WHO) officially declared the Covid-19 as a pandemic, and according to this the education field has been experienced significant changes. In order to reduce these effects, the strategic planning suited to the new unstable situation has performed a fundamental role in the continuation of the educational processes. The uncertainty of the educational situation has bade universities' managers to find efficient alternatives and calculate best scenarios to concentrate specific educational actions and results of success in the future (REBUKHA; POLISHCHUK, 2020), mainly to aid disadvantaged students (SILVA et al., 2021).

According to Bianchi, Backes and Giongo (2006), in times of new challenges, the organization has to be prepared to take efficient decisions, for such decisions might risk affecting its continuity. Thus, one realizes the importance of the superior teaching institutions to adapt their strategic planning (FERNANDES *et al.*, 2015) so as to reach the objectives even in unstable situation such as the one of the pandemic, to guarantee efficient and continuous learning. A clear administration is a crucial factor in times of crisis and limpid decisions involving the main agents became advantageous, causing a sense of presence in addition to a safe management of the situation however difficult it might be for the whole community (AGASISTI; SONCIN, 2021).

That said, comes the interest to identify the actions adopted by the universities aiming at showing how several brazilian federal institutions could manage to continue the teaching without loss of efficiency; including the measures adopted during the experienced scenario in order to bypass the difficulties found and that might support other institutions or forthcoming researches to reach their objectives whilst providers of knowledge, precursors of brazilian

science and trainer of good citizens. Thus, one raised the next question: Which were the strategic actions adopted by federal universities of Brazil's midwest region before pandemic at the year of 2020?

The aim of this research is to perform a survey of the strategic actions adopted by the federal universities of Brazil's midwest region at the year of 2020 before the pandemic period of Covid-19. This region was surveyed for presenting a potential advance of scientific and technology natures in relation to the others (ABRITA; SILVA, 2019). Hence, one demonstrates theoretically how several federal universities managed to proceed with the teaching without prejudice of the education efficiency.

Due to the new situation created by the Covid-19 pandemic wherein many spheres of life were affected, and understanding that the education maintenance is of extreme importance during this period, the universities had to adapt to this new daunting reality. The bibliographic survey performed shows that many were the strains and changes experienced by the university members, for instance, the lack of structure to implement distance learning, financial issues, and also the difficulty of interaction amongst students and lecturers (DOGAR et al., 2020; KELLY; JOHNSTON; MATTHEWS, 2020; ANDO, 2021; YANG; HUANG, 2021).

2 UNIVERSITIES IN THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC PERIOD

On march 12th 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) officially declared the Covid-19 as a pandemic, and as consequence, the education sector has suffered significant changes. Most of the countries closed shops, schools and every service that were not taken as essential so as to refrain virus propagation. Thus, the UNESCO recommended the adoption of digital platforms to continue education; this being one of the main priorities during the pandemic outbreak. According to Cuaton (2020), several institutions of the North Hemisphere have decided to anticipate summer vacations for the months of march and april 2020 instead of june and july 2020 and this decision has granted mental and phycological health as for students as for lecturers, who were in a situation of tension with personal responsibilities due to changes caused by the pandemic. According to Dobrilă (2020) there was a deferral of teaching activities in the first weeks so as to mitigate the virus propagation and to reassemble the activities to online mode. Accordingly, in the first weeks of quarentine, the lecturers staff had to adapt themselves to the new changes by establishing remote conection with the students. (MOLCHANOVA; KOVTONIUK; SAVYCH, 2020).

Most of the institutions of superior learning has chosen to replace their presential activities to the online mode by using tools to undertake the classes in synchronous and asynchronous form. The preferred tools to this modality of learning are: ZOOM, Discord, tik.io, Google Hangouts, YouTube, moodle e Skype. Due to these new demands, several universities started to supply technical support to aid lecturers and students in using digital platforms. (MOLEA; NĂSTASĂ, 2020; GONÇALVES; SOUSA; PEREIRA, 2020; PERROTTA, 2021).

Another actions performed by the institutions consist on the loan of notebooks and aids to support financial issues (KELLY; JOHNSTON; MATTHEWS, 2020). In addition, it was ascertained that phycological, technological, methodological supports as well as the professional skilling of the lecturers are of extreme importance to lessen the negative impact of the rapid changes of the educactional process and to guarantee an efficient online education. The educational process organization needs the cooperation of lecturers and students to be efficient , for it involves innovative learning activities and it takes the using of modern technologies (ALMAZOVA et al., 2020).

Even aiming at ensuring the right to study, despite the health crisis, every decision taken by the universities were embraced by the inner community. (GASISTI; SONCIN, 2021). Nonetheless, there was a struggling from students and lecturers to adapt to the new scenario as reveals the results of several surveys. There are learning issues with online methodology such as low efficiency, inability to concentrate for long periods and scarce discussion between mates. (KABANOVA et al., 2020; RAAPER; BROWN, 2020).

Thus, in this new scenery, according to Kabanova et al. (2020, p. 13) ” lecturers and students gained new experiences, tried the possibilities of a different form of learning and could perform online work. The transition to distance learning education during the pandemic has become a ’ stress test’ to the system of superior teaching”. Even performing changes there was a struggle from students and lecturers to adapt to the new scenery. Usually, the difficulties raised were: scant financial conditions, lack of structure to proceed studies in oline mode, issues with internet connection, overexposion to the screen and issues on the communication between students and lecturers (DOGAR et al., 2020).

Students’ financial conditions were presented as one of the most prominent issues in the articles and many students have no capability or financial stability to acquire the necessary equipments to the transition of teaching modality; mainly students who come from humble

and numerous families. (KELLY; JOHNSTON; MATTHEWS, 2020; ANDO, 2021; YANG; HUANG, 2021).

Some of the barriers endured by the students were the difficulties of communication due to the *webcam* in off mode, sound disturbance made by noises, another family members or roommates. The lack of digital abilities as well as of interactivity of online activities might represent problematic barriers in the process of transition to online learning (MOLEA; NĂSTASĂ, 2020), considering that connectivity is the prerequisite to the online education services; the first and most important restriction is the lack of availability of internet services at students' residences.

According to Dogar et al. (2020, p. 12) "The lack of internet connectivity represented one of the greatest challenges raised by students. The issue was not exclusive of rural areas and the bad quality of connectivity was taken as one of the greatest issues by students of urban areas." Therefore, one realizes the importance to provide technological tools as well as online support for students, mainly to those of low income as pointed in the studies of Raaper and Brown (2020).

In addition to difficulties presented by the students, the lecturers staff has also suffered with the pandemic situation. The challenges met by the lecturers staff in the study performed by (MOLCHANOVA et al., 2020) were the lack of access to libraries, for universities did not scan the books and in order to manage the situation, the lecturers sought to find in another collections of granted access the support to adapt the content of the course to the new online method. Furthermore, it is important to mention that the workload and stress of the lecturers have increased due to the misunderstood communication from authorities management. Along with that, they had their workload expanded so as to adapt to the new reality and had to deal with difficulties on account of the unstable connectivity to internet and oldfashioned equipment at home (ALMAZOVA et al. 2020; PERROTTA, 2021).

One also has to consider that "the potential issues concerning the transformation of the curriculum in online format are connected both with pedagogic and university management questions." (ALMAZOVA et al., 2020, p. 9). Therefore, lecturers became the main protagonists in this process of learning modality transition by recasting their pedagogic techniques, counting on the support of other people involved in this change to adapt the pedagogic didactics to necessary technology, without prejudice of the teaching quality (NUERE; MIGUEL, 2020).

In light of the difficulties presented, the institutions of superior teaching had to adapt their strategic planning in order to reach the goals (or part of them) previously established. The strategic planning is an efficient driving tool used to by the management of an organization wherein goals are settled, as well as methods and tools to perform the activities that lead to the intended result. Every planning is made considering the environmental changes to reach the competitive advantage (SOUSA; DIAS, 2016).

According to Birchal, Zambalde and Bermejo (2012) in public institutions it is used as driving tool the Situational Strategic Planning (SSP) which analyses the situation and formulates, from the analysis, the action plan to reach the goal so as to benefit the society as a whole. In order to be efficient in its actions, according to Paludo and Procopiuk (2014), the SSP must predict many forthcoming scenarios with distinct actions to each one, in which selects the issues and identifies the reason of their occurrence for then create the action plan along with the performance of a analysis of resources feasibility, to eventually, apply every performed analysis in practice.

Equally, the federal institutions of superior teaching elaborate the Plan of Institutional Development (PID) as driving tool, which has the same characteristics of a strategic planning, however this planning is based on the relevant legislation to the federal teaching institutions (SALERNO; LEITE, 2020).

Still according to Salerno and Leite (2020), the university management confront with numerous difficulties, not only structural ones but also of budget, which forces to use new management methodologies, once traditional methods of planning have become limited to manage such a complex system that was marred by the Covid-19 pandemic. Thus, due to the unstable situation, the university management had to adapt its strategic planning so as to mitigate the effects of the pandemic in the education cycle to respond timely to environmental changes. It is relevant to consider there was a strategic reasoning from university management, which consists on elaborating with creativity and innovation the means that will be used to reach the desired goal, commonly said “to think outside the box” (SOUSA; DIAS, 2016).

3 METHODOLOGY

It is about a survey of qualitative and descriptive character through documental analysis. In this section, one specifies the proceedings performed to select the articles that aid this bibliography survey and the reports used to support the documental analysis. The articles

selected articles to this bibliography survey were collected in the database *Web of Science* by means of the keywords: *Higher Education and Covid-19 and University Education and Covid-19*; Idiom: english and portuguese; open access; year of publication: 2020; document type: article; *Web of Science* categories: *Education educational research; Social sciences Interdisciplinary; Social work; Management*.

With these parameters one obtained a response of ninety six articles, which were imported to the program *Start*, where, after the reading of the title, abstract and keyword thirty two articles were selected to full reading, for presented to be closer to the aim of the research. Such articles were in the literature review.

This research is also distinguished as a documental analysis by means of content analysis of the management reports of the Brazilian midwest region federal universities (Bardin, 2011), in order to survey the actions adopted during the Covid-19 pandemic. To perform the documental analysis of the research, one used five of eight reports of management from midwest federal universities in the year of 2020 so as to verify strategic actions. The reports analysed came from the Federal University of Mato Grosso do Sul (UFMS), Federal University of Mato Grosso (UFMT), University of Brasília (UNB), Federal University of Grande Dourados (UFGD) and Federal University of Goiás (UFG), for they presented the complete report of the year of 2020. Considering the Federal University of Jataí (UFJ), Federal University of Rondonópolis (UFR) and Federal University of Catalão (UFCAT), they were not analysed once are new institutions that came from the disruption of the universities of their respective states and for this reason are still in structuring phase.

4 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS: STRATEGIC ACTIONS ADOPTED DURING THE PANDEMIC

The actions performed due to the pandemic were classified and presented in this study, most of the actions was adopted to allow the continuation of learning in safe manner. The actions were the following: suspension/prorogation of the beginning of the classes; reevaluation of the management due to the Covid-19; risk mapping and management; support actions to the student in 2020; budget planning review; attendance and support by social assistants and psychologists; remote activities; creation of specific committee to coordinate the recovering actions related with the Covid-19; new means of communication, and finally, the maintenance of edifications.

Table 1 depicts the actions adopted by the federal institutions of superior learning (FISL) of midwest region. The cells with the letter S indicate that the respective action was performed by the university and the cells with letter N indicate that this action was not performed.

Table 1: Actions adopted by the FISL of the midwest region.

ACTIONS	UFMS	UFMT	UNB	UFG	UFGD
Maintenance/adaptation of the academic calendar of 2020.	S	S	S	S	S
Suspension/prorrogation of classes beginning.	N	S	S	S	S
Management reevaluation due to the COVID 19.	S	S	S	S	S
Risks mapping and management.	S	S	S	S	S
Support actions to the student in 2020.	S	S	S	S	S
Budget planning review.	S	S	S	S	S
Attendance and support by social assistants and physiologists.	S	S	S	S	S
Undergone disruption of the campus in the last two years.	N	S	N	S	N
Remote activities.	S	S	S	S	S
Creation of specific committee to coordinate the actions of recovering related to the COVID 19.	S	N	S	N	S
New means of communication.	S	S	S	S	S
Buildings maintenance.	S	N	S	S	S

Source: The authors.

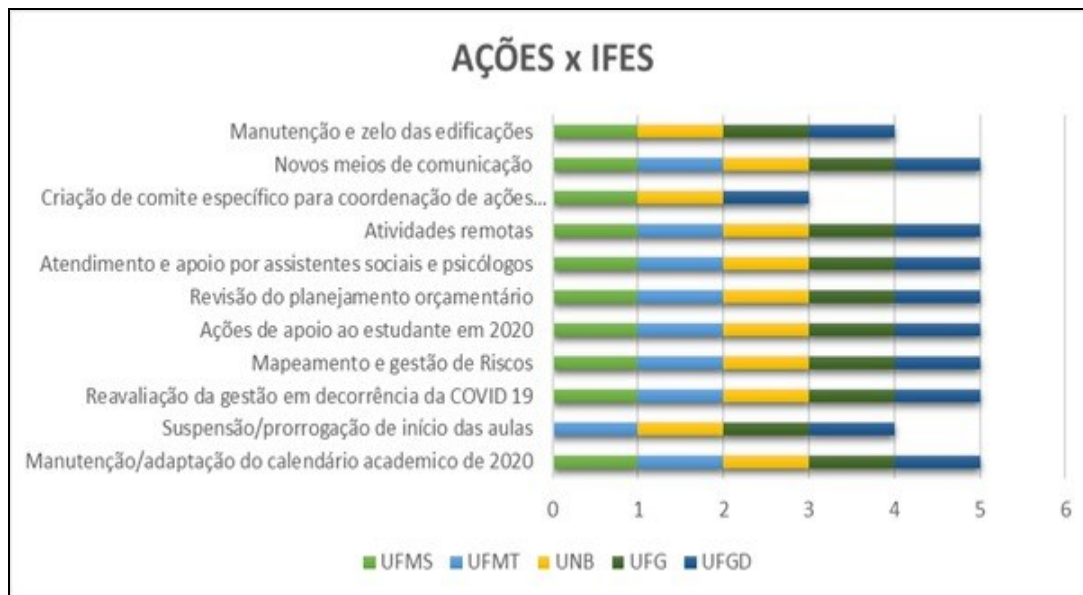
Generally, one observes that the universities have a similar strategic vision for the actions adopted by most of the FISL's are common. It is certified that many of them might have performed a benchmarking of actions that others were performing for common environments and similar realities according to what is depicted in Figure 1.

4.1 ACTION: SUSPENSION/PRORROGATION OF CLASSES BEGINNING

The action was adopted by most of the FISL's, the UFMS "was one of the three federal institutions that kept the academic calendar in 2020 and ended the academic year still in 2020". Initially, at the Federal University of Mato Grosso(UFMT) "there was suspension of presential activities and flexibilization of the graduation and postgraduation by means of communication and information technology, what demanded from the superior administration

many processes of reschedule of activities in the year of 2020” (FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF MATO GROSSO, p. 23).

Figure 1: Similarities of strategic actions adopted by the FISL’s of midwest region.



Source: The authors.

Other universities (UNB, UFG e UFGD) suspended the beginning of the classes. Next, these institutions report bring the upcoming resolutions:

(...) with the suspension of the activities and presential classes, the school semester occurred at distance. In 2020, due to the impacts brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic, considering the suspension of presential activities in academic and administrative environment and the retake of academic semester in online manner (University of Brasília, 2021, p. 23 e 80).

In the case of the Federal University of Goiás, after the paralyzation period of the classes during the first semester of 2020, these were retaken in the ERE condition¹ in 31/08/2020 and ceased on 22/01/2021. The second semester begun on 22/02/2021 ceasing on 16/06/2021 (Federal University of Goiás, 2021, p. 35).

The classes of graduation and postgraduation courses were suspended on march and retaken on august 2020, in Emergencial Academic Regime, what allowed that the graduation students could, according to their reality, opt or not for their attendance. Due to the pandemic, the academic calendar of 2020 was suspended (Federal University of Grande Dourados, 2020, p. 9).

¹ ERT- Emergencial Remote Teaching.

4.2 ACTION: MANAGEMENT REEVALUATION DUE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The process of management evaluation of the universities is based on methodologies already used but due to the pandemic it was necessary to reevaluate the management, for this new scenario could affect the fulfillment of institutional goals yet planned, such as the reduction of students number, the increase of evasion index as well as the maintenance and functioning of the institution (Federal University of Mato Grosso do Sul, 2021, p. 40).

The action “Reevaluation of management due to the Covid-19”, was necessary, for according to the management report of the Federal University of Mato Grosso (UFMT) ”, the paralization of academic activities demanded from the superior administration a rescheduling of the activities, as well as redistribution of unused resource to new expenses caused by the situation of exception.” (Federal University of Mato Grosso, 2020, p. 69), just as in another institutions:

The year of 2020 was signed by great challenges due to the pandemic. The necessity of coping actions to Corona virus in emergency character has reinforced the importance of a funded governance, with acting of many committees, collegiate judgement and attendance of university community (University of Brasília, 2021, p. 45).

(...) there was a necessity of unprecedented adaptation of the routines and processes, as administrative as finalistic of this University, being performed a great effort aiming at the maintenance of services to the academic community, the best of preestablished planning execution, as well as of what had to be adapted in consequence of the cyclical reality (Federal University of Goiás, 2021, p. 81).

In the emergency of the pandemic, it was necessary to perform a management of dynamic strategy, demanding the early identification of the sources of opportunities, potentials, threads and/or institutional fragilities, aiming at retaking more assertive decisions in the dynamics of the public administration of the university (Federal University of Grande Dourados, 2020, p. 27).

The reevaluation of management was necessary due to the scenario of instability created by the pandemic, a form the reevaluate the actions is the use of the PES, that was defined by Birchall *et al.* (2012), as a driving tool used by the public institutions when they need to adapt to the new contexts of pandemic, reformulating predetermined actions in this management tool.

4.3 ACTION: MAPPING AND RISK MANAGEMENT

The universities used mapping and risk management to analyse the opportunities and risks that might occur with the pandemic. This action aims to improve the management and governance indexes avoiding losses and improving the quality of services (Federal University of Goiás, 2021; Federal University of Grande Dourados, 2020). Along with that, the management report of the Federal University of Mato Grosso do Sul (UFMS) performed the action with the excuse that "The adoption of the Methodology of Risk Mapping, allowed and will still allow in the years to come, the canvassing, the cataloguing and mitigation of the risks involved in the activities of the UFMS." (Federal University of Mato Grosso do Sul, 2021, p. 41). Equally, "The UFG has created a Commission of Governance, Risk and Control Management (Ordinance UFG nº 86), including professionals of every organ which are technically qualified to map, monitor, correct and manage risks within the scope of this university." (Federal University of Goiás, 2021, p. 36). Next, the reports of other universities:

The Federal University of Mato Grosso (UFMT) identified the risks and opportunities related to the objectives of the pro-rectories (and other unities of the same level) and of their subordinate. This was documented in the plans of risks management of each unity, which also have its sources, evaluation based on the probability of occurrence and on the impact, control applied, among other informations (Federal University of Mato Grosso, 2020, p. 33).

With the end of this stage, the workgroup of the DPO, unity incharge of the coordination of Risks Management and of the Program of Integrity of the UnB, will elaborate the report with the mapping of budget risks to be appreciated by the Committee of Governance, Risks, Control and Integrity (University of Brasília, 2021, p. 26).

The Politics of Risks Management of the UFGD, driven by the PDI, presents as goal to guarantee the advisors the access concerning information on the risks that the institution is exposed, allowing to take more assertive decisions, expanding the feasibility to reach the goals established in the PDI and in the Plan of Management (PM) (Federal University of Grande Dourados, 2020, p. 29).

4.4 ACTION: ACTIONS OF SUPPORT TO THE STUDENT IN 2020

Concerning the "action of support to the student in 2020", it was perceived that this is a pioneering action performed by universities for being one of the main strategies to accomplish education viability, and it is of great importance to control or reduce the risks brought by the pandemic to the educational cycle. This action ensures the conditions of study, survivance and permanence of the academic staff (Federal University of Goiás, 2021). One

realized that the actions of support to the students, in general, were the same according to what can be observed in the snips taken from the management reports of each following university.

(...) aid for digital inclusion – access to the internet by means of data chip; registration of loan of technology equipment to perform the studies conducted by the use of information and communication technologies (TICS); emergencial aid to acquire Equipments of Individual Protection (EPIs); selection of supportive student to aid deaf students. Debates on mental health were conducted as well (Federal University of Mato Grosso do Sul, 2021, p. 54).

(...) access to digital technologies necessary to follow the academic calendar and that researchers had resources to finance the scientific publishing by means of financial resource application distributed in accordance to the legislation and public notice. (...) Registration in the Student Welfare by means of notice of continuous flux at every institution, considering the necessities that take place in this period, being about 500 students selected to be granted the Permanence Aid, Housing Program and Meal Allowance. For digital inclusion it was granted a few more than 1.400 aids or financial support, such as for internet access as for acquisition or loan of equipments, including a differential value of R\$1.500 for disabled person's. To support food security of vulnerable students, the Emergency-Food of R\$300 for three months has helped 707 students. Aiming at giving permanence guarantees, the Notice of Financial Support to Student Projects has granted 29 projects with 73 scholarship recipients of affirmative action (Federal University of Mato Grosso, 2020, p. 39).

(...) offer of notices of digital inclusion to students in situation of social and economic vulnerability, flexibilization and adaptation of the academic processes; availability of virtual sites and digital tools to perform the academic activities and management in synchronous and asynchronous form; offer of actions digital training and improvement to lecturers, students and technical-administrative staff; readjustment of the technological infrastructure; creation of areas to support remote activities as well as the offer of diverse digital services by means of the institutional platforms (...). In order to give attendance to the students demands in social and economic vulnerability, UnB has doubled the quantitative of emergencial aids offered and made available, in emergencial character, a temporally food aid to students of extreme vulnerability served by the university refectory, which has also offered packed meals to the target public of the politics of the university's student assistance during a certain period (University of Brasilia, 2021, p. 42).

To support the Emergencial Remote Teaching (ERT), the PRAE contributed to the following forms of attendance to low income students: internet aid, with an amount of R\$ 50,00 (july and august – due to Free Nuclei), and the amount of R\$ 100,00 (september, october, november and december). In october, the students who received the amount of R\$ 100,00 of the internet aid migrated to the Project Conected Students MEC/RNP. The payment was interrupted after the migration. There was also the distribution of mobile telephone chips with a pack of data of 20 Gb. (Federal University of Goiás, 2021, p. 60).

The Program of Student Assistance of the Federal University of Grande Dourados (UFGD) – Emergency Aid for Digital Inclusion is destined for students regularly registered in the presencial graduation courses who attended the Process of Socioeconomic Evaluation of the PROAE/UFGD and were classified as a profile. (...). It is also destined to students who are in need of internet access to the academic activities whilst their last in remote form, (...) (Federal University of Grande Dourados, 2020, p. 75).

One may verify that the supportive actions to students were fundamental and assertive, once, in a broad form, and according to the studies of Kelly *et al* (2020); Almazova *et al* (2020) and Dogar *et al* (2020), the difficulties from the students and lecturers were: limited financial conditions, lack of structure to proceed with their studies in online mode, difficulty of internet connection, excessive exposure to the screen and difficulty in the communication between students and lecturers. Therefore, the actions implemented by the universities of Brazilian Midwest sought to supply aid to the problems of both sides.

4.5 ACTION: BUDGET PLANNING REVIEW

Concerning the “Review of Budget Planning”, one observed that every university of the Midwest region had to adapt their planning to the scenario experienced. The budget planning is annually elaborated by the universities, but due to the pandemic, the institutions had to review it so as to supply the lecturers necessities as well as from students and the general population, to control the boost of the Covid-19, according to what is reported in the management document of the UFMS, “During the year of 2020, the main factor that contributed to over review the budget planning was the Covid-19.” (Federal University of Mato Grosso do Sul, 2021, p. 75). In agreement, other universities had the same strategic view, according to what is presented the following reports:

(...) the budget and financial program was reissued by means of the Decree nº 10.295 de 30/03/2020, and authorized the full execution of the limits approved to the accomplishment. In addition, with the paralization of activities since March due to the COVID-19, the resources not executed were distributed to the management unities according to the goals of the PDI and related documents (Federal University of Mato Grosso, 2020, p. 69 e 147).

(...) with important impacts which demanded adjusts in the institution planning, due to specific demands to the confrontation of the pandemic, in the same way of the acquisition of inputs and specific material, emergencial grants for food and digital inclusion of students in situation of vulnerability, notices of support to research and activities of extension to pandemic confrontation, strenghten of remote teaching activities, among others (University of Brasília, 2021, p. 105).

During the year of 2020 the UFG experienced a change of activities due to the pandemic and suspension of presential classes. Thus, every planning had to be readapted to the new reality and so there were many lines to contribute with the society in regard to the COVID-19 coping (Federal University of Goiás, 2021, p. 103).

The UFGD has no system or methodology to the calculation of costs, however, as initiative, it was created the Division of Budget and Costs Planning, bound to the Pro-Rectories of Institutional Evaluation and Planning according to the Resolution n.º 96/2018 – COUNI. The Proap – Graduate Support Program - works with the data available in the government systems such as (Managerial Treasury, SIAFI- Integrated Financial Administration System of the Federal Government, SIOP- Integrated Planning and Budgeting System, and others) and SIPAC- Integrated System of Assets, Administration and Contracts so as to structure supportive reports to decision taking (Federal University of Grande Dourados, 2020, p. 105).

4.6 ACTION: ATTENDANCE AND SUPPORT BY SOCIAL ASSISTANTS AND PSYCHOLOGISTS

Additionally to the difficulties yet presented, it was identified psychological issues among lecturers and students, according to the study of Almazova *et al* (2020). The psychological support is of extreme importance to lessen the negative impacts of the rapid changes of the educational process, considering that the social isolation has contributed on it. Next, snips of the management reports presenting the actions of psychological support undertaken.

(...) it was performed in the year of 2020, the amount of 493 attendances of psychological reception and brief advices of different demands, mostly, related to organizational questions and from servants who are kept away for medical license to their own health. Attendance and support to the social assistants and psychologists when observed the necessity or by free demand (Federal University of Mato Grosso do Sul, 2021, p. 86).

The attendance to the students was implemented by remote way with the creation of online services, as to social advise as to psychological reception (p. 39). In the first months of 2020, it was given continuation to the implementation of Projects of Mental Health with integrative practices of promotion. (...) The creation of the " Online Service of Reception and Psychological Advisement" in the PRAE and similar in the institutions, considering the pandemic context, was fundamental as a room of listening and support to the students (Federal University of Mato Grosso, 2020, p. 41).

The psychosocial assistance promoted by the university had to act during the whole year, so as to contribute to the preservation of the mental health of the community (p. 23). Among the actions of care with mental health and psychosocial, the Direction of Attention to Health of the University Community (DASU) have established a network of support that offers online psychological support, with individual and collective attendance - community therapy, integrative practices, discussion workshops and chats -

available to every segment of the university community (University of Brasília, 2021, p. 38).

In this last case, the PRAE attends the students subsidizing the cost of the meals in the university restaurants, developing activities of sport and entertaining, nutrition services, social service, odontology and mental health (p. 58). The program "Healthy " performs individual attendances or collective of students aiming to promote and reestablish the mental health of them, contributing to the permanence and academic success of those who might get sore during the period of university bound (Federal University of Goiás, 2021, p. 63).

Action 160 – To strengthen the Program of Psychosocial Attendance to the Student The politics of student assistance aims to develop advising and psychosocial actions to students, contributing to the overcome of their social and psychological difficulties, as well as giving information and clarification of specific themes of the university community interest. The goal is the permanence of the student in the university , contributing to its psychosocial wellbeing at the university environment. (...) Are also developed the care, prevention and promotion of mental health in the university, performing campaigns and lectures (Federal University of Grande Dourados, 2020, p. 69).

Therefore, one realizes that the actions presented of psychological support to lecturers and students were appropriated and necessary to proceed the teaching and permanence of the academic staff at the universities. From another point of view, one realizes there was a " strategic reasoning" from the management in not to concern only about the financial support, but there was also this human sight and care with the mental health of people during the period of extreme isolation.

4.7 ACTION: REMOTE ACTIVITIES

Most of the institutions of superior teaching has chosen to replace their presential activities to the online mode. According to the management report of the Federal University of Mato Grosso (UFMT, 2020, p. 52) " This year, the global scenery demanded a improvement and adaptation of activities to proceed and to reach the community by means of the virtual platforms ".

Due to the mandatory isolation to lessen the virus propagation, the universities had to adapt their model of teaching" In this sense, the main actions of adaptation were: actions to implement the Emergencial Remote Teaching (ERT). " (Management Report, UFG, 2020, p. 41). "The context of the Emergencial Remote Teaching created by the pandemic and the difficulty of presential classes have promoted inner specific training to the use of the digital

technologies as tools to the Superior Teaching ” (Federal University of Mato Grosso do Sul, 2021, p. 22). Due to this, the following measures were taken:

Despite the difficulties, the UnB kept its commitment with the activities in 2020. Having remained in the most of the year with non presential academic and administratives activities, the institution delivered teaching, research and extension of quality to the society. For the first time, it was performed a academic semester of completely remote mode (p. 23). The institution, then, begun the planning and implementation of actions to proceed its activities in remote form and to prepare the gradual retake of presential activities, when possible, aiming to preserve the physical and mental integrity of the whole community (University of Brasília, 2021, p. 31).

It is also destined to the students who need internet access to the academic activities whilst last their graduation in remote mode, that is, inside the Emergencial Academic Regime of the Federal University of Grande Dourados (UFGD), due to the control measures of the COVID - 19 pandemic. (Federal University of Grande Dourados, 2020, p. 75).

Even with the adoption of the aforementioned modality of teaching, according to the study of Molea and Năstasă (2020) there were difficulties in the implementation on account of the lack of digital abilities, as well as no interactivity of the students. The same happened to the universities surveyed, where some could implement the online system immediately (UFMS) and others took time to get used to. Nonetheless, even with the difficulties, this action was of extreme importance to proceed the continuity of the education cycle before the isolation to which the society was submitted.

4.8 ACTION: CREATION OF A SPECIFIC COMMITTEE TO COORDINATE THE RECOVERY ACTIONS RELATED TO THE COVID 19.

According to what is depicted on the graphic nº 1, the following universities: UFMS, UFGD and UNB chose to create a specific committee “to give celerity to the decisions for the pandemic confrontation. It was also created the Operative Committee of Emergency (OCE) which, despite the difficulties, had many achievements for the sake of institutional biosecurity. ” (Federal University of Grande Dourados, 2020, p. 8).

Therefore, the creation of a specific committee has been of great importance to the universities in which it was implemented, once it was fundamental to a better analysis and decision-making in face of the scenery, to ellaborate the reassessment of management and new strategic axes. Aditionally, it was ahead of the virus dissemination monitoring inside the university, publicizing the population on the *status* of the virus propagation giving newsletters on how to prevent the contamination in agile form.

4.9 ACTION: NEW MEANS OF COMMUNICATION

As consequence of the social isolation and suspension of the presential classes, new means of communication turned out to be used by the universities both as tools for learning and communication between lecturers and students and to raise community awareness on the practices to reduce the risks of transmission of the virus Covid-19. Next, follows the list of the actions performed to adpotion of new means of communication:

There was the necessity to adopt the remote work system and immediate adaptation of its peculiarities, such as the attendances given by telephone with redirected branch lines, WhatsApp, intensification of the use of e-mails and virtual meetings, still used to take over new servers (Federal University of Mato Grosso do Sul, 2021, p. 79).

Elaboration and disclosure by diverse means of the Orientation Guide - Tools for Work Cooperation, available on the website of the UFMT, with instructions to use the diverse tools of communication by messages, audio and video. Additionally, the STI has given support to the areas in the use of such tools, causing impact by decreasing the amounts spent with telephone contract. In the Advising Guide - Tools for Work Cooperation, the following tools of Communication and Video Conference were used: Fone@RNP, WhatsApp Messenger, WhatsApp Business, Hangouts, Skype, Microsoft Teams, Conferência Web – RNP e Webex (Federal University of Mato Grosso, 2020, p. 117 - 118).

The use of virtual platforms of learning and academic management were prioritized, covering plans of communication for lecturers and students as well as the digital processing of processes. It is important to mention the challenges faced, given the difficulties of equipment availability and of internet access to every student and the necessity to develop online capability programs of the new teaching tools, learning and academic management (University of Brasília, 2021, p. 61).

With the public health calamity scenario due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was necessary the reallocation of the PROAP- Graduate Support Program resources (granted to the programs of postgraduation and to the PRPG), aiming at the acquisition of softwares, technological inputs, digital books, etc, so as to ease the use of Digital Technologies of Information and Communication (DTICs). Another action to aid the remote work was the publication of the Normative Instruction SeTI 01/2020 que trata sobre o uso de tecnologias digitais de comunicação e informação (TDICs) at the UFG, aiming to support the emergencial remote teaching in the pandemic period (Federal University of Goiás, 2021, p. 51 e 83).

The offer of material in digital form was specially important in the year of 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The attendances were carried out in virtual manner, by e-mail, social networks and by Whatsapp, providing services such as answering questions and providing information. Additionally, training were offered virtually through the extension project Cycle of Training in Research (Federal University of Grande Dourados, 2020, p. 83).

Therefore one realizes there was a technological advance in universities with the adoption of new tools for learning and communication, as presented in the study of Molea & Năstasă (2020); Gonçalves *et al* (2020) and Perrotta (2021), and in agreement with the management reports. Thus, one concludes that the action adopted for learning continuation was necessary, once presential classes were suspended, requiring the adoption of new media, making activities faster and digital

4.10 ACTION: MAINTENANCE AND CARE FOR BUILDINGS

During the analysis carried out in the management reports, it is clear that universities in the midwest region, even though they were going through delicate moments of a pandemic, as well as the whole world, still managed to carry out complete works in the year 2020. However, at UFMT “the implementation of the UFMT building maintenance plan depends on carrying out preventive maintenance activities, at the moment it is still being implemented” (Federal University of Mato Grosso, 2020, p. 61). Therefore, we list the following excerpts in order to demonstrate that, in fact, universities have not stopped. There was only one restructuring in possible sectors.

Some spaces were expanded and adapted to accommodate new study environments and the library's collection. New on-line collections were included and allow a greater rotation of these copies, reducing the time between one access and another. The addition of new technological resources made it possible to increase the collection without increasing maintenance cost (Federal University of Mato Grosso do Sul, 2021, p. 22).

In 2020, despite the changes required by the pandemic, 14 works were completed (p. 128). Due to the pandemic, there was a decrease in the number of published bids. Even so, in 2020, 10 new works were tendered, in addition to the completion of 14 works. All the works bid were in the Differentiated Public Contracting Regime - electronic RDC modality (University of Brasília, 2021, p. 129).

Of the total amount granted, about 28% was allocated to the Faculties of Agronomy and Nutrition and 72% to the Dean of Student Affairs, to meet demands for maintenance and conservation of movable and immovable assets and actions to combat COVID-19 together with to the student body (Federal University of Goiás, 2021, p. 120).

It is important to mention that the year 2020 was marked by the delivery of numerous works at UFGD that will contribute to a better provision of services to the academic community. Among the works, there are three laboratory complexes for research, the photovoltaic plant and the buildings of the University City Hall and the Indigenous Intercultural Faculty (Federal University of Grande Dourados, 2020, p. 117).

With the actions highlighted, it is possible to verify that they were strategically designed based on the threats and opportunities brought by the pandemic, with the purpose that even with the difficulties faced, the maintenance of the buildings and the progress of the works could continue, so that in the resumption of classes the patrimony is in good condition, soon concluding the budgetary and structural planning.

5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Due to the changes caused by the covid-19 pandemic, universities were forced to adapt to this scenario, in view of this, there was a reformulation of strategic planning and the adoption of actions aimed at the pandemic context, in order to continue the educational process, even in the face of the difficulties encountered.

In general, from the bibliographic review, it was identified that the difficulties encountered by universities were: limited financial conditions, lack of structure to continue their studies in the online modality, difficulty with the internet connection, excessive exposure to the screen, difficulty in communication between students and teachers and, finally, the difficulty in transitioning from face-to-face to remote teaching.

Thus, the objective of this research was to carry out a survey of the strategic actions carried out during the pandemic period, the actions identified were: Suspension/extension of the beginning of classes; reassessment of management as a result of Covid-19; risk mapping and management; student support actions in 2020; review of budget planning; care and support by social workers and psychologists; remote activities; creation of a specific committee to coordinate recovery actions related to Covid-19; new means of communication and maintenance and care of buildings.

It can be concluded that there was a special care, by all universities, with the students, from the release of financial resources to mental health. There was also a look at the teaching staff and servers, in which resources and training were made available so that they could proceed with their activities. Therefore, the IFES started to use new technologies, improving the teaching model. The limitations of the study are: few articles address this topic because it is a recent issue and university management reports are not standards for collecting information.

This study may contribute to new research by presenting an overview of the difficulties during the pandemic and the actions carried out by universities in the midwest region, contributing to university management as a guiding tool in situations of instability

such as the one experienced. For future research, it is suggested the association between the strategic actions carried out with the performance indicators during the pandemic period, as well as the increase in the sample of IFES.

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