Democratization of Education in Brazil: Distance Education at the Federal University of Paraná

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The democratization attempts over the history of education in Brazil brought forward the efforts to make increasingly accessible knowledge to regions without colleges or universities. This is now possible by the democratization of the media, in special Internet. Distance education (DE) is a teaching modality characterized by teacher and student being in physically distant locations. In this sense, one should not overlook the fact that the elaboration of a program or course in DE demands several tasks and there is no single solution or module to solve all problems found in the different institutions. The authors discuss planning and pedagogical evaluation of DE actions developed by the coordination of the course in Public Administration, Department of General and Applied Administration (DAGA), Federal University of Paraná (UFPR), Brazil. The study demonstrated that DE requires a collective effort by all stakeholders so that one can structure a pedagogical project to meet the students’ demands. At the same time, it is necessary to institutionalize the methodology guiding the necessary teaching activities.

Keywords: distance education (DE), Federal University of Paraná (UFPR), democratization of education, planning and pedagogical evaluation, public administration

Introduction

To prepare a program or course in distance education (DE), one needs to carry out different tasks. There is no single solution or module to apply to all institutions to solve all the existing problems. The entire process requires organization and planning, so it is necessary to develop a team with defined responsibilities for each professional involved in the development of the course (Tavares, 2011).

The main aspect in the different DE conceptualizations (Peters, 2001; Litwin, 2001) is the spatial or temporal separation between those who teach and those who learn, a separation mediated by the information and communications technology (ICT). For Brazil’s Ministry of Education (MEC), DE is a learning process with teachers and students located apart in terms of time and space. The educational intervention in the teaching-learning process occurs by using the communication media and the ICT, with students and teachers...
developing educational activities in different places or times.

In this sense, the most objective concept of DE is that of a modality of teaching that happens through a systematic and organized educational process where teachers and students are physically separate while interacting with the help of a technology that enables bidirectional interaction. DE is a form of education and not just a technological system or a means of communication used as tool for traditional teaching (Behar, 2009). The planning and demarcation of the teaching process occur through the technology chosen (Amarilla Filho, 2011).

Although considered by the World Bank as the 7th world economy (World Bank, 2014), Brazil still has 49% of its population over 25 years without higher education (Brazil’s Geography and Statistics Institute [IBGE], 2010). Brazil’ educational authorities want to use DE as a way to augment that percentage. The MEC Department of Distance Education (SEED) has invested in technological innovation strategies as a way to democratize and improve the quality of the national education. A fact to highlight is the growing number of DE courses in Brazil in the last decade. According to the MEC, 5,359 students took DE courses in Brazil in 2001, most of them in public universities both federal and regional. In 2012, this number went up to 1,113,850, with a shift to private educational institutions with 932,226 of the total enrollment.

Despite the growing number of students in the DE mode, the discussion of this educational modality in Brazil still needs “epistemological, pedagogical, organizational, technological, and methodological” pillars to build up a didactic-pedagogic consistent basis (Behar, Passerino, & Bernardi, 2007).

This paper focuses on how higher education institutions can develop the necessary didactic and pedagogical dynamics of their DE courses in accordance with their organization and pedagogical evaluation processes.

**Organization and Work Evaluation**

The policy and objectives of the institution will permeate every DE activity, from diagnosis strategy to planning, course design, and course offer. This dynamic permeates the philosophy of the institution in the early stages of a DE program or course (Moore & Kearsley, 2008).

The curricular organization of the school should focus on the general professional skills of one or more technical areas, plus the specific professional skills by course, for each conclusion profile desired, depending on the individual and social demands of the market, the local and regional peculiarities of the vocation, and the institutional capacity of the school (Nunes, 2002).

In this sense, DE faces three challenges: the teaching-learning process, the teacher, and the student. The teaching-learning process bases on the choice of the technology that permeates the technical-pedagogical process, from a critical stance on what methods and technologies are to use according to the objectives of the development of pedagogical proposal, not only the fashion or logic of the market place. The teacher is the professional that permeates the relationship between the educational process and the student, while the student is the participant of the learning process using this method (Amarilla Filho, 2011). Facing these challenges, we consider DE requires not just “a set of common methodologies and of conventional didactic teaching, but also innovation, review and addition of other such methodologies” (Amarilla Filho, 2011, p. 58).

Pedagogical architectures (Behar, 2009) enable greater dynamism when contemplating different action strategies. One can adjust the application of the architecture to a didactic act in accordance with its specificity without changing the original structure and expanding the learning strategies.
Planning can be considered the guiding element for the development of the political-pedagogical project of the offered course since the issues that permeate the project require a direction as to their views, goals, audience to be reached, the conditions of implementation and production, as well as the resources available to the institution (Junges, Povaluk, & Santos, 2009).

To evaluate the effectiveness of DE, one must apply methodological procedures to assess the relevance, effectiveness, and impact of the decision-making activities, the a priori proposed objectives and the pertinent internal and/or external criteria (Laguardia, Portela, & Vasconcellos, 2007).

DE evaluation includes the student’s performance, the nature of the course, and the technology used (Palloff & Pratt, 2002). These evaluation spheres enable decision-making and improve the quality of teaching by informing actions under development and the need for constant adjustments. The evaluation of the students and their progress includes formative assessment, which can occur at any time throughout the course, and a final evaluation conducted at the end of the course which we believe is the method most used by educational institutions.

The course evaluation must consider the kind and nature of goals to achieve. However, in most cases, the evaluation made by students is more about understanding the experience of learning in distance, than to know whether the course was able to achieve the proposed objectives (Palloff & Pratt, 2002).

The DE evaluation depends on assumptions on the educational proposal and the interests of the groups involved. Considering these aspects, evaluations need to consider, among other things, the adequacy of pedagogical proposals to meet the needs of users, the potential and limitations of the used technology, the student performance throughout the learning process, and the results achieved. Thus, one can consider that the methodology used for the evaluation of the teaching process should be consistent with the context present in the teaching dynamics used and the conditions offered by the course (Laguardia et al., 2007).

Research Design and Methods

This study is descriptive and qualitative. It adopted as research strategy a case study of the DE program of the course of Public Administration, Department of General and Applied Administration (DAGA), Federal University of Paraná (UFPR). For that, this study investigated how are conducted the planning and evaluation processes implemented by the course administration.

To achieve the proposed objective, the study seeks to: (a) identify and discuss the implementation of the DE course of Public Administration; (b) describe how the coordination of pedagogical activities of the course were structured; and (c) describe how the process of evaluation and monitoring of educational activities occurs.

Collection of primary data took place in October and November 2013, using semi-structured interview guides to gather information on their original design and the current evaluation and organization of the educational work in the institution. Secondary data came from the institution Website and were used to complement the primary data.

The content analysis method was used to analyze data from interviews. According to Mozzato and Grzybovski (2011), the content analysis technique explores the relationship between discourse and reality, determining how texts are made from meanings formed through social processes. Thus, the texts can be analyzed both from the perspective of a discursive unit as a material manifestation of the speech itself.

Thematic content analysis was used as content analysis (Bardin, 2009). According to the authors, thematic content analysis is a method “to find core meanings that compose communication and whose presence or frequency
as a way of revealing of appearance may mean something for the chosen analytical objective.” From this technique, some categories emerged from theoretical and others were identified through the analysis of data.

Faculty members (coordinators and teachers) working at the Curitiba Campus composed the target population. Three people were chosen as the study sample: (a) the first general coordinator (GC) of the pilot course and of the course of Public Administration; (b) the current tutoring coordinator (TC); and (c) the pedagogical coordinator (PC) of the course.

**DE in Brazil**

In Brazil, the first experiences of DE took place in 1923 at the Radio Society of Rio de Janeiro (Rádio Sociedade do Rio de Janeiro) (Castro Neto, Gutierrez, & Ulbricht, 2009). In terms of officially recognized (by the MEC) undergraduate courses, the Federal University of Mato Grosso seems to have been the pioneer. The course was about training teachers for the early grades of public schools (Nogueira, 2012).

Having in mind the country size, DE in Brazil opens the possibility to meet the increased demand of society seeking to improve its knowledge and/or professional education, but that are located in outside urban centers providing public higher education in the classroom. Thus, the new ICTs have become an alternative to the process of teaching and learning in the country (Castro & Slope, 2009). In this aspect, DE in Brazil from the 1970’s on is characterized by two main facts: alternative chosen by the federal government for reducing illiteracy in the country, and the improvement of the supply of this type of courses due to the advancement of technology and the communication media (Junges et al., 2009).

The Legislative Act Guideline and Basis Law—LDB 9394/96—and its subsequent regulation (Decree 5622/2005) allowed the MEC to lay down the policy foundations for the promotion of the quality aspects of DE in the Brazilian educational context. Before that, people considered DE as an alternative teaching method for courses from primary to college level (Castro & Slope, 2009).

The Decree 5622/2005 establishes the DE foundations considering that the programs developed by the institutions may have different combinations in terms of language and educational and technological resources. Such configuration must consider the conditions of the reality observed by the institutions as well as the needs of the students and the nature of the course offered as a way to define the best methodology and technology to use (SEED/MEC, 2007). The Decree 5622/2005 contains the specific guidelines for the accreditation of colleges that want to offer this modality, the diversification of courses, and the configuration of the geographical and institutional territory of the courses. The decree also sets the moments of actual presence of the students to take tests and exams and to carry out the evaluation process (Novais, 2009).

From the discussions on the history of DE in Brazil, one observes the local government efforts for accreditation and dissemination of the modality at national level, primarily through agreements with federal universities in order to offer courses through partnerships sponsored by the Open University of Brazil (Universidade Aberta do Brasil [UAB]).

Currently, there is a growing supply of both DE undergraduate and graduate courses in the country universities and in the Open University of Brazil—UAB (Castro Neto et al., 2009). The scope of this work focuses on the latter institution in respect of its contribution to the spread of online education in national universities and for being the subject of this research.

The Open University in Brazil was founded in the 1980’s, inspired in the successful experiences of open universities in countries like England, Venezuela, and Costa Rica. The first Brazilian university to develop this
type of education was the University of Brasilia with courses using the mail, personal meetings, and printed materials as teaching materials (Freitas, 2005).

In the 90s, the Federal University of Bahia also started some experiments in DE. Among the successful initiatives undertaken by the university, there is the optional DE course offered by the School of Education and the graduate alphabetization courses for teachers working in public school in distant locations in the State of Bahia (Freitas, 2005).

In 2006, the MEC created the open university system. The idea was to put together institutions already offering this method, without the need to open new institutions in the DE field. In this sense, UAB aims to bring public higher education to municipalities with no public colleges or whose colleges are insufficient to attend the demand (Castro Neto et al., 2009). UAB priorities are the initial training of teachers working with basic education who do not have college degree and the enhancement through continuing education of college-graduated teachers.

UAB works through the integration and coordination of public universities committed to offer higher education to Brazilian municipalities and to meet the demand for training basic education teachers. For this, the system has established partnerships with federal, state, and municipal governments (Castro Neto et al., 2009, p. 72).

In the State of Paraná, UAB is present in six public universities1: State University of Londrina (UEL); State University of Maringá (UEM); State University of Ponta Grossa (UEPG); UFPR; Midwest State University (UNICENTRO); and Federal Technological University of Paraná (UTFPR).

DE has advanced swiftly throughout the world and Brazil was not different. The following section shows historically how the appearance of this mode of education at the UFPR occurred.

**DE in the UFPR—Legal Framework**

Several provisions legally support DE at the UFPR. First is Resolution 72/2010 then comes Law 9.394/1996, followed by Ordinance 4.059/2004 of the MEC stating the courses of the different curricula offered in a mixed (distant plus present) modality and Resolution 83/2008 stating the basic standards of the academic activity of undergraduate programs (UFPR, n.d.).

UFPR has two Bachelor of Science courses in DAGA: one in Business Administration (Pilot) and the other in Public Administration (PNAP I); one graduate specialization course in Environmental Education and two advanced courses in Environmental Education and Adult Education.

The course in Public Administration was the object of this study, aiming to offer a public free of charge higher education course within the same patterns observed in the classroom mode. The course integrates the National Training Program in Public Administration (PNAP), with a partnership between UAB and four UFPR sections: the DAGA, the Sector of Applied Social Sciences, the Coordination of the Integration of Distant Education Policies (CIPEAD), and the Dean of Undergraduate Studies (PROGRAD).

**The First Courses**

The first DE course UFPR offered was that of Business Administration in 2006. The request came from the MEC and UFPR could say “Yes” or “No.” The ministry invited all the federal universities with 25, UFPR included, accepting the invitation. This pilot course also attended to a specific demand of the Bank of Brazil.

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1 In Brazil, all public universities (federal and state-owned) are free of charge.
which reserved approximately 60% of the vacancies for its employees giving, in exchange, financial help to start up with the course. The partnership with the Bank of Brazil lasted for four and a half years.

Having accepted the demand, the pilot project started the same year. The whole process had to overcome many obstacles, since the institution had to start from the beginning this new kind of education. The university had lost the knowledge it possessed on DE, with the retirement of the professionals who had worked with it since 1988. As the UFPR did not institutionalize it, the acquired knowledge on the field was eventually lost, that being one of the main difficulties faced at that first moment.

Another obstacle faced in the pilot project, according to the respondents, was resistance to the acceptance of this new type of education in the department. Professional resisted to accept because they did not know how to do it, had not much information and not so little, a body of professionals with some experience so they could coordinate the pilot course deployment process. According to one interviewee, “[…] The only one who knew was the JC, but he was leaving (from the university)” (GC).

The respondents to our questionnaire (GC and TC) also argued that, being a new process, the MEC itself did not have all the information and the clarity of the goals of this project, a fact that raised resistances among members of the team involved in the pilot project. The UFPR shared the faced difficulties with the MEC, who played the role of articulator. According to the GC, faculty members of the DAGA of the UFPR took over the course coordination and based their work on regular meetings, discussions, idea sharing, and solutions.

Completed the first phase of experiential DE, the DAGA opened a second course in Public Administration. This second call came originally from the PNAP, leaded by the Federal Universities of Santa Catarina and Mato Grosso do Sul. The foundation were the results obtained in the pilot project implemented in several federal universities. Thus, according to the technical coordinator, the success of the pilot project provided ground, so the universities, financially helped by the federal government, could offer undergraduate degrees with an emphasis on the training of public administrators, following the format of the pilot project.

The four-year course started in 2010 and its first class graduation will take place in 2014. Besides this group, two other classes of this same course will graduate in 2015 and 2016. There are also three DE specialization courses currently in DAGA: Public Administration, Public Health Administration, and Municipal Public Administration.

Currently, there are five centers in the state of Paraná: Colombo, Lapa, Paranaguá, Rio Negro, and Foz do Iguaçu. These cities maintain the UFPR regional centers through an agreement with UAB. One of the objectives of DE is the promotion of regional development through education focusing on the interior of Paraná with its metropolitan areas and it is for this reason that the DE poles are in those regions.

**Pedagogical Planning**

In relation to DE, DAGA seems to have an institutionalized philosophy, since each department supports the conduct of DE courses based on the ideas of their coordinators, so it looks different in each course at the university. The GC and the technical coordinator informed that in the administration course, there is a vision of a different work, especially in relation to the engagement of tutors in personal meetings and the cohesion of the poles. At first, the work philosophy set by the department was not about video classes, but about a more guided direction given by the mentor. It was also contemplated the creation of a teaching guide to meet the perceived didactic and pedagogical needs of the students, including their required readings. The aim was to have a

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2 The full name shown as JC was omitted to preserve his identity.
dynamic construction of shared knowledge, especially in times of personal meetings at the geographical poles. One of the coordinators interviewed (GC) was proud in saying that “[...] our face-to-face meetings are not expository, but (are) constructive meetings, knowledge making meetings.”

According to the respondents (GC, TC, and PC), UFPR’s pedagogical design was born at the PNAP formed by the federal universities that implemented DE. These institutions formed a joint educational project with minimal differences among them. Currently, this forum has annual meetings to discuss very similar issues, since their pedagogical project is also very similar.

Currently, the educational and administrative structure of DE in UFPR has three coordinators:
1. TC looks after the training of tutors, and this coordinator has a tutor support for each class, like a tutoring sub-coordinator. Each discipline has its classroom tutor and his tutor distance.
2. PC is responsible for the relationship of the teacher and learning resources.
3. GC integrates the two coordinators to the administration, as shown in Figure 1.

The course of the implementation process in the current format started in 2006 as a building process of trial and error. In fact, to this day, the practices have not been institutionalized yet. This process is continuous since 2006 in spite of the change of coordinators. One respondent (GC) claims that this was one of the reasons for its success. Currently, the process runs relatively smoothly, still depending on the three coordinators, but with a back office that solves most of the problems.

Although a demand from the MEC, the validation process is required, i.e., the whole process of validation of the documents required by the ministry. This process is redone every new course, as is the case currently in the course of Public Administration.
From January 2014, the role of tutors will undergo a significant restructuring. This change, according to the TC, is the third by which passes the mentoring system. At first, the tutors were allocated by classes and participated in all subjects by the end of the course, however, over time, it was realized that this was not the best disposition of the tutoring process. According to the TC, the way it was established, the mentoring system:

Created a very patronizing and little technical relationship, which is the important role of the tutor, the technical paper. Thus came a UAB changing the standard tutor profile in 2011 and ran as follows: The tutor now can no longer work the way it was being prepared: it was a tutor for each group of 25 to 30 students, will now be a tutor for each group of 50 students, it should be tutor for specific area of knowledge.

The last change is expected to be in the course curriculum, but that will directly affect the dynamics of the mentoring process, because the disciplines offered in modules will be resized and will now be offered every semester. To exercise this function, new tutors will be submitted to a competition for public notice and should have links with the public service, to be server in any of the spheres of government, temporary or permanent or student graduate public institution in master’s and doctoral level. This selection process should be performed every six months.

With this new mentoring structure, the respondents believe that tutors following the activity by course, can do so with a greater number of students and more technical quality, including working closer to the teacher. The interviewee explains how PC will be the adequacy of the curriculum dynamics:

All courses will begin and end on the same day as if it were in person. We had to scale the way the students perform the activities. As will be more concentrated, they will not have two disciplines going on at once, as happens now. (PC)

The pedagogical articulation to start the course planning activities focused on a specific pattern, represented by the teaching guide used as the course framework. The first step was the teacher training, with the introduction of DE and its resources. New templates and guidelines were used to develop the necessary course approach. Even with all this preparation, there were some mishaps, especially with the difficulties of teachers to migrate from the traditional model toward DE. One of the interviewees (GC) expressed this difficulty:

[...] It is very difficult to help you to understand that DE is different, that it uses a different logic. For many teachers, they do not have class. In their minds, they do not have class! They were teachers of a course, but gave no class.

The drafting process of teaching guides according to interviewed PC starts with the training of teachers after the teacher prepares the guides and forwards them to the PC that makes the assessment and gives the return to the final version of this document. Communication is mainly by e-mail, and each semester starts, the educational coordinator sends an invitation to teachers to know about the possibility to teach subjects. Meetings with teachers take place only if the educational coordinator realize the need. Respondents GC and PC realize that in the process and a more structured formulation of didactic guides, each year, the process of coordination and preparation of teaching materials becomes a more natural process simpler.

The choice of poles for offering the courses did not come from UFPR, because the MEC had other institutions in the state. In some way, it was a geographical choice because the UFPR especially covered the central-eastern state of Paraná. Beyond the region, the MEC established the city of Foz do Iguaçu, Western Paraná as Polo. “This was a political choice, because it was an important pole, needed a slightly stronger involvement” (TC).
According to interviewee TC, the basic physical structure of teaching these poles including library, Internet, computer rooms, TV sets, and multimedia devices was offered by the MEC in partnership with the municipalities where they are installed. Importantly, Curitiba could not receive these benefits for not being a pole. Curitiba is as coordinating center.

The respondents listed some of the necessary skills to run the course. They were:

1. Administrative—the most easily learned;
2. Pedagogical—the most complex because they involve a new logic of teaching and learning, especially with the evaluation that is not formative and where it is clear the teacher to be involved in the pedagogical issues;
3. The students must relearn how to learn, how to focus on autonomy, and construction because these students were not prepared to study independently.

Free to choose, UFPR adopted a system through the CIPEAD for managing the courses was the Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment (Moodle). This system was the one that presented at the time the best cost/benefit ratio. Also known as a course management system or even a virtual teaching and learning environment, it is totally based on Internet. Courses are separated by disciplines, also called modules, since, as explained by the interviewee PC, subjects are concentrated in shorter periods of four to five weeks.

Initially, the resources made available to students were textbooks and other teaching materials. Besides these, the teacher used part of the teaching resources he/she already used in the face-to-face courses, with some adaptations, such as video lectures, dynamic activities, and case studies. Transposition of teaching materials used in classroom for the distant mode is one of the challenges that universities offering these courses need to overcome (Amarilla Filho, 2011). Thus, DE requires innovation, revision, and addition of teaching methodologies that can overcome the logic of classroom teaching.

Currently, according to the PC, 99% of the teaching materials used come from basic materials provided by UAB, which are mandatory for all universities in the covenant. UFPR has only two disciplines without materials provided by UAB. In such cases, the teacher in charge indicates a textbook for the students. Despite the required teaching materials, according the PC, the teacher has a certain degree of freedom to supplement the material:

[...] The teacher thinks the booklet could go a little deeper on specific topics, or take a different approach, and then he/she can include additional materials, but cannot stop using it. He/she can add up things, but cannot stop using the material we give to students.

To help the students, there is a general back office located in Curitiba, the pole tutor and the distant tutor.

**Pedagogical Evaluation**

In UFPR, teachers have full autonomy in constructing and updating the contents to see what did work and what did not. They can change, enhance, and remove things. However, it is noteworthy to mention, as clarified by the interviewee PC, that the base book, if there is any, must be the one provided by UAB. However, as revealed by the TC, there is feedback given by the course coordinator, with comments on what was wrong and what was good in the books.

In search of greater efficiency for DE, the initial pedagogical project originated the academic content. Thus, the second course offered by DAGA, the one in Public Administration used the learning gained from the pilot. According to one interviewee (TC), the course design remained unaltered, because it still is very recent.
The course content is under continuous evaluation in a process where tutors, who play a major role, also provide feedback to teachers and students.

The overall assessment to see whether the learning objectives are met, it is executed, but not systematically, since according to the TC, no formal instrument for that was created by the course coordinator. This aspect confirms the criticism that the perceived lack of action planning affects both the continuity of programs, the use of valuation models, and inadequate follow-up to the reality of the course offered (Junges et al., 2009).

However, something to point out is the clear demarcation of responsibilities between the coordinators regarding the evaluation of subjects and their referral. According to the PC, the responsibility for control of what is being effective or not is the tutors who, as far as possible, pass information to the TC, which forwards the educational coordinator:

We have a control, only that portion control is not made by me. Who makes these controls are the tutors. So, corrective action is taken when there is a problem with the class, not to have all failed. If it is possible to correct at the time we correct, if not we try to fix for the next semester. Changing form teacher to teach, even changing teacher if you realize that the problem was with the teacher, or the ways in which the discipline was given. Therefore, these issues have to be improved throughout the course. Now, this return always comes back to the X. Realizing what happened to the group, X performs a general communication for all of us. (PC)

Lack of knowledge about the dynamics of an ongoing DE was a major problem at the beginning of the work. As highlighted by the PC, when the course of public administration began, there was great difficulty in meeting the deadlines, because teachers did not deliver the correct term for the review of didactic guides. “It was almost the time to start the course and we did not received the first version of the guide, and it was the day you start to discipline” (PC). Over time, teachers were adapting to the dynamics and problems were decreasing, especially in not depend on reformulating all teaching guides’ content in order to offer the discipline each semester.

According to the PC, another difficulty in making changes along the supply of a course when problems are identified is that the material already formatted be provided from the start of the course. Thus, there is little scope for intervention or modification of the content or dynamic already established,

But we always try to interfere when a problem occurs. For example, when the teacher is not answering the need of the course, when the load of activities students are exaggerated or when they are very difficult, or students do not understand, we interfere with the teacher, and then we will find solutions. What can be a solution? We give more time for the student to perform an activity; sometimes the time is short post, giving more time or ask the teacher to reformulate the activity, ask the teacher to write explanatory videos. We have no way to replace the teacher in the middle of discipline, because otherwise you have to start again all content. Although it is a complicated situation, but we try to interfere during the course of the disciplines. (PC)

Likewise, the discussion on the progress of the course took place at weekly meetings (at least until 2011). An evaluation system composed of students, teachers, tutors, and infrastructure was developed. The meetings with both teachers and tutors present contemplated one discipline at a time. Currently, the interviewee PC thinks that there is no longer need for regular meetings on the routing of the course, as teachers, in her words, repeat the content at each module offered, just modifying some content in the teaching guide and in the proposed activities and assessments.

The dropout rate in this mode is 50%, considered very high by the respondents. They add that this index is about average for the type of DE, and also that is due to the requirement level set by the UFPR, the average is
more demanding than the market courses, it is required that students study in average 20 hours per week.

Respondents (GC and TC) also showed some policies that have been institutionalized to reduce this dropout rate. Among them are the flexibility of supplying the courses and the concern in having more interesting teaching resources. The main thing is the clarification early in the course of the need for dedication of 20 hours of study. Moreover, note that after students pass the first dropping out cycle, most remain until its conclusion. They added that the evaluation of the teacher who concentrates a high failure rate in your module is made not by the failure rate, but if the teacher developed the activities properly. This is reported as frequency decreases, but it not used to approve the student assessment.

The TC also pointed out the lack of formal DE training available to teachers. According to her, there is a six-month methodological preparation course, the course being actually a DE course, but few teachers take it. They say that they have no available time, because of their many accumulated tasks. The interviewee describes the dynamics of the training offered to teachers:

The course is basic, but there are training initiatives. If I call CIPEAD to come over, it comes and helps with the course, but the big question is how I can find time for that, is very difficult. There are some initiatives yes. We meet with CIPEAD, only theirs is not a continuing education, a comprehensive training. It is, rather, an initial training. Today, we have a lot less problems since all teachers have already taken a course in DE. (TC)

**Discussion and Conclusion**

The development of a DE course requires the organization of several tasks, and in this respect, the institution must consider that there are no ready-to-use ways to solve existing problems (Tavares, 2011). In this sense, there must be an action plan as well as a team with defined responsibilities of each member in the course development to obtain the best possible result.

As pointed out by several authors in the Brazilian literature, the trajectory by DAGA is not very different from the historical development of DE in Brazil with relation to government incentives that consider DE as an alternative to the democratization of education (Castro & Slope, 2009). This was evident in our study. We went through the choices of the poles and the justification that, as the university is part of the educational system of higher education, there are demands set by the government that require the compliance of institutions especially when one thinks of the growing demand for qualified professionals. Demands that materialize in the type of course offered of Public Administration, which is about to have better professionals in the public service at all levels.

It is important to make clear that qualitative research seeks to explore a multifaceted reality, so the ransom conducted on the subject DE at UFPR is a part of this reality. Currently, the education program is undergoing a major process of review and coordination by current settings. In general, what can be emphasized in this research, in relation to the DE in DAGA, are:

1. That the action of the MEC in creating the UAB was effective in promoting the courses and socialize knowledge;
2. That decisions taken collectively were the most praised points by the respondents, the shared learning in an open environment, construction, and discovery;
3. Periodic meetings, discussions, sharing ideas, and solutions.

The main achievements mentioned by the respondents over the supply of both the pilot course, as the course of Public Administration were:
(a) Training about 150 tutors;
(b) Training about 50 teachers;
(c) Academic education for 150 students in Business Administration in pilot project and over 553 academic education for Public Administration (five poles);
(d) Institutionalization of DE at the UFPR.

The most relevant and desired competence to the successful deployment and even the institutionalization of this type of education in the UFPR is an open mind on the part of faculty members for the new, for learning a new system and a new way of producing education.

There is a clear difference profile of students and teachers in the classroom form and the distance form. In DE form, the students must be the subject of their own learning process, be critical and autonomous. Some teachers have an almost insurmountable difficulty of giving a lecture on camera. Thus, a fact to be highlighted is the possibility to rethink the technologies used to get closer to the student, because as highlighted by Amarilla Filho (2011), the challenges of DE permeate a critical stance on what methods and technologies to be used as the objectives of the elaboration of the pedagogical proposal; the figure of the teacher, as a professional that permeates the educational process and the student; and the figure of the student himself as a participant in the learning process through this mode.

Considering the aspects brought forward by the use of DE in DAGA, one realizes that its development has gone through and still goes through mishaps linked to how the didactic pedagogical dynamics for the course was established. In this sense, it is having in consideration the educational processes behind this type of education in order to increase the possibility of creating learning environments and different teaching models that go beyond the more traditional proposals and can be run in different ways considering the situation of learning as it stands (Magnavita, 2003).

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