

# CHALLENGES AND TEACHING EXPERIENCES IN A DISTANCE COURSE OF TEACHER TRAINING

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## SUMMARY

*The EAD is a modality of education based on the construction of the autonomy of the student during the process of teaching and learning, through the use of ICT resources, being effective in its purpose when students, tutors and teachers understand their professional activities and recognize the challenges inherent in the whole distance learning process, becoming able to suit their experience expectations and lead to a teaching-learning process dynamic, interesting and effective. This study aims at reporting challenges and experiences encountered by teachers during the Course of Pedagogical Training in Biological Sciences in the distance. The main challenge was to encourage the students to overcome the problems encountered and persist in the course, ratify the importance of the interaction between the actors in the EAD, although not always attempts to develop-motivation of students are sufficient, resulting in evasion of course, a constant phenomenon in this modality. Experiences and challenges reported in this study provide the search for ways and projects that reduce the distance between the ideal and the real student, so that you can offer a better education, respecting the demands of students.*

**Key words: learning; teaching; distance education.**

## 1. Introduction

The Distance Learning (ODL) has been implemented in Brazil in the 1930s (COSTA; FARIA, 2008; ALVES; ZAMBALDE; FIGUEIREDO, 2004) through the use of correspondence. This type of provision of ODL had as main limitation the absence of dialog between students and teachers, thus not enabling a direct interaction, rapid and efficient among them, however, the EAD is currently considered as a modality of education based on the construction of the autonomy of the student during the process of teaching and learning, through the use of technological resources for information and communication, where teachers and students develop activities in many places and/or times (FERREIRA; FIGUEIREDO, 2011). In this way, the students of distance learning courses are facing a new and innovative educational reality, especially by enhancing the autonomy of the learners, apart from the constant presence of a teacher.

In this modality of teaching/learning, the teacher and the tutor are mediators in the construction of knowledge to establish a network of communication and learning, through communication capabilities and technology. However, this system of education is effective in its purpose, some elements are essential, as the understanding of this modality by each "actor" of the process: students, tutors and teachers. Understanding the actions of each one, as well as the way in which this perception influence in their professional activities, it is possible to recognize the challenges inherent in the whole distance educational process, as well as suit their experience to the expectations of the learners, making the teaching-learning process dynamic, interesting and effective.

This study aims to report the challenges and experiences encountered by teachers during the innovative experience to the Federal University of Sao Francisco Valley (UNIVASF), which was the implementation of Distance Learning Courses, through the Courses of Pedagogical Training (PARFOR). Specifically in this study, we present some reflections of teachers about the Course of Pedagogical Training in Biological Sciences in the distance, in terms of skills in the use of information and communication technologies, and autonomy in the learning process, allowing us to understand the factors associated with the ownership and use of knowledge and skills developed, as well as the elements that promote and restrict the use of distance education.

### **1.1. The EaD at UNIVASF**

The Federal University of Sao Francisco Valley (UNIVASF) began its career in EaD offering, during the period of August 2012 to December of 2013, 6 courses of teacher training in the areas of Visual Arts, Biological Sciences, Physical Education, Physics, Mathematics and Chemistry, for teachers in exercise in public networks for education, in the cities of Ouricuri (PE), Salgueiro (PE), Petrolina (PE), Juazeiro (BA) and Pintadas (BA), through the Department of Distance Education (SEaD/UNIVASF) and the System of Open University of Brazil (UAB). These courses are on offer at the National Plan for the Training of Basic Education Teachers - Parfor, which is a national program implemented by CAPES, in cooperation with the Departments of Education of the States, Federal District and municipalities. Currently, the SEaD/UNIVASF offer 2 (two) graduation courses and 8 (eight) post graduation, through the System UAB/CAPES, modality in the distance.

The Training Courses of Pedagogical UNIVASF use MOODLE, a Virtual Learning Environment (AVA) whose support platform comprises the learning via web (HACK; Negri, 2010). This teaching methodology are allowed synchronous mediations (when the transmitter and the receiver are located in state of sync before the communication start and remain in sync during transmission) and asynchronous (participants do not communicate simultaneously) between teachers, tutors and students. Administrators and teachers must master techniques for course design, instructional techniques special and different methods of communication, especially through electronic means. Through a collaborative work, students and trainees geographically distant work as a team and exchange information, share experiences and interact constantly, allowing the construction of new knowledge and skills. The teachers and/or tutors can work in groups, debates, forums, among other ways of making learning more meaningful. In this sense, the management of knowledge itself depends on the infrastructure and the desire of each person (LITTO; ANT, 2009).

### **1.3. Teachers of courses distance**

Since this is a modality where there happens the classroom lessons for the resolution of the various issues and questions in the teaching process, it is of great importance that there is an effective interaction between managers, teachers, tutors and students, both to resolve questions as to guide the path of knowledge and, often, to encourage students to continue on the journey of course. These interactions make

the modality of distance learning more welcoming and humanized and collaborates to it actually meets the objective of providing tools for the construction of knowledge, regardless of the distance.

The new ways of learning require new forms of teaching, thus reinforcing the challenge of overcoming the concepts of classroom education, which is based mainly in oral discourse and writing, centering on deductive procedures and simplified linear, while the EAD is based on planned learning that normally occurs in a different place of the place of education, which requires special techniques of communication, creation, organization and administration, and for this we need a good training program for teachers, based in at least three dimensions: in the specific field of the content; in media of communication and on the foundations of the EAD and the model of teaching. Thus, it can be said that the success of Distance Education also depends on the training, expertise and performance of teachers who need to overcome the challenges encountered with diligence, dedication, studies and above all qualification.

In Distance Education, the teacher must exercise a collaborative, cooperative and communicative role, there is a view that should assume the role of mediator, integrator, motivator and facilitator of collective construction of knowledge through sharing and search. He is the fundamental agent of changes and interactions that must be understood and appropriate to the students, allowing the- constant construction of knowledge.

## **2. Methodology**

The exploratory research occurred with the application of 1 (a) questionnaire printed with objective questions, answered by a sample of 12 teachers (N=14). The methodology used for the collection of information, the participants answered questions about challenges and experiences of the distance learning modality, such as: advantages and disadvantages; reasons to participate in this type of education; tools, locations and frequency of use of the AVA; level of computer literacy; internet connection speed; analysis of MOODLE: positive and negative points; interaction between subject .

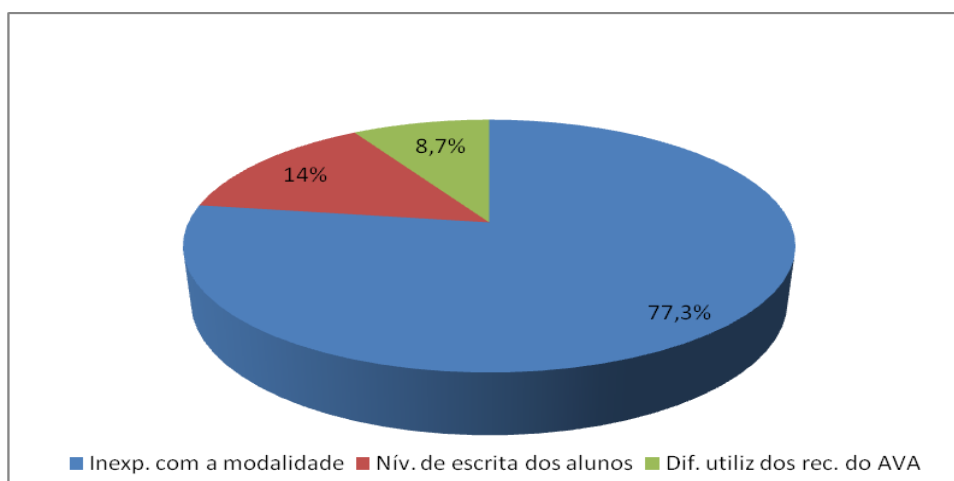
### 3. Results

The analysis of the data collected in the survey allowed reporting challenges and experiences encountered by teachers during the course offered Pedagogical Training in Biological Sciences in the distance modality, allowing knows them as active elements of this educational context.

#### 3.1. Related to modality EaD

The research participants, course teachers pedagogical training in biological sciences, consider as the main advantage of the EAD the possibility to exercise their function at times and diversified places (90-%). As advantage 10% also mentioned the pedagogical challenge of exercise teaching for students who are physically distant.

On the other hand, the main disadvantages of teaching in EaD found were the inexperience with this type of education (77.3 %), the level of writing of the students (14 %) and the difficulty of use of the resources of AVA (8.7 %), as seen in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Main disadvantages of teaching in EaD

The teachers surveyed said they had chosen to participate in this type of education aiming primarily bring knowledge to students who can not attend courses (75.4 %). The possibility of exercising their function in schedules and diversified places and the remuneration for extra activities were considered as motivating factor to teaching in Distance Learning by 12.8% and 11.8% of teachers, respectively.

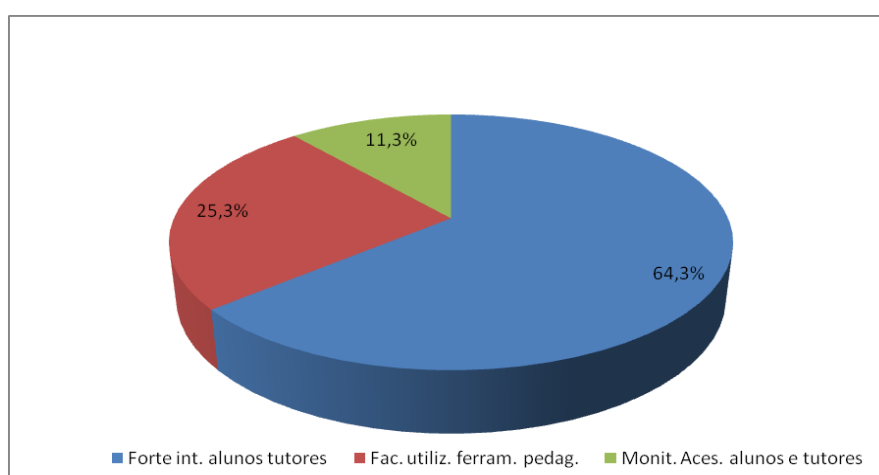
### 3.2 Related to accessibility to AVA

To assume the role of mediator, integrator, motivator and facilitator of collective construction of knowledge through sharing and research, the teachers of distance learning courses must often access the Virtual Learning Environment, interacting with students and tutors. In this study, the teachers of Parfor in Biological Sciences UNIVASF stated that conferees accessed the AVA mainly through the home computer (73 %) and work (25 %) and a minority, in mobile device (2 %). Said, including, who remained longer in AVA, interacting with the students and tutors on the weekends, although access it daily during the offering of their disciplines.

Only 5% of the teachers reported difficulties for connectivity to the internet, while 95% had no connection problems during the planning and implementation of their disciplines.

All teachers (100 %) ratified that have great domain/knowledge about informatics, however a percentage of 63% of respondents said that found as main negative point of MOODLE the complexity of construction of virtual disciplines at AVA, in addition to the impossibility of fragmentation of notes (37 %).

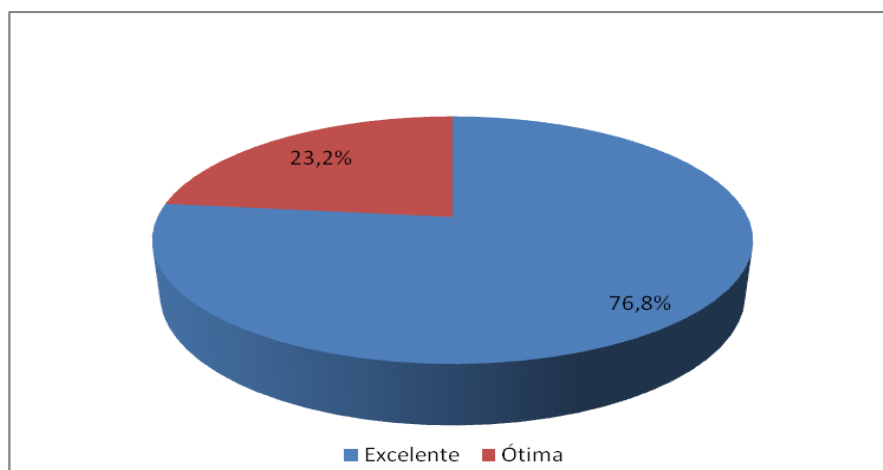
Figure 2 shows that the teachers choose as the main positive points of this AVA the possibility of strong interaction with students and tutors (63.4 %), ease of use of the various pedagogical tools (25.3 %) and the ability to monitor the access of students and tutors to the environment (11.3 %).



**Figure 2.** Positive Points of AVA

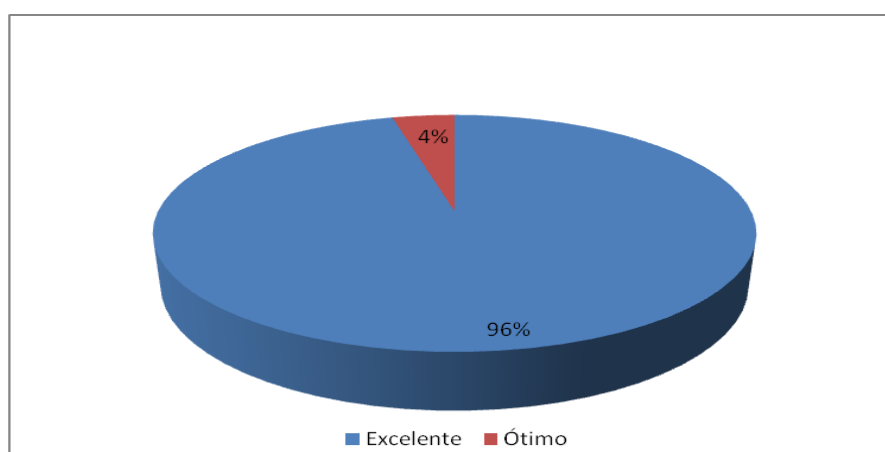
### 3.3 Related to interactivity

The importance of interactivity between the actors of the EaD, represented in Figure 3, is ratified by the exchange of information between teachers, tutors and students, considered excellent by 76.8% and great for 23.2% of the teaching staff.



**Figure 3.** Importance of Interactivity between the actors in the Ead

The course of pedagogical training in biological sciences was considered by a majority of teachers as excellent (96 % ). A percentage of 4% of teachers considered the course great (Figure 4).



**Figure 4.** Classification of the course of pedagogical training in biological sciences by teachers

#### 4. Final Considerations

The possibility of individuals seek, exchanging and organise information, transforming them into knowledge, Virtual Learning Environments used in EaD, requires changes in behavior and profound concepts in students, tutors and teachers, whatever the level of education. For this to occur, it is essential that all professionals who work in EaD recognize that "education is a set of phenomena, processes and actions that affect and are involved in the development of people and the relationships between individuals and groups" (LIBÂNEO, 2002).

A great challenge for the availability of TICs used in distance learning courses is due to the necessity of its compatibility with the experiences and limitations of students, tutors and teachers, as well as the viability of good connectivity. In our experience, the MOODLE proved to be a Virtual Learning Environment interactive and easy to use, both for students, tutors and teachers.

The modality of distance learning, the teacher and the tutor are mediators in the construction of students' knowledge through the construction of a network of communication and learning. The main challenge encountered in course by teachers was to encourage the students to overcome the problems encountered, persist in the course and corroborate the importance of interaction between the actors in the EaD, although unfortunately not always attempts on the part of the tutors and teachers for the development of motivation of students is sufficient, resulting in avoidance of courses in EAD, a constant phenomenon in this modality of education.

The challenges and experiences reported in this study provide the search for ways and projects that reduce the distance between the ideal and the real student, so that you can offer a better education, which meets the demands of the students.

The awareness among all actors involved in distance education on the reality of their students, it is expected that they seek and offer continuously better ways and methods of teaching and learning.

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