

## Original Article

# Analysis of the Distance Learning Implementation Policy in the face-to-face undergraduate courses: the case of PUC Goiás

*Análise da Política de Implementação da EaD em Cursos de Graduação Presencial: o caso da PUC Goiás*

*Análisis de la Política de Implementación de la EaD en los cursos de pregrado presenciales: el caso de la PUC Goiás*

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## Abstract

The objective of this work was to analyze the implementation process of the Distance Education modality in graduation courses at PUC Goiás. The article deals with the results of a practical study at PUC Goiás from the perception of course coordinators that adhered to the percentage of distance learning allowed by law. Data analysis is performed in order to articulate documents reading with the Theoretical Reference studied and the course coordinators interviews by content analysis. It is understood that educational policy movements are loaded with intentionality and express the defended society vision of each historical moment, that understanding allows better positioning and contributions in the education area. The results showed that it is not enough for legislation to direct the usage of technology in education, much more is needed. Besides the resources availability and technical support, the teacher's preparation matters a lot to know how to deal with the new challenges and make adequate planning, considering the particularities of the modality D.E. acting as the mediator of the teaching-learning process.

**Keywords:** Distance education. Educational policies. PUC Goiás.

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Higher education.

## Resumo

O artigo trata dos resultados de um estudo de caso da PUC Goiás a partir da percepção dos(as) coordenadores(as) de cursos que aderiram ao percentual de ensino a distância permitido por lei. A análise dos dados é realizada de forma a articular a leitura dos documentos com o referencial teórico estudado e as entrevistas dos(as) coordenadores(as) de cursos via análise de conteúdo. Entende-se que os movimentos das políticas educacionais são carregados de intencionalidade e expressam a visão de sociedade defendida a cada momento histórico e que a compreensão destes permite melhor um posicionamento e melhores contribuições para a área da educação. Os resultados mostraram que não basta a legislação direcionar para o uso da tecnologia na educação, é preciso muito mais. Além da disponibilização de recursos e suporte técnico, importa sobremaneira o preparo do professor para saber lidar com os novos desafios e fazer um planejamento adequado, considerando as particularidades da modalidade EaD, atuando como mediador do processo ensino-aprendizagem.

**Palavras-chave:** Educação a Distância. Políticas educacionais. PUC Goiás. Educação superior.

## Resumen

El objetivo de este trabajo fue analizar el proceso de implementación de la modalidad a distancia en los cursos de pregrado presenciales en la PUC Goiás. El artículo trata sobre los resultados de un estudio de caso en la PUC Goiás a partir de la percepción de los coordinadores de cursos que se adherieron al porcentaje de enseñanza a distancia permitido por la ley. El análisis de datos se lleva a cabo para articular la lectura de documentos con el marco teórico estudiado y las entrevistas a los coordinadores de curso a través del análisis de contenido. Se entiende que los movimientos de políticas educativas están cargados de intencionalidad y expresan la visión de sociedad defendida en cada momento histórico y que la comprensión de esta permite un mejor posicionamiento y aportes en el área de la educación. Los resultados mostraron que no es suficiente que la legislación oriente el uso de la tecnología en la educación, se necesita mucho más. Además de brindar

recursos y soporte técnico, es de suma importancia preparar al docente para saber enfrentar los nuevos desafíos y realizar una adecuada planificación, considerando las particularidades de la modalidad de educación a distancia, actuando como mediador del proceso enseñanza-aprendizaje.

**Palabras clave:** Educación a distancia. Políticas educativas. PUC Goiás. Educación universitaria.

## I. Introduction

By observing distance education policies historically, it is possible to perceive legislation with objective policies that permit offering distance hours in face-to-face courses. These policies have driven the growth of this implementation in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and began with MEC Ordinance No. 2,253, of October 18, 2001, updated by MEC Ordinance No. 2,117, of December 6, 2019, which regulates the expansion of the percentage that is currently up to forty percent (40%) of the workload in the distance education modality in the undergraduate face-to-face course. Courses that used to be only face-to-face can now use a percentage of the workload in the distance education modality.

Law No. 9,394, of December 20, 1996, which establishes the Guidelines and Bases for National Education (LDB), formalizes distance education as valid and equivalent for all levels of education in Brazil. This movement of educational policies adopted by the Brazilian state, expressed in regulations regarding distance education, influences institutional practice. With this focus, we opted to analyze this process with a case study at the Pontifical Catholic University of Goiás (PUC Goiás), considered the oldest university in the Midwest region of Brazil, with over 60 years of existence, in addition to being private, community-based, and philanthropic.

In our review of the state of knowledge on the subject of study, we noticed a lack of research on offering distance hours in face-to-face courses in higher education institutions with the characteristics mentioned. Based on this selection criteria, we formulated the research problem, which consisted of the following question: how was the implementation of the distance education modality in PUC Goiás courses from the perspective of managers and course coordinators who adopted the percentage allowed by law?

In the analysis of the implementation process, we considered Draibe

(2001), with legislation, documents on the use of distance hours in face-to-face courses, and the selected higher education institution. We used Laurence Bardin (1979) for content analysis and inference of empirical information obtained from interviews with the coordinators. Along the same lines, we resorted to Severino (2016) for the technique of categorical analysis.

The research problem was defined based on an academic investigation, focusing on the movements of educational policies, as the actions of the society, whether civil or political, are expressed in public policies, which, loaded with intentionality, convey the vision of society defended at each historical moment. We acknowledged the importance of researching to comprehend the implementation of policies that enable the adoption of distance education in the face-to-face modality.

## 2. Metodologia

This is a case study carried out at PUC Goiás, through a survey and analysis of face-to-face courses that have adopted the implementation of distance hours. We adopted content analysis according to Laurence Bardin (1979) for inference of empirical information obtained from interviews with coordinators and analysis of the implementation process based on Draibe (2001).

Out of the 45 undergraduate courses offered by PUC Goiás, we identified nine courses that, at some point, until 2019, either adhered or planned to have some percentage of distance hours in their curriculum and respective Pedagogical Projects (PPCs) for face-to-face undergraduate courses. Quantitative data was obtained from secondary sources such as the National Institute for Educational Studies and Research Anísio Teixeira (INEP), the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), and the PUC portal, while information from research subjects was obtained through semi-structured interviews with course coordinators at PUC Goiás. The courses observed in this research that met the above criteria were: Administration, Biomedicine, Accounting, Economics, Pharmacy, Mathematics, Philosophy, Physics, and Chemistry. The Distance Education Coordination (Cead) of PUC Goiás participated in the study, as the coordination works in partnership with course coordinators in the delivery, monitoring, and evaluation of distance education disciplines. As this work involved research with people, we submitted it to the Ethics in Research Committee (CEP) of PUC Goiás

and since there were no ethical objections to the execution of the project, it was considered approved under the number CAAE 48361421.1.0000.0037.

The interview was structured to give voice to those involved, in this case, undergraduate course coordinators and the general coordinator of Distance Education, who monitored the process of introducing distance disciplines in some courses at PUC Goiás. A total of 10 participants took part in the research, nine of whom were course coordinators, and one was the general coordinator of Distance Education. The interview was conducted according to each participant's availability and acceptance, was semi-structured, recorded with the participants' permission, and later transcribed. We considered this methodological resource important because course coordinators and the Cead coordination are involved in educational policies and their effects on the environment in which they work.

The analysis of the interviews took into consideration the whole, enabling the interpretation of perception conflicts, contradictions, and relationships to construct categories. At this point, we were careful to establish this relationship and assist in understanding the proposed problem and achieving our objectives in this research, bringing out the main ideas and meanings that emerged from the interviewees' speech. The categorical system and units of analysis were considered because this process allows the integration of information and meanings after inventorying, which means isolating the common elements. According to Bardin (1979, p. 55), this process "further on in the analysis, it is advisable to classify the units of meaning by creating categories, introducing an additional order that reveals an internal structure."

The data analysis was carried out to articulate the readings of the PPCs, the theoretical framework studied, and the interviews with course coordinators after content analysis of the speeches. This research presents the intentionality of educational policies in facilitating the insertion of distance education through distance hours in face-to-face higher education courses. The transcribed speeches of each coordinator became the main factor in the empirical research, analyzed to perceive the categories that emerged to identify what converges and what diverges in the speeches and what they can reveal to us.

For the interview, the script consisted of six items:

1. The time the participant has been involved with the course or institution;

2. Entry of the distance discipline in the course, beginning, or experience with this modality;
3. Involvement with the topic of distance education. If they follow policies and debates, either within the institution or in national education;
4. Understanding of the distance modality, with its own resources and technologies;
5. Relationship with the Distance Education Coordination (Cead);
6. What they consider important to record from their own speech.

There were more than 300 minutes of recording documented in over 70 pages of transcription. The semi-structured interview was chosen in order to allow the subjects to speak more freely, bringing what they consider relevant to the dialogue. When the participant and researcher could be face to face, allowed us to contemplate the reactions and facial and bodily expressions in speaking.

In this sense, although we consider content analysis of the words expressed, we sought to capture the essence of thought and not just receive answers to questions about the investigated object. Thus, there was care taken to break with appearances.

Although this research was authorized by the Ethics in Research Committee, as stated, we will refer to the interviewed subjects as C (course coordinators), followed by the numbers 1 to 9 (number of subjects interviewed), and CI for the Cead coordinator.

### 3. Results and discussion

Through the study of internal documents of the institution and the PPCs of the courses participating in the research, we observed how distance education began at PUC Goiás. We noticed, through the reading of internal legislation, the tension experienced between what is presented as "changes in society", "renewed demands", and the understanding and adherence of the subjects that compose the courses' boards. This tension is experienced in the different sectors of PUC Goiás, especially among the teachers who actually perform the teaching work. We agree with Libâneo, Oliveira and Toschi (2003, p. 309) that "teachers are also responsible for the forms of

organization and management", so contrary thoughts end up generating tensions and conflicts that must be overcome for transformation to occur.

The origins of distance education at PUC Goiás are linked to institutional programs started in the 1980s, in partnership with the Federal University of Goiás and the State Department of Education, for the training of teachers in cities where there were no higher education courses. On the other hand, there was a demand for professionals qualified to exercise the teaching profession. To meet the legal requirements that emerged in the 1990s, precisely with the approval of LDB 9.394/96, Art. 87, § 4º: "Until the end of the Education Decade, only teachers qualified at the higher education level or trained on-the-job will be admitted" (BRAZIL, 1996), the implementation of DE at the institution for teacher training began. Through programs in partnership with government agencies, PUC Goiás, then the Catholic University of Goiás, began to offer itinerant and short-duration courses, responding to the demands of that historical moment.

The DE model used was the blended/hybrid one. At that time, with the itinerant undergraduate program, the workload was 75% face-to-face and 25% distance, and this part was very different from the current model, as printed material was used.

In the document "Política de Educação a Distância da PUC Goiás" (2018), the emphasis given to the institution's Distance Learning policy is based on the principles and values that involve the commitment to social responsibility and meeting demands:

Given the constitutional precept of the right of all citizens to education, imbued with its social commitment and in the permanent context of institutional expansion, PUC Goiás sees Distance Education as another possibility to act in the education of people, ensuring their integral development for the whole exercise of citizenship and qualified insertion in the world of work (PUC GOIÁS, 2017).

There is a strong inclination towards social inclusion in the document, especially for a humanistic education, since it highlights "integral development, full exercise of citizenship" in addition to referring to the "market" as the "work world", which is not perceived, even empirically, in notably private institutions.

After the experience with itinerant courses, the process began at the

institution. The first discipline in the record is Education, Communication, and Media in 2005, in the undergraduate courses regulated by MEC Ordinance No. 4.059 of December 10, 2004.

In 2005, the offer of leveling courses began in the Portuguese language, Mathematics, Guidelines and Standards for Academic Productions, and Basic Computing domains. These free courses for undergraduate students are considered relevant for the students' experience in the institution's virtual environment and for the Cead team to advance in terms of "distance methodology, production of didactic material with more interactive and dynamic interfaces" (PUC GOIÁS, 2017).

Through the investigations, PUC Goiás presents itself with experience, infrastructure conditions, technological and media resources that support the development of distance education for more than a decade and yet the institution does not have a great diffusion of the insertion of distance learning hours in face-to-face courses. According to the institution's history and the coordination of Cead, "we had some experimental offers that were later formalized in the courses' pedagogical projects" (CI, 10 min. 45 s). This fact indicates that the adherence to the use of distance learning hours has followed the legal opening process of distance education in the country due to the success of the institution's experiences in extension programs carried out in the distance learning mode and to follow the demands arising with contemporaneity.

Cead's activities are conducted by a multidisciplinary team supports distance education at the institution, with personnel from the technology (web design and programmer) and didactic material production (reviser, instructional designer, and author) areas. The action plan is guided by the PPCs, which are the responsibility and management of each course coordinator, together with the Structuring Teaching Nucleus (NDE) and the board.

In addition to the general institutional documents, we considered other information contained in the PPCs made available in digital files, such as Administration (2016), Biomedicine (2016, and the matrix version of 2019), Accounting Sciences (2015), Philosophy (2017), Mathematics (2017, containing parts of the 2021 version), and Chemistry (2009). These served for the development of the investigation and as a parameter in the analysis.

According to the curriculum of the Administration course, it is possible



to perceive the guidelines for the classes of the subjects that adopted the distance learning model:

It is emphasized that the face-to-face class will always be followed by a distance class. The face-to-face classes are explanatory, where the teacher will present the topic to be studied and coordinate the analysis and debate of that topic. The distance classes are developed in the virtual learning environment, seeking to integrate the student into the virtual environment and at the same time research and expand the texts studied in the classroom with research and interactions with other sources of information and learning (ADMINISTRATION PPC, 2016).

Based on this excerpt from the Administration course document, we infer the model used. According to Lima's studies (2014), it would be the dual-mode model, which alternates between distance and face-to-face moments, maintaining greater contact between students, the institution, and professors. This model is justified because, in general, in the disciplines named as EaD (Distance Learning) at PUC Goiás, only 50% is asynchronous, meaning that part of the workload is given at a distance, and the other remains face-to-face, with weekly meetings at the institution with the presence of the professor. This model is followed by other courses, with the exception of the Research Project discipline, which was presented with the entire workload planned for distance learning in the Biomedicine course in the eighth period.

In one of the PPCs, it is stated that the discipline in the Distance Learning model is taught with a class of up to 40 students. The other PPCs do not mention the maximum number of students in class. This is considered a small number for the Distance Learning model, as it is intended to serve a larger number of people, resembling the quantitative format of a face-to-face classroom. Face-to-face weekly meetings happen at the institution, and the others at a distance occur via Moodle.

In the exercise of reading the PPCs, we observe that, in some courses, the implementation of disciplines in the distance learning modality tends to be slow, preceded by many discussions and reflections. This observation gains greater visibility in the courses of the School of Teacher Education, where the teaching degrees are located.

This quote reinforces our understanding, as it appears in two PPCs from the school:

According to Libâneo (2000), teacher training institutions, such as PUC Goiás, have been under pressure to rethink their role in light of scientific, technological advances and new paradigms of economic development. For Shulman (1992), cited by Pires (2004), each area of knowledge has its own specificity that justifies the need to study the teacher's knowledge, considering the discipline they teach (PPC Mathematics, 2017; PPC Chemistry, 2009).

This excerpt highlights the concern with the shift in paradigms, especially in teacher education, alerting to the paradigms of economic development. The formalization of the use of distance learning in the workload began in 2013 in the PPCs, as we can perceive from the interview with the CEAD Coordination: "Formalized in the pedagogical projects, we have three courses: Administration, Accounting Sciences, and Economics. These three courses started with 11% of the workload being developed at a distance" (CI, 11 min. 20 s). Since then, this percentage has not increased much, decreased to eight and at most 22% of the workload was developed at a distance.

Regarding the explanation of the reason for the adoption of distance workload, we found that it appears several times in the interviewees' statements (not homogeneously), but it was possible to emerge components that indicate the reasons for this inclusion. After analyzing the components, it was found that out of the nine managers interviewed, seven gave the following reasons for their support: schedule flexibility (three occurrences), compliance with legislation (two), course integration (two), incorporation of technology (one), modernization (one), trend (one), external evaluation (one), research into students' interests (one). Additionally, the use of distance workload was also seen as naturalized since it was already provided in the course's matrix since its inception in the institution. While the other two did not present reasons, and the justification was that they were not in charge of the course's coordination in the process of implementing distance learning and adopting distance workload.

It is worth noting that even when motivation was presented, it does not imply that it was positive motivation. External pressure can be perceived, and it was pointed out by some, : "Look, these things came because of legislation itself, because I am in charge of a course's coordination. The teachers are extremely critical; they will see this as a situation absurd" (C7, 32 min.). This statement shows that external pressures have influence on education. Even though the subjects who make up the schools and who directly act in the

educational process present criticisms regarding this or that methodological or educational conception, what often determines the educational policy adopted are external interferences.

Regarding the choice of disciplines, the analysis of statements describes divergent points between the course coordinator's vision and the institutional coordination. Convergence was observed regarding the quality of teacher and student training. Below, read the institutional coordination's statement:

We have always drawn attention to the fact that distance learning courses should not be limited to those subjects that are considered external to the specific course's field of study. When I say field, I mean the specific field of study of the course. [...] So it is not restricted to the area that the student thinks can be taken as a distance learning course because it is not related. This perception exists! (CI, 18 min. 18 s; 18 min. 40 s).

The concern revealed by the coordinator is not to have a stigma of distance education as education of lesser importance. Distance education is education.

In the following passage, we observe systematic questioning regarding the use of the modality in the course. The need for training and preparation of the teacher to use it properly without prejudice to the teaching-learning process is evidenced by the speech.

Given this discipline's importance to the course and the profession within this context (as I am looking at it), does it have to be in this mode? Or can I rethink it? Then I ask myself another question: am I, as a teacher, really equipped with the skills and competencies to ensure that my message, my information, about the content is conveyed to the student in this context? So many things start to arise (C1, 10 min.).

In the overall context of the interview, at multiple moments, concern with the teacher and their ability to work with the Distance Learning model emerged. The explanation is that it is not enough to be a professional with expertise in the area of course formation. The Distance Learning modality requires much more from the teacher, from planning to the mastery of certain skills, for teaching-learning to occur. This perception appeared several times, with different coordinators. The willingness to change is essential for the acceptance of Distance Learning in course disciplines. An example of

this statement:

You know that everyone, I mean, a good part of people, they are resistant to change. Since they reached a comfortable level, leaving that comfort zone is terrible for them. In other words, they will try their best not to leave it. That was the resistance I faced. [...] Trying to tell the teachers that it's not like the way they're thinking anymore, that we have to diversify... That we have to update ourselves (C2, 13 min.).

In another interview, it appears as follows:

I confess that some teachers are still resistant or, in fact, have a somewhat restricted understanding of it, you know. Of course, it's not everyone. I think the vast majority, let's say about 90% of the faculty, already understands the difference and can keep up well. [...] But we have some small groups of teachers who still have difficulty keeping up with the students in this system, especially when it comes to Moodle (C4, 11 min. 45 s; 12 min. 40 s).

The acceptance among teachers for distance education in courses, even as a percentage of the matrix, encounters resistance towards the new.

Technology is one of the differentials of the distance education modality. In the interviews, when speaking about distance education and its importance in different course matrices, the words "technology" and/or "technological" were observed in the speech of all coordinators. We observed other words associated with technology, such as modernity, market, necessity, and pandemic. The association generally comes as an adaptation to the current reality, as a need.

When we opened up space for coordinators to emphasize what they considered relevant to record, the components that emerged in the participants' speech were methodology, public policies, education/licensure crisis, teacher/professional formation, technology, uncertainty, skills and competencies, market, functionality, and trend.

The component with the highest frequency (three times) in the interviewees' speech was public policies, in the sense of absence: policies that promote the valorization of licensure and, consequently, the professional/teacher.

## 4. Conclusion

Through the analysis of the challenges of distance education in the expansion of face-to-face undergraduate courses, we have seen that the growth of distance education occurs mainly through private higher education institutions and has contributed to meeting goal 12 of the current National Education Plan. However, as Lima (2021) affirms, this expansion needs attention, when what is being defended is to ensure the quality of education.

We have observed that the implementation of the distance education modality at PUC Goiás in undergraduate courses occurred, in the analyzed period, with respect, caution, and autonomy, but with resistance on the part of the course committees, but dialogue provided convincing and acceptance of this insertion. Thus, the strategy is considered incremental. The process appeared to occur without internal pressure on course programs to accelerate implementation. The pressure presented by coordinators/course managers had external origins, given making undergraduate programs adequate to the demands of current society.

Regarding the study of distance education policy through the implementation process at PUC Goiás, in the temporal dimension, we know that it was not imposed; it is the responsibility of the committees of each course and intends to endure. The experience of distance education at the institution began with teacher training programs, in which there was demand, especially in the state's interior, leading to the institutional formulation of Cead. For the institutionalization of the program, political action was necessary, which is expressed in Resolution 44/2018-CEPE, of December 10, 2018 (PUC..., 2018). In 2005, offering courses using distance learning hours began with free courses. In 2009, the Philosophy course inserted disciplines into the distance learning modality, and in 2012, it was the turn of the Pharmacy course. In 2013, new courses began to work with this modality: Administration, Accounting Sciences, and Economic Sciences; in 2019, the courses of Biomedicine, Physics, Mathematics, and Chemistry introduced distance learning in the matrix.

The option of using distance education made by PUC Goiás so far considers the model by discipline, maintaining part of the face-to-face workload. This indicates concern in using a percentage much lower than allowed by legislation, despite maintaining the reference at 20%, even though it could be expanded to up to 40%.

The coordinators' main concerns regarding the inclusion of distance learning hours in face-to-face courses can be summarized in two: adequate training of teachers to teach in this modality and the loss of course quality. Among the positive aspects of this process, we highlight: meeting the demands of modernity with the incorporation of technology and flexibility as a need to comply with legislation.

The concern with the educational crisis, especially of teacher education, emerged in almost all the coordinators' speeches since the devaluation of the teaching profession leads to discouraging students interested in teacher training courses.

The research showed that mediation is crucial, and it is not enough for legislation to direct the use of technology in education, as much more is needed, including not only the availability of resources and technical support but also the teacher's preparation to know how to deal with everything and make the appropriate planning, considering the peculiarities of the distance learning modality, continuing as the mediator of the teaching-learning process.

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