

EDUCATION AT A DISTANCE OF UAB MARABÁ: ANALYSIS OF EXPERIENCES OF COURSES

Marabá- PA- February 2013

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Category: F

Educational Sector: 3

Classification of Research Areas in DE

Macro: C / Meso: L / Micro: N

Nature: A

Class: 1

ABSTRACT

This research had as its starting point a quantitative and qualitative approach whose objective was to evaluate the courses of Open University Brazil (OUB) in the city of Marabá-PA. Took part in this research four courses of distance education (mathematics, pedagogy, public administration, and natural sciences with specialization in chemistry). The instrument used for this research was a questionnaire targeted students. The questionnaire was administered to assess the mode of distance learning, adapting the methodology, the organizational structure of the material, the content of the material offered and the difficulties that the students found the courses pole of university open of Brazil, in the city of Marabá-PA. The research was conducted in the period August-September 2012. Based on the analysis of the results, it was observed that the majority of respondents are satisfied with the mode of travel. Despite the difficulties, such as the low quality of the internet, shortage of the organizational structure material. Students believe that distance education will improve throughout each course, as well as for others that will arise in pole OUB of Marabá.

Keywords: Distance education; OUB; Marabá

1. Introduction

In the context of distance education, in the 1960s, countries such as Australia, the Soviet Union, Japan and the United States initiated the plans of the Open University in 1969 and the Open University of the United Kingdom began the process of teaching the distance. In a few years (in 1972), were already over 2 million graduates and more than 200.000 students taking courses every year, a cadre of 2.800 full-time employees and a team of over 5.000 advisors and counselors part-time, with 13 regional training centers [1].

In Brazil, in the 80s, there was more emphasis on the use of technology to applied education with the use of the internet, new possibilities for learning and interaction between teachers and students become valued. The main landmark is the use of computers in education with distance learning course at different levels to the qualification [2].

The courses started using hypertext systems and multimedia to fabricate documents and students handouts. Thus, the use of the internet provided new possibilities for information transmission and interaction between teachers and students, thus making it feasible courses of Distance Education (DE) [3].

The distance education is a possibility of social inclusion, besides demanding in their practice a new dimension in construction knowledge. According to the student's perspective is the active element and the teacher, tutor or specialist should act as mediator of learning process [2, 5, 6].

According to the authors Santos and Santos (cited in Peter 2011) the importance of models in the distance stands important point as regards the classification of distance education models, among them may be the highlight of the "autonomous learner" and "extended classroom "in relation to the first, the author considers to be gaining his knowledge through research [2].

To the authors Silva et al., (2013), the distance education students receive guidance activities of tutors via email, phone, forum, chat and personally as regards both content issues as technical. Thus, students can develop academic activities and building new knowledge with the support of tutors [2].

Thus, based on the above context the object of this research is to evaluate of the courses Open University of Brazil (OUB). This research had as its point starting quantitative and qualitative approach concerning the difficulties encountered by students, adapting the methodology and the reasons to enroll in a distance learning course. Students took part in this research four (4) distance education courses (mathematics, pedagogy, public administration, and natural sciences with specialization in chemistry) in the city of Maraba-PA.

2. Methodology

The instrument used for this research was through a questionnaire, which was composed of five (5) questions. The questionnaire was administered prior evaluation of the distance learning mode, the students' adaptation to the methodology used in distance education, the organizational structure of the material, the content of the material offered and the difficulties encountered in the course of the pole OUB in the city of Maraba-PA. The study was conducted from August to September 2012. Took part in this four courses research (mathematics, pedagogy, public administration, and natural sciences with specialization in chemistry).

Initially, after being set content to be investigated in the questionnaire, the questionnaire design, the scale of evaluation and planning qualitative and quantitative analysis of their issues. The questionnaire was administered to the students of mathematics for validation and other classes. Noting that the use of the questionnaire was to collect information about the courses offered in distance education mode of Maraba-PA.

3. Results and Discussion

Given the results obtained by the analysis of the questionnaires, the four (4) courses were obtained 28 (twenty eight) questionnaires showed a partial situation of the students involved in distance learning education. As expected, some of the students reported in their responses that the greatest difficulty during the course was the internet access. It was noticed that some students are not adapted to the reality of a course at a distance or even completely

blended. Figure 1 shows the percentage of the degree of effectiveness of the course in the form of distance education.

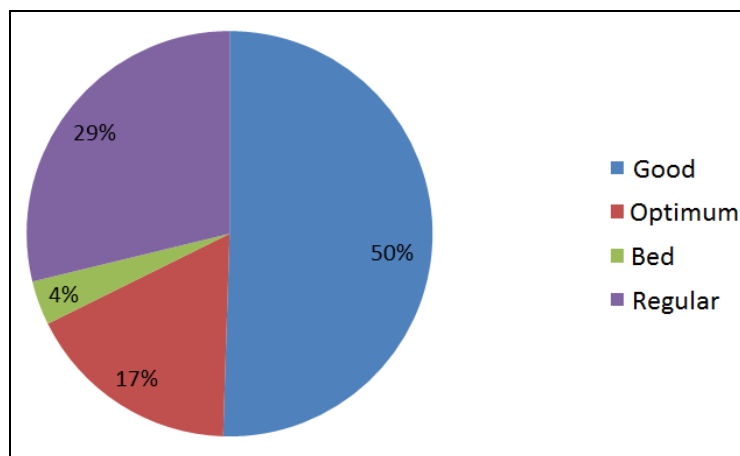


Figure 1. Percentage on the degree of effectiveness of the course in the form of distance learning.

It is observed in the graph of Figure 1, for efficacy, 50% of respondents think the proper mode of teaching the course and 17% believed to be great. While 29% of them said that this modality has the degree of effective and regular 4% think the degree of effective mode to distance lousy. Noting that it is considered a satisfactory result because adding the result of those who said good and great, comes a higher percentage than 65%. In this line of thought, it is clear that in general, most students believe positively in the form of courses in distance education.

Some students justified mostly lacking a bit of assistance, even as a distance learning course, and the time to take as many questions with the tutor is short and that, in fact, the ideal would be to have a teacher present to answer questions. Others said they could only study in the distance mode and it often becomes difficult when the changes very didactic.

However, according to the reports of the students interviewed in the research, what actually happens in the course in distance mode is that it requires independence of students with respect to learning requires that the student must have a computer and printer to assist in study, so they would have more time to organize themselves better in activities linked to progress. Also in

this context, they also reported that they need more support within the classroom and the difficult access to the internet hinders learning.

Other groups of students reported that the course is not really great, since the mode is wanting in some respects, because the student is practically the mentor of their own learning. In addition, some tutors and trainers of these courses fall short in relation to teaching and learning at a distance modality empowers the student. However, these same students consider good course.

From the results of the questionnaire, it was also verified from the level of adaptation to the type of student progress, as can be seen in Figure 2.

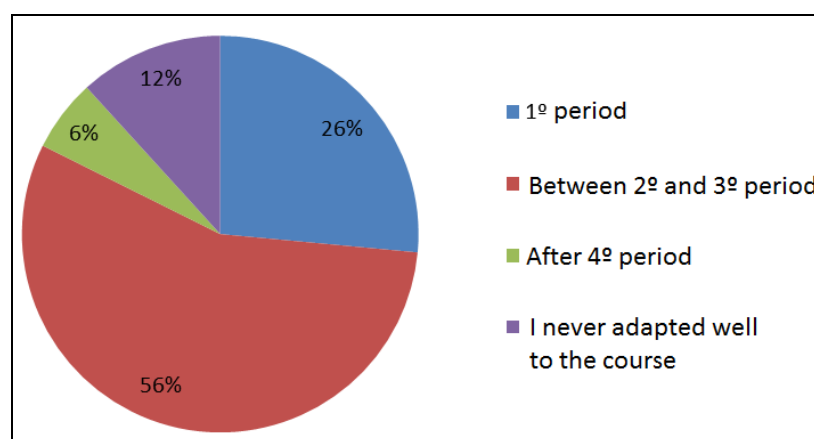


Figure 2. Represents the level of adaptation of students with the mode of travel.

The result obtained to assess the level of compliance was satisfactory, because it was observed that 56% of respondents have come to know better the course from the 2nd and 3rd periods and 26% managed to adapt already in the 1st period of the course. Also realized that 6% of them started to adapt from the 4th period and 12% of these students have never adapted well to mode of travel. With respect to the percentage of 12% seek help at another time with some teaching methodology to be crafted this deficiency manifested among students.

Figure 3 shows the degree of students' expectations about the course, if you were alcançada or not.

Overall, most respondents showed that expectations about the course are considered satisfactory. This expectation student was 75% and 25% affirmative negative, as can be seen in Figure 3.

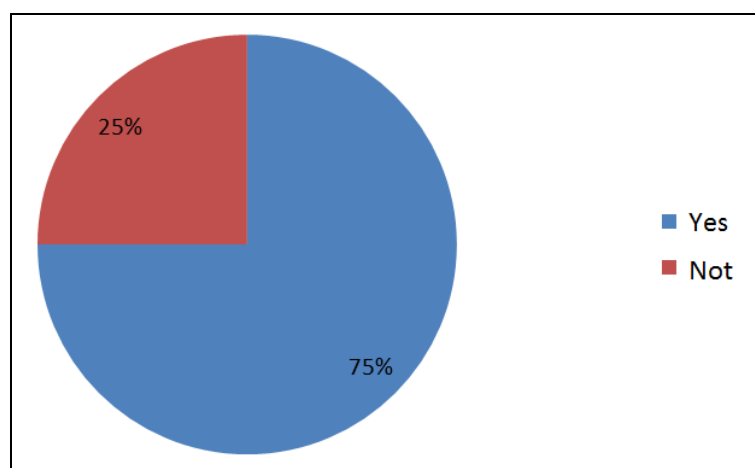


Figure 3. Represents the degree of students' expectations about the course.

In the answers provided in the questionnaires, it was also observed that students enjoy the course and others have reported that they are having learning, but with some difficulty. For other respondents expectations could be achieved if the contents were studied clearer and internet access was easier. Table 1 shows the types of difficulties encountered by students of mathematics, pedagogy, public administration, and natural sciences with specialization in chemistry. Among other difficulties, the students showed more than one difficulty encountered during the course.

Description	Participants
Difficulties of access platform	10
Difficulty navigating	06
Low quality internet connection, speed, instability etc.	19
Difficulty in handling the tools (forum, daily board, chat, library etc.)	05
Difficulty in understanding the content or find content within the sequence of modules	05
Communication difficulties and / or relationship with the tutor	03
Communication difficulties and / or relationship between students	00
Lack of feedback from the evaluations or activities	04
Lack of physical meetings	05
Other	03

Table 1 – Distance learning difficulties encountered by students during the course.

Based on the results obtained in relation to the difficulties encountered during the course, it was observed that the low quality of the internet

connection, such as speed, stability, etc., was considered the highest in the responses regarding the degree of difficulty. Quantitatively, among the 28 respondents, 19 of them claimed to have difficulties in accessing the internet connection, that is, consider low quality. However, these difficulties severe impact the quality of the course and causes discomfort to the professors and students of distance education. Additionally, the difficulties of access to the platform and navigation were considered indicative that harm the education of students.

Some of the students interviewed indicated also have difficulties handling the following tools: forum, daily board, chat, library, among others. Furthermore, pointed it difficult to understand the contents or find ourselves organized sequence within each module. Since some reported that many classes are distance to just 4 hours of weekly meeting. Perhaps, a possible solution to this would be by conducting mini-courses or increasing the number of meetings during the course.

Another fact that respondents reported was the lack of incentives and educational materials more accessible and, as a distance course, the internet should be of good quality. Because the speed is considered slow and fails it stays for a long time, it becomes difficult to carry out the activities provided throughout the course, as many are content to be seen by every encounter with tutor / teacher.

Regarding the organizational structure of the material offered by the course, it can be observed that the respondents believe that the structure still needs to improve a lot. Figure 4 shows the percentage of organization of material offered by distance learning courses.

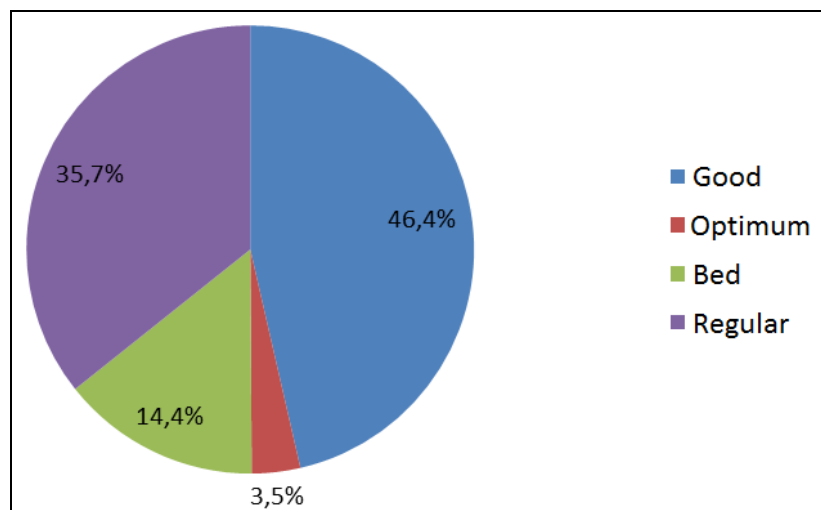


Figure 4. Represents the organizational structure of the material offered by the course.

The results regarding the organizational structure of the material offered by the course were considered relevant to assist in the search to optimize the material quality. Of all students, 46.4% consider the good stuff, and 35.7% exhibited the material is regular. For some students, 14.4% of the total, the organizational structure of the bad stuff.

Students who admitted poor organizational structure of the material and reported that it should be better organized in the distribution platform. Moreover, according to students, was supplied printed material only in the 1st period. To alleviate the problem situation, the distribution of more videos, lessons could be very useful.

4. Final thoughts

Through this research, it was observed that the students of distance education Maraba-PA have some kind of difficulty with regard to technological access of course it happens to any student of this sport. Thus, the adaptation to the subjects, with the tools with tutorials and other happens gradually during the course either in the first period or even the fourth period onwards.

It is understood that the answer on the degree of effective course in the form of distance education depends on many of the students, coordinators and tutors, course material etc. So, like most students were satisfied with the

method, this implies that the distance learning courses are in Marabá contributing in human resource training.

The adaptation of students to form the courses in their mostly gave up from the 1st, 2nd and 3rd period, noting that some students were already at the end of the course and also failed to adapt. However, it has become a "reality" for any student who is attending a college course, not all students who enter a college can finish their course, either for lack of encouragement or even because they had no choice in course selection.

In this context, it was observed that the majority of respondents is satisfied with their courses, and that despite the difficulties, such as the low quality of the internet, deficiency in the organizational structure of the material, among others, students believe that distance education will improve over the years, as well as for others that will arise in the pole OUB Marabá.

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