

# **THE INFLUENCE OF THE INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY ON THE PEDAGOGY GRADUATION COURSE OF THE UAB/UFAL**

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## ***Abstract***

This article deals with the influence of the ICTs on the graduation Pedagogy Course of Brazil's open university/UFAL and as well on the using of the Learning Virtual Environment at the formation of the distance higher teaching. It analyses the adaptation process of the research subjects during the beginning of the course until the current moment, as well as the Pedagogy Course/UAB/UFAL and its relation with the ICTs, relating to the main technological resources used by the teachers and pointing the main difficulties during the graduating process. The study was taken at a backland pole in Alagoas. It has been investigated how the ICTs step in the graduation of the Pedagogy students of UAB/UFAL. The hypothesis is based on the fact that the difficulties of the majority of the students on accomplishing the tasks in the course environment is related to the disabilities on its usage, that on the other hand is associated to the use of the informatics equipments and its devices as well as the internet. The research had a qualitative nature, through the case study.

**Keywords: Distance Education; Learning Virtual Environment; Pedagogy/UAB; Difficulties of the Distance Education Student; Teaching-Learning.**

## Introduction

In this study it is analyzed the influence of the ICTs at the Pedagogy Graduation Course of Brazil's open university(UAB), offered by the Federal University of Alagoas (UFAL), in order to the distance education students have a formation that will bring benefits to their professional and personal development. For Kenski (2007, p. 46):

In order the ICTs can bring changes to the educational process, however, they need to be understood and incorporated pedagogically. This means that it is necessary to respect the specificities of the teaching process and of the own technology to guarantee that its usage, really can make a difference. Using the TV or the computer is not enough; it's necessary knowing how to use in a pedagogically correct way the chosen technology.

So, the addressed theory is that with the advance of the ICT on the last decades, the Distance Education has strengthen its basis and disseminated the knowledge for those who could not finish their graduation despite of the distance between their homes and the capital of the state, where it is located the many opportunities of accomplishing the intended courses in face-to-face classes. The distance education, nowadays, is one more option to the citizens to obtain their degrees, however, the majority of the participants suffer for not knowing how to use the computer, the internet or the learning virtual environment (AVA), where the classes take place online, and also for being out the classrooms for many years and not having the excitement to face the necessary technological changes for the distance courses. Belloni (1999, p. 5) make a point of the new reality, that requires the competent and polyvalent citizens.

The actual societies and the future ones, in which will act the generations that now are starting school, requires a new kind of individual and worker on all economic sectors: the emphasis will be on the need for multiple skills of the individual, at team work, the capacity of learning and adapting to new situations.

In this context, the acceleration of the ICTs stands out. Their union with the internet contributes significantly for the growth of the distance education, but

these advancements requires changes of behaviors to the distance education students, who have to use the computer intensely, the ICTs and/or the internet to accomplish the studies and the proposed activities. These innovations, according to Dias e Leite (2010, p. 36), promotes the digital inclusion.

The Distance Education in Brazil and in the world is not a new subject. However, in function of the big technological advance in the last years, more precisely after the 90s, especially after the dissemination of the internet, the global digital inclusion policy and continuous education, resulted on federal government incentives, making it come back to the international and national scenery.

This study investigated how the ICTs step in the graduation of the Pedagogy Course of UAB/UFAL students. It had as its goals analyzing the process of adaptation of the research subject during the beginning of the course until the current moment; analyzing the Pedagogy course/UAB/UFAL and its relation to the ICTs; relate the main technological resources used by the teachers during the course; and point the main difficulties found during the graduating process.

## **2. The Distance Education and the UAB/UFAL Pedagogy Course**

The distance education has gotten best known in Brazil after the creation of the System UAB in 2005, officialized by the Decree nº 5.800/2006, with the goal of provide the extension and internalization of the good and free high education in Brazil, “highlighting the articulation and integration of high education institutions, municipalities and states, seeking the democratization, extension and internalization of the public high education offer in the country”. (MOTA, 2009, p. 300).

The UAB distance graduation Pedagogy course has started in 2007, attending the determinations of the UAB/MEC Project and the Law nº 9.424/1996 (LDB), in its article 80. The proposal of the Graduation Course in Pedagogy is to graduate teachers to act in childhood education and in elementary school, so that they can share knowledge and citizenship contributing for a quality education. (PPP/CEDU/NEAD/UFAL, 2007).

The municipal administrators had the responsibility to maintain the infrastructure of the pole, to know: headquarters, library, informatics lab, classrooms, auditorium and human resources (presence tutors), and UFAL, with the pedagogical support, didactic and human resources (teachers, distance tutors and coordinators). The UAB, through the Ministry of Education, provided the financial support, providing scholarships for teachers, coordinators, secretaries, distance and presence tutors.

Currently, according to UFAL data, there are about 885 distance Pedagogy graduating students, distributed between the 4th, 6th, and 8th semester. The data reveals that the initiative of UAB enabled the insertion of people that are only advancing in their graduation thanks to the opportunity given by Distance Education, whose the main characteristic is clearly displayed by Kenski (2007, p. 75) and proves that when there is interest and public policies, the education is geographically amplified and can attend the less served.

Teachers and students don't need to be present at the same classrooms, neither at the same school buildings or the same cities. They can also participate on the classes in different moments, according to their availability and needs. This new educational reality is possible with the more intensive usage of the new digital technologies, especially the internet.

Through distance education, the students acquire skill on the use of technological equipments like the computer, mouse, keyboard and AVA, as well as the Pedagogy curricular matrix knowledge that could enhance their professional and personal lives.

### **3- The UAB learning virtual Environment.**

With the advance of distance courses and the use of the internet emerged the AVA, software created to make easier the interaction between the pedagogical team and its users. The AVAs are "environments that simulate the presence learning environments as the use of the ICTs" (ARAÚJO; MARQUESI, 2007, p. 358), being one of the main technological resources used by the teachers in distance modality.

At federal universities that have chosen the Distance Education as the alternative of the taking the superior information to the farthest places, the Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment (MOODLE) was the AVA chosen by the MEC/UAB to be used at the Distance Education courses, for being a free software and more accessible, and easy to use. According to Silva (2011, p. 18) the Moodle is: “a learning virtual environment that works with a dynamic learning perspective on which the social constructivist pedagogy and the collaborative actions have a prominent place”.

Every pedagogical work in the distance of education courses will depend on how the subject teacher and the tutor will interact, interpret and share this knowledge, using the ICT as a main support. This way, the pedagogical staff needs to be enabled to use the ICTs, contents and some proposed discipline activities, as well as being conscious of the fragilities that the distance education and the ICTs can bring in some moments, for being geographically far from the students. Such difficulties could be overcome if the teachers and tutors interact permanently using the technological resources as: e-mails, AVA tools (forums, tasks, glossary, wiki), messages, blogs, social networks and others; in other hand, there could be blocks and discouragement on the accomplishment of the activities causing delays on the postings, and consequently the drop out.

#### **4. Methodology, analysis of the data and discussions**

The research had as an investigation goal the seventh semester Pedagogy graduation students of UAB/UFAL from Santana do Ipanema pole, started in 2007. It is about a qualitative research, because it has involved the studied achievement. “The qualitative research is aimed at the analysis of concrete cases in its local and temper peculiarities, going from the people’s personal expressions and activities in their local contexts”. (FLICK, 2009, p. 37).

As the methodological approach the case study has been chosen, which is a kind of research with a strong descriptive character. With this approach intervening on the situation is not intended, but make it be known as it emerges. According to Gil (2009, p. 18), the case study presents a “proposal of

investigating the case as one, considering the relation between its component parts”.

The state backland pole was chosen for its municipal characteristics, on which there are a few places with availability of internet access and when it's captured, it is low quality. And also for being 220kms away from the capital which is an obstacle for this population, because of the bad transportation services, unavailability of time and financial condition of the ones interested on having a graduation, assuming that most of these population make a living from the agricultural activities. The population involved consists of five students of the 7th period. The gathering of data it was held on 24.9.11, through the interview on which the interviewed answered spontaneously the formulated questions. The interviews were recorded, transcribed and later analyzed.

The researched students started in 2007 group with 50 students, and in 2011 the researcher observed that in the presence list there were only 30 students that was attending the course regularly. It is believed that 40% have dropped out for many reasons, like: transportation, family, subjects from the curricular, and long period away from the classroom as students; however, the fact of not having skills to use the equipments and the ICT (e-mail, links, internet), for not knowing how to use the AVA/Moodle and for not getting adapted to the distance modality and with the usage of the ICT as the main support, contributes a lot for the drop out of most of the researched pole students.

As analysis approach of the data it was used the content analysis, that “is a technique of investigation that has as a goal the objective, systematic and qualitative description of the manifest content of the communication” (BARDIN apud SILVA et al. ,2005, p. 73). Next will be presented the results and the research analysis, which was divided in categories: difficulties ICT and AVA, knowledge on Distance Education and overcoming.

In the difficulties category TIC X AVA noticed that 80% of the interviewed didn't have the skills with the computer and its devices, with the ICT and with the AVA/Moodle used by UAB/UFAL, in the first and second period of the course, which started on September 2007, in other words, in the beginning of the graduation the interviewed had difficulties to advance and develop better

their graduation because of the three impacts. It is cited for example: handle the computer, the internet and the AVA/Moodle and consequently the contents and the activities that should be read, comprehended and posted to AVA.

In the research it was observed that 80% of the interviewed had a little knowledge of the “new” distance modality. New because in 2007 it brought connected the usage of the ICT as a support for the reading of the contents and activities proposed at an AVA.

Concluding the three first periods considered critics by the researcher, because the students are still getting acquainted to the first impacts, like the usage of the computer, of the ICTs and the AVA/Moodle, 60% of the interviewed that were at the 7th period stated that they could overcome the difficulties with the ICT and Distance Education and 40% still had a difficulty accessing the Moodle tools. The interviewed that have reported that they had overcome the problems are students who have become autonomous, learned to manage and administrate their study time, bought their own computer, joined informatics course, and introduced in their own daily lives the constant use of the ICT. It is deduced that these activities were solved during the course and that the students started to understand the dynamic of the course and the importance of the systematic knowledge for their personal and professional lives, according to the report of the students when they were being asked if they could overcome the difficulties:

Not all... because... I don't have a computer... I do it at my friend's... the homeworks. **(Student EW).**

Sure... these difficulties have been overcome... even us have a wide vision of what if the distance education... there are a lot of knowledge... but it lacks time to get to know all of these “bunch” of the knowledge and for sure we overcome the difficulties. **(Student JP).**

When they were being questioned how was the relation with the ICTs in that current time, the students answered:

When they were questioned if the digital inclusion contributed or made difficult the learning process of the students, they answered:  
It contributes a lot... why contributes... because it brings us a lot of knowledge. On my learning process it was very good, undoubtedly, the digital inclusion... offers many facilities to my work, my study, and for everything we do nowadays. **(Student JP).**

It's ok... now I've overcome many things. **(Student EW)**

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At the end of the interview the researcher asked the students who was teacher at the public teaching net: 80% answered that they are teachers of the municipality school initial grades in their cities. The fact confirms the need for a higher education in these municipalities, because only through the distance education we can achieve a larger number of participants and take them to the higher education, especially the degrees, for those who can't come out of their communities and join presence course in other places.

It is noticed that there are a gap to be filled with academic actions, like: preliminary diagnosis to know the public profile in target, and based on the result, elaborate a plan of work that will favor the flatness of the technological knowledge, the dynamic of the distance study, the usability of the informatics devices, the AVA communication interfaces and the internet, so that the students do not suffer for concerns and discomforts in the beginning of their graduation which causes delays on the curricular of the course.

## **5. Final Considerations**

The research resulting data prove that the changes in academic life of the students cause an impact as to harm the good performance at the course. To win these difficulties some students have passed through tough moments in many trials to overcome them in order to achieve the proposed goals. It is still observed that part of the students could not overcome the challenges and ended up discouraged, causing delays on the reading of the contents and on the posting of the activities, cause a failure on the subjects and even the drop out.



It is noticed in this study that the distance students face in the beginning of their graduation at least for challenges: the informatics devices, the ICT (e-mail, links, internet), the AVA and the distance education with the usage of the ICT.

In order to exist qualified students and avoid complication in the beginning of the graduation, it is required to ease these afflictions and let the students relaxed, in order to walk without trampling. It is necessary, also, to look for solutions that can smooth these impacts, because the participants in their first contact with the ICTs and the Distance Education need a leveling course, in order they can remain strong at the course.

To try to solve these initial problems, it is necessary to test the realization of an informatics and typing basic course, the use of the Power Point, the access to the internet, the utilization of pen drive, and the many actions that are performed with an archive like: converting to PDF, saving, attaching and sending an e-mail, formatting texts, and others, being this course funded by the municipality, using texts related to the pedagogical and scientific police of the ICTs usage in the education; and other leveling course, offered by the Coordination of the Course, as an initial dialog about the goal of the distance courses; and a workshop about the AVA/Moodle with contents of the first period subjects, so that the students start to socialize and share the initial knowledge of the course. Besides these initiatives, the Coordination must promote group dynamics between the members of the same city to socialize the knowledge assimilated at the courses and workshops, since the majority is not from the same city; guiding and setting up study groups with the students such as they can reflect upon the applied knowledge; and enable the articulation between theory and practice collectively with the students of their locality and/or near region.

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