ORIGINAL ARTICLE

BRIEF STUDY ON THE ACADEMIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE OF THE UAB SYSTEM AND THE MAINTENANCE OF THE QUALITY OF THE COURSES

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ABSTRACT

This experience report aims to present considerations about the importance assumed by the public policy instituted through the Open University System of Brazil (UAB) in relation to the decentralized strategy of its performance through the courses offered by the institutions that are part of its structure. UAB currently has 147 public institutions, a total of 970 integrated centers and 685 active courses in 5,555 classes, and is constituted as a system formed by public universities that offer higher education courses to sections of the population that have difficulty accessing university education. This model is aligned with the policies of equity and democratization of access to higher education and the need to make the educational offer more flexible in the country. It should be noted that, since the publication of Decree 5.800/2006, experiences accumulated by UAB aimed at the systematic work of raising the quality of the courses, based on the constant improvements of the management processes, both academic and administrative, have solidified the presence of the student at the center of the training process, enabling the raising of the scientific-technological level of the social body in all participating institutions. The report will also present how the selection processes of the main actors (teachers and tutors and support staff) occur, in order to show the transparency, publicity and sustainability of the acts of academic and administrative management.

Keywords: Open University of Brazil, Quality of Training, Academic and Administrative Management, Transparency.

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BREVE ESTUDO SOBRE A ESTRUTURA DE GOVERNANÇA ACADÊMICA E ADMINISTRATIVA DO SISTEMA UAB E A MANUTENÇÃO DA QUALIDADE DOS CURSOS

RESUMO

Este relato de experiência tem como objetivo apresentar considerações acerca da importância assumida pela política pública instituída por meio do Sistema Universidade Aberta do Brasil (UAB) em relação à estratégia descentralizada de sua atuação por meio dos cursos ofertados pelas instituições que integram a sua estrutura. A UAB possui atualmente 147 instituições públicas, um total de 970 polos integrados e 685 cursos ativos em 5.555 turmas (Sisuab, 2024), e se constitui, como um sistema formado por universidades públicas que oferecem cursos de nível superior para camadas da população que têm dificuldade de acesso à educação universitária. Este modelo se alinha às políticas de equidade e democratização do acesso ao ensino superior e à necessidade de flexibilização da oferta educacional no país. Ressalte-se que, desde a publicação do decreto 5.800/2006, experiências acumuladas pela UAB voltadas ao trabalho sistemático de elevação da qualidade dos cursos, a partir dos aperfeiçoamentos constantes dos processos de gestão, tanto acadêmicos como administrativos, solidificaram a presença do (a) discente no centro do processo de formação, possibilitando a elevação do nível científico-tecnológico do corpo social em todas as instituições participantes. O relato vai apresentar ainda, como ocorrem os processos seletivos dos principais atores (docentes e tutores e pessoal de apoio), no sentido de mostrar a transparência, a publicidade e a sustentabilidade dos atos da gestão acadêmica e administrativa.

Palavras-chave: Universidade Aberta do Brasil, Qualidade da Formação, Gestão Acadêmica e Administrativa, Transparência.

BREVE ESTUDIO SOBRE LA ESTRUCTURA DE GOBERNANZA ACADÉMICA Y ADMINISTRATIVA DEL SISTEMA DE LA UAB Y EL MANTENIMIENTO DE LA CALIDAD DE LOS CURSOS

RESUMEN

Este relato de experiencia tiene como objetivo presentar consideraciones acerca de la importancia asumida por la política pública instituida mediante el Sistema Universidad Abierta de Brasil (UAB) en relación con la estrategia descentralizada de su actuación a través de los cursos ofrecidos por las instituciones que integran su estructura. La UAB cuenta actualmente con 147 instituciones públicas, un total de 970 polos integrados y 685 cursos activos en 5.555 grupos (Sisuab, 2024), y se constituye como un sistema formado por universidades públicas que ofrecen cursos de

nivel superior para sectores de la población que tienen dificultades para acceder a la educación universitaria. Este modelo se alinea con las políticas de equidad y democratización del acceso a la educación superior y la necesidad de flexibilizar la oferta educativa en el país. Cabe destacar que, desde la publicación del decreto 5.800/2006, las experiencias acumuladas por la UAB orientadas al trabajo sistemático de elevación de la calidad de los cursos, a partir de la mejora constante de los procesos de gestión, tanto académicos como administrativos, han solidificado la presencia del (a) estudiante en el centro del proceso de formación, posibilitando la elevación del nivel científico-tecnológico del cuerpo social en todas las instituciones participantes. El relato presentará, además, cómo ocurren los procesos selectivos de los principales actores (docentes y tutores y personal de apoyo), con el fin de mostrar la transparencia, la publicidad y la sostenibilidad de los actos de gestión académica y administrativa.

Palabras clave: Universidad Abierta de Brasil, Calidad de la Formación, Gestión Académica y Administrativa, Transparencia.

1. INTRODUCTION

We begin the presentation of this report, which aims to highlight aspects of the academic and administrative governance of the Open University System of Brazil (Universidade Aberta do Brasil – UAB). It is important to emphasize that, over the course of 18 years since the publication of Decree 5,800/2006, the experiences accumulated by UAB during this period have fostered and intensified a systematic effort to improve the quality of its courses and offerings.

The approach to the quality of UAB's courses, as a public policy driven by the Ministry of Education / Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES), takes into account that both administrative and academic governance elements define the system. This system operates under sustainable principles that support decision-making, strengthen the relationships of the stakeholders with society, align good management practices with ethical standards, and maintain a focus on collective objectives.

It is also important to reflect on the variations in the use of the concept of governance. In our report, we focus the analysis within the scope of public policy and its interactive derivations of accountability. Here, accountability is understood not only as the process of reporting, but as part of a broader set of responsibilities assumed by stakeholders in their roles and functions, which are oriented toward outcomes. In our case, the outcome is the maintenance of the quality of the courses offered by UAB.

The study emphasizes the dynamic nature of governance arrangements, which are influenced by different strategies that are not always consensual among the actors involved, due to the inherent capabilities of public organizations (Ipea, 2018). Thus, the goal was to enhance the understanding of this concept and, above all, to raise awareness about the problems and risks associated with the prevalence of a normative-prescriptive view of governance. This perspective can lead to confusion

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and recommendations for practices that fail to consider the diverse, complex realities, structural bottlenecks, and existing inequalities within the public sector.

It is important to emphasize that, through the continuous improvement of integrated management that brings together actions from CAPES, universities, and learning centers (Polos), there has been a significant advancement in the scientific and technological level of the social body across all participating institutions.

Another important factor that can be attributed to UAB is that, despite the country's socioeconomic challenges, it is evident that the inclusion of individuals from low-income families in higher education has enabled access to employment, thereby improving the quality of life for students in various municipalities across the country.

However, it is not only access to higher education that should be prioritized. The broader scope of CAPES' actions, as the managing body of UAB, must also include the systematic promotion of tools and alternatives to ensure that students remain engaged in their educational process until they complete their courses. An important measure in the field of academic management aimed at increasing transparency was taken by the Distance Education Directorate of CAPES, which regulated Article 7 of Ordinance No. 183/2016. This regulation allows universities to structure the selection process for granting scholarships to the social body involved in UAB courses (faculty members and tutors), thereby meeting the requirements of oversight bodies and demonstrating greater transparency, public accountability, and sustainability in the academic and administrative management processes.

More recently, in 2024, another academic initiative will begin in the second semester, focused on providing funding and support to courses with the goal of creating an environment for research, extension, and innovation. This initiative aims to enhance student development and foster a more effective connection between higher education/UAB and the local community, in response to the social and economic challenges faced by the regions where the learning centers (polos) are located.

It is within this context that educational authorities must act, through policies aimed at creating programs that address the reduction of inequalities, which unfortunately remain prominent in our society, where disparities in income and culture continue to persist among students from humble backgrounds.

It is widely agreed among scholars and researchers that a democratic process of access to higher education provides young people from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds with the opportunity to overcome this vulnerable condition. Through the acquisition of knowledge, they are able to enter spaces that, due to the inequalities of a vast country, might otherwise be considered unattainable.

Despite the challenges inherent in the country's socioeconomic context, it is evident that the inclusion and democratization of access to higher education promoted by UAB in the most remote

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municipalities of Brazil significantly contribute to reducing social inequalities of all kinds.

2. DEVELOPMENT

This report, above all, seeks to emphasize the concept of decentralized public policy, in which state actors aim to address social issues through a government plan that seeks solutions via targeted actions. This perception, linked to the role of the manager, as outlined by Rua (2012), becomes consolidated within the field of public sector operations, surpassing the actions of political institutions.

Furthermore, consequently, a public policy in the field of education, focused on higher education, will present discussion elements that align with Thomas Dye's (2014) proposition. Dye argues that the state cannot remain passive in the face of social demands, one of which—of immense significance—is the educational process of individuals.

In this context, where the system under study is the UAB, which operates through decentralized action, it is important to consider the characteristics of Brazilian municipalities and their financial and technical deficiencies. These municipalities still face a reduction in institutional support from the federal government and states.

The premise of decentralizing government actions at any cost can lead to serious distortions, especially when municipal governments are assigned responsibility for basic policies and services. As Silva states:

> [...] due to the lack of a decentralization policy agreed upon between the different levels of government, following a coordinated action by the federal government after the authoritarian regime, particular logics and strong sectoral specificity marked the decentralization processes that took place, or even their absence (Silva, 2010, p. 22).

Therefore, programs coordinated through government action, such as the UAB System, and their clear dependence on state funding, require careful attention. Any eventual budget cuts or resource freezes could hinder the success of the public policy. In the case of education, where multiple stakeholders are involved, such interruptions could lead to the dismantling of teams and physical structures.

This analysis also highlights the importance of the dynamic nature of the governance arrangements established at each public university participating in the UAB system. Given that, at the ministerial level, the strategies for managing the program were set, these universities had to make normative and practical adjustments in response to the different realities they face and their structural bottlenecks.

In line with this, according to Schoute, Budding, and Gradus (2017), "the new Public Governance advances through the relationship of multiple actors in service delivery via networks." Therefore, as universities take on the implementation of public policies from the Ministry of Education, they seek to organize themselves into cooperative networks in order to optimize the scarce budgetary resources available.

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2.1. On Academic Governance

This report aims to present considerations regarding the academic and administrative governance established by the public policy driven by the UAB System, in relation to its decentralized strategy of action through the courses offered by the institutions that are part of its structure.

It is important to highlight as a fundamental element, still in its early stages, the process of institutionalizing Distance Education (EaD) in universities, which is at different levels of development. Regarding this process, a careful approach by the UAB coordinator is necessary, particularly in the construction and approval of regulatory documents (resolutions, bylaws, and ordinances) that serve as guiding instruments for policies and actions within the institution, aligned with its Institutional Development Plan (PDI). Representation in collegiate bodies and other academic forums of the university is vital for the greater sustainability of this modality.

Another equally important perspective is the ongoing maintenance and improvement of physical and technological infrastructure. In this regard, the role of the UAB coordinator in the university's strategic planning will be crucial for balanced expansion, creating guidelines for this growth while considering the quality standards intended and established in the pedagogical projects of the courses.

This growth must be accompanied by the expansion and/or adaptation of the physical space and the entire technological infrastructure of the institution. Improvements in bandwidth and the coordination among different stakeholders to implement this issue, both within the institutions and at the learning centers (polos), should be one of the key goals of the institution's Distance Education (EaD) policy.

Another important aspect for recognizing the course and maintaining the quality of student training is the access of distance education (EaD) students to the physical and virtual libraries of the institution. This includes the acquisition of books for the course collections and a computerized loan system both at the institution and at the learning centers (polos).

This report also aims to highlight both formal and informal governance instruments, which have been established as essential for a system of shared responsibilities. These include: formal structures and contracts (formal instruments); and social values and information sharing (informal instruments).

According to Caldas e Silva (2020, p. 18), "governance is a structure that ensures decisions are made with the purpose of determining sustainable, long-term values for an organization." In the context of an academic management structure, we illustrate below in Figure 01 aspects of academic management that highlight the flexibility of courses offered by higher education institutions (IES) at the learning centers (Polos).
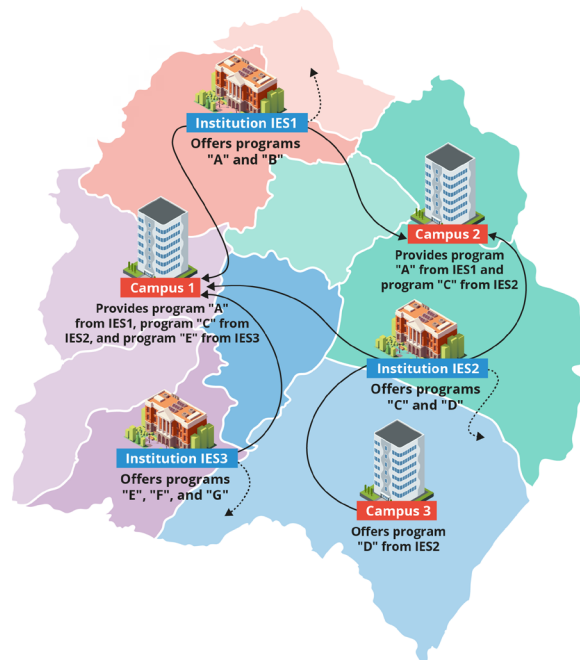
Source: Capes, 2017.

2.2 On Academic Management and Aspects of Quality Governance

At the beginning of this chapter, it is worth emphasizing that, in any management model designed to implement a governmental action within the scope of education, the organizational structure must be conceived in its full extent, especially in a country of continental dimensions.

> There is no single corporate governance system, just as there is no unique model of public administration. However, there are likely some fundamental aspects that support a strong governance structure. The public sector, by adopting governance throughout its structure, organizations, and at the highest levels of administration, could leverage an institutional architecture design that would strengthen a national governance model for the country (Esmerova, 2019).

In this regard, and referring to our case study, considering the seventeen years that have passed since the implementation of the Open University of Brazil (UAB) in public universities, it is important to highlight the ongoing and systematic work of faculty members and administrators aimed at enhancing the quality of all its processes, both academic and administrative.

The composition of academic management within the university context, and the roles of the head coordinator and assistant coordinator, serve as key references in linking management activities with CAPES / Directorate of Distance Education. It is important to emphasize that this relationship is crucial for guiding the system's guidelines in alignment with the objectives set by public policy.

In the area of transparency, while preserving factors of public expenditure control, the role of UAB coordinators, who receive stipends, does not require a selection process, allowing for

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broad participation by the university's faculty. This process is carried out through the publication of a selection notice, widely disseminated, and includes a significant set of requirements aimed at selecting the most qualified candidates with the greatest experience from among the institution's applicants. Among the main requirements are:

- The candidate must be a tenured faculty member at the institution, with proven experience in the fields of Education and related areas, as well as in the area of Distance Education (EAD). They must hold a Master's or Doctoral degree.

Among the key competencies required for the roles of Head Coordinator and Assistant Coordinator of the UAB are:

- *Coordinate the activities of the programs offered by the Educational Institution within the scope of the UAB System;*

- *Hold regular meetings with course coordinators to manage all academic and operational activities;*

- *Receive and evaluate the development reports of the programs prepared by the course coordinators and campus coordinators;*

- *Participate in working groups within the IPES framework for the development of teaching-learning methodologies and instructional material development;*

- *Submit the registration forms for scholarship recipients, by official letter;*

- *Send the Scholarship Commitment Term (Annex II), duly signed, to UAB/DED/CAPES;*

- *Submit the scholarship report for payment, by official letter;*

- *Monitor the financial allocation of resources released for the development and delivery of programs;*

- *Prepare the financial accountability report for the resources released by the Ministry of Education (MEC);*

- *Analyze and arrange for the creation of a new campus in their state;*

- *Manage the UAB/CAPES systems: Sisuab, SGB, Sicapes, Atuab, and others;*

- *Organize the selection processes for UAB/CAPES students and scholarship recipients, or request the Central Administration to designate a Committee for the Development and Implementation of the selection processes when required by legislation;*

- *Promote training for the team involved in UAB activities, in partnership with other departments of the institution (IPES);*

- *Facilitate the creation of new undergraduate and graduate programs, among other tasks.*

It can be observed that, based on the selection requirements and the set of responsibilities assigned to the coordinating roles, these factors significantly contribute to the ongoing processes of maintaining quality management in the programs and offerings. Similarly, regarding the selection process and responsibilities of course coordinators, which, although varying across institutions due to their respective regulations, maintain some essential requirements, namely:

- *The UAB Course Coordinator is a tenured faculty member of the higher education institution (IES) who performs pedagogical coordination activities for distance education programs funded by UAB/CAPES.*

- *They are part of the teaching team of the Open University of Brazil (UAB) program and are a scholarship recipient in the UAB program, with the stipend paid directly by CAPES into a bank account.*

- *Responsibilities of the Course Coordinator - CAPES Scholarship Recipient:*

- *The UAB Course Coordinator has both administrative and pedagogical responsibilities, including:*

- *Coordinating, monitoring, and evaluating the academic activities of the program.*

- *Participating in training and professional development activities at the institution.*

- *Ensure the training of both in-person and distance tutors for each course subject.*

- *Submit the documents requested by the UAB General Coordination for registration in the CAPES scholarship management system.*

- *Prepare and submit reports on the execution of planned activities.*

- *Organize in-person pedagogical activities at the campuses.*

- *Oversee the update of the course's Pedagogical Project, as well as the functioning of the Teaching Staff Structure (NDE).*

Another important selection process carried out by UAB managers is the appointment of professors and tutors for the subjects of each program. According to the quality standards established by UAB, the selection of professors must be based on three main criteria: highest academic degree (Master's, Doctorate, or Postdoctoral), extensive experience in higher education, and proven experience in Distance Education (EAD). The selection process for professors of UAB course subjects may vary from one IPES to another and depending on the specific program. However, we can outline some general information on how this process typically unfolds:

- *Opening of the Notice: UAB announces the opening of positions for teacher-trainers or content developers through a specific notice. This notice outlines the subjects, requirements, responsibilities, and selection criteria.*

- *Applications: Those interested in participating in the selection process must submit their applications within the timeframe specified in the notice. Applications are typically submitted online through the institution's website.*

- *Curriculum Evaluation: Candidates' curricula are evaluated based on criteria such as academic background, professional experience, scientific production, and participation in projects related to the field of education.*

- *Interview or Teaching Test: In some cases, candidates may be invited for an interview or a teaching demonstration. During the teaching test, the candidate presents a lesson or a portion of it, showcasing their teaching ability and mastery of the content.*

- *Ranking and Hiring: After the evaluation of curricula and, if applicable, interviews or tests, candidates are ranked. Those selected are hired as UAB/CAPES scholarship recipients to teach subjects in the distance education programs. The following section will focus on the responsibilities of Teacher-Trainers or Content Developers:*

- *Develop teaching activities in accordance with the course's curriculum.*

- *Participate in teaching activities for the course subjects.*

- *Prepare instructional materials for availability on the teaching platform.*

- *Deliver synchronous classes (when necessary).*

- *Coordinate the activities of the tutors.*

- *Develop systems for assessing students.*

- *Submit reports on student performance and course outcomes.*

Details about specific selection processes will be included in notices published by the universities or institutions responsible for the UAB programs. In the case of the tutor selection process, the same rules apply as those for the selection of professors, with some specific responsibilities tailored to the tutoring role, namely:

- *Facilitate communication between the professor and the student, as well as between the course coordinator and the student;*

- *Monitor academic activities according to the course schedule, both in-person at the teaching campus and virtually through the Learning Management System (LMS) on the Moodle platform;*

- *Support the course instructor in developing teaching activities through the Learning Management System (LMS) on the Moodle platform, other digital tools, and at the teaching campus during in-person meetings;*

- *Establish continuous contact with students and mediate student activities, promoting and encouraging the formation of study groups;*

- *Collaborate in the overall evaluation of the course;*

- *Participate in training and professional development activities organized by the course coordination, including on weekends and holidays when necessary;*

- *Prepare monthly activity reports and submit them to the course coordination;*

- *Participate in the assessment of student learning under the guidance of the course instructor, based on criteria defined in the grading rubric;*

- *Maintain regular access to the Learning Management System (LMS) on the Moodle platform and respond to students' requests within a maximum of 24 hours;*

- *Provide operational support to the course coordination in in-person activities at the campuses, particularly in administering assessments, and take responsibility for the distribution of instructional materials;*

- *Monitor student attendance and maintain contact through the Learning Management System (LMS) on the Moodle platform, telephone, email, and/or in person;*

- *Be proficient in using digital tools such as computers and basic software programs (operating systems, web browsers, office applications, and other digital communication tools);*

- *Participate obligatorily in Virtual Classroom Introduction meetings according to the course schedule;*

- *Participar, quando convocado, de reuniões presenciais junto a Coordenação UAB da sua instituição.*

- *The regulatory actions to which the academic governance of the UAB system is subject aim to guide the system's operations, but they do not act as limitations on the autonomy of the institutions. These regulations are intended to regulate the granting of scholarships and the funding for the UAB's operational costs. It is evident, therefore, that there is particular attention given to the selection processes for the key participants in the UAB, with the aim of ensuring the highest quality and transparency in these processes and their subsequent outcomes.*

Another crucial element is the funding provided by the DED/CAPES for the support team within the IPES/UAB institutions to ensure the successful development of the programs. This refers to the Information Technology (IT) team, the Administrative team, and the Pedagogical team. The IT team plays a fundamental role in managing the technological aspects of course development, such as the establishment, organization, and maintenance of the Learning Management System (LMS). For all IPES/UAB institutions, Moodle has been selected due to its various capabilities and features that it offers. Similarly, the IT team contributes to the development of various digital tools used in the programs, such as Learning Objects (LO) and the creation of repositories for videos, digital teaching materials, and other related resources.

The Administrative team is responsible for ensuring the proper use of financial resources allocated for the UAB programs. This includes tasks such as hiring staff and processing their salaries, issuing per diems and travel expenses for in-person meetings of professors and tutors at the support campuses, and managing the documentation related to scholarships. Additionally, the team organizes purchases made by the IPES (books, workshop materials, consumables, equipment), among other administrative matters.

Last but not least, the work of the Pedagogical team is essential in reviewing and advising professors during the preparation of teaching plans for course development. This includes the organization and revision of digital teaching resources (video lectures, creation of Learning Objects (LO), planning of videoconferences, and the use of existing teaching materials available on the Internet), as well as overseeing all activities related to the professional development of professors and tutors, in collaboration with course coordinators, to ensure continuous teacher training throughout their careers.

With regard to the support campuses, as the operational arm for all administrative and pedagogical actions carried out by the IPES/UAB, the institutional partnership between the IPES and UAB must be maintained on a permanent basis.

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In this relationship, continuous communication between the actors at the campuses and the IPES/UAB is of fundamental importance, with the primary goal of placing the student at the center of the educational process. Among the main objectives being pursued by the campuses, the IPES, and the DED/CAPES are the replacement of equipment, the training of faculty at the campuses (including coordinators, in-person tutors, and others), the selection of administrators and teaching assistants, and, lastly, addressing student demands within the teaching plans (such as organizing support courses in areas like Mathematics, Portuguese, and Educational Technology), social support (issuing student IDs to reduce transportation costs, and providing financial support for students' participation in regional and national academic events). These actions have contributed to reducing student dropout rates and enhancing the quality of the teaching and learning processes for UAB participants.

Another academic initiative was the creation of an institutional repository to house instructional materials with open resources, known as EduCAPES. This repository contains a significant number of digital educational objects, including books, articles, theses, videos, and more, which are made available to students, faculty, and the general public.

It is also important to highlight the partnership between DED/CAPES and the State University of Maranhão (UEMA) through Agreement No. 904067/2020, signed with the aim of promoting the training of Basic Education teachers and undergraduate students nationwide, through courses offered exclusively in the MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) format on UEMA's ESKADA platform.

ESKADA is an open course platform offered by the State University of Maranhão (UEMA) that provides the opportunity to develop new skills from the comfort of home. Here are some details about the ESKADA courses:

- *Course Catalog: The platform offers 62 courses in various fields, including Business, Management, Law, Philosophy, Environmental Education, Food, Health, Languages, and Technology.*

- *Certification by UEMA: Courses completed on ESKADA are certified by the State University of Maranhão. This means that upon completing a course, participants will receive an official certificate from the institution.*

- *Schedule Flexibility: The courses are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, allowing participants to adapt their study schedules according to their availability.*

Since the launch of the ESKADA platform, its capacity to serve has expanded both nationally and internationally, with 1,040,567 students, accessed by participants from 114 countries.

Considering the support to UAB/CAPES, UEMA/ESKADA platform offers training courses for undergraduate students enrolled in the Universidade Aberta do Brasil (UAB) and for high school graduates. These courses are conducted online and aim to enhance skills in various areas. Here are some examples:

- *Portuguese: This course covers basic concepts of text, reading and writing processes, interpretation, and writing in the academic context. It is divided into six modules, including topics such as the*

Portuguese language, text organization, and expression in academic-scientific writing.

• *Mathematics: The course provides technical support to students, addressing fundamental issues of the subject. It consists of nine modules covering topics such as numerical sets, operations with natural, rational, and fractional numbers, exponentiation, root extraction, expressions, equations, and functions.*

• *Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs): This course is aimed at those interested in the digital technology field. It explores the current landscape of technological resources and deepens knowledge in areas such as organizing studies in a virtual environment, networked society, distance education, media, and technological evolution. Note that each course lasts 60 hours and offers a certificate issued by CAPES.*

This support has enabled UAB students, who for various reasons (time away from the classroom, academic reinforcement, the need for support and knowledge updates, personal responsibilities, among others), to receive institutional assistance and continue their education, thus reducing dropout rates and helping them stay on track with their life projects.

Many actions have been carried out in recent years to ensure and enhance the quality of UAB courses. As technological and teaching resources continue to develop, the public policy for Distance Education (EAD) at CAPES has been intensifying its funding efforts within its budgetary structure.

2.2.1 Strategies of DED/CAPES for Lifelong Professional Development of UAB Participants: Some Successful Examples

In the past five years, DED/CAPES has encouraged the creation of Working Groups (WGs) to deepen, research, and provide academic/administrative recommendations to ensure the improvement processes of UAB activities. Among these, we can mention:

• *Implementation of the Scientific Training Pilot Project/UFMA (creation and operation of Research Groups at the UAB's support campuses) /6 Campuses in Maranhão/, which achieved significant results for establishing pedagogical-administrative measures to support the scientific training of future teacher-researchers in UAB courses.*

• *Creation of the WG "Scientific Training of Students in UAB Undergraduate Courses." This group delivered significant results for implementing support measures to encourage UAB students' participation in scientific events at the local, regional, and national levels.*

• *Creation of the WG "PAAS - Academic Action Plan CPCF/CGPC/DED/CAPES" for studying the low graduation rates and high dropout rates, and recommending measures to combat student dropout. This WG provided important recommendations to DED/CAPES aimed at reducing student dropout in UAB courses and improving the overall functioning of the courses across the different IES in the UAB Program.*

• *Creation of the WG "DED/CAPES Academic Advisory Group (GAAD)" to analyze the results obtained by the IES in the last ENADE exam and make recommendations on how to improve the overall work of UAB course collectives at the national level.*

- *Implementation of the Project to Promote the Creation of an Environment for Scientific Initiation, Research, University Extension, and Innovation within the UAB Bachelor's, Technology, and Teaching (Undergraduate) Programs, carried out in collaboration with Public Higher Education Institutions (IPES) and with the support of CAPES.*

- *Creation of the "FORUAB Academic WG" with the goal of - Submitting suggestions to DED-CAPES regarding central issues of the courses offered by UAB via EAD in the fields of teaching, research, and extension. This WG aims to establish a partnership with DED-CAPES to design and implement policies for research, teaching, and extension.*

It is observed that the academic action carried out between DED/CAPES, universities, and advisory groups has focused on strengthening the academic and administrative management structures of the UAB system, with a strong emphasis on maintaining the quality of the courses, which is indeed the main objective of UAB and its network of institutions—namely, to deliver the highest quality education to all corners of the country. In this regard, it is important to note the return, in 2023, of the activities of the UAB Coordinators Forum (FORUAB) and the Forum of Campus Coordinators, as spaces for DED's advisory work, coordination, analysis, discussion, and joint decision-making aimed at improving the operation of the UAB.

2.2.2 Reflections on the Effectiveness of the UAB System

The Universidade Aberta do Brasil (UAB) system plays a direct role in teacher training, which is one of its main objectives. On this subject, Gatti, Barreto, and André (2011) emphasize the importance of teacher education in contemporary society:

> "[...] the initial teacher education is of paramount importance, as it establishes the foundations upon which the teacher is able to carry out educational activities in schools with the children and young people who attend, as well as the foundations of their professionalism and the development of their professional identity" (Gatti; Barreto; André, 2011, p. 89).

Professor Dourado (2008) reports in his studies that, since 2002, there has been a growth in policies for teacher education with an emphasis on distance education (EaD). Therefore, understanding the outcomes of the policy advocated by the UAB System for its graduates becomes relevant, since this policy primarily aims at the training of teachers to work in Basic Education.

It is, therefore, an effort through an induced policy aimed at the development of the distance education modality, with the purpose of expanding and decentralizing the offering of higher education courses and programs, thus democratizing access and reaching municipalities far from the capitals.

Under this condition, the Universidade Aberta do Brasil (UAB) will provide access to higher education for individuals residing in municipalities that lack public higher education institutions. According to Hernandes (2016, as cited in ALONSO, 2010), distance education is seen as an educational modality aimed at the rapid expansion of higher education enrollment, enabling the government to substantially improve the population's education level.

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The courses offered by the Universidade Aberta do Brasil (UAB) are implemented through face-to-face support centers. As of 2023, more than 990 centers are linked to UAB across all Brazilian states, equipped with technological resources and support for the teaching and learning activities of Distance Education (EaD).

According to Martins, Nascimento, and Sousa (2018, p. 02) "[...] the face-to-face support center serves, in many regions, as the main or only location for higher education training." There are more than 919 course offerings spread across 150 public higher education institutions, which have already graduated over 330,000 students, with 80% of them (264,000) having completed degree programs in teaching.

3. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

It is important to discuss in this experience report, in addition to the elements already presented that indicate a qualitative basis for the courses, some characteristics of the profile of students at the Universidade Aberta do Brasil (UAB), based on the article titled "*A Brief Study on the Socioeconomic Profile of UAB Students*", published in October 2023. The study presented data showing that, in most cases, the students are women, and the majority of active enrollees are between 30 and 39 years old. They completed high school in public schools, in the traditional teaching modality, have an individual monthly income of up to R$ 1,431.00, are pursuing their first undergraduate degree, and work full-time, with a weekly workload of 40 hours or more.

Regarding UAB (2006), a new challenge will be the effective integration of research, extension, and innovation into the curricular activities as a valuable opportunity for improving education. This integration will enable a closer connection between higher education and the reality of local communities, providing an assertive response to the social and economic challenges at local and regional levels.

Therefore, we believe that an integrated set of administrative and academic actions can contribute to meeting new curricular guidelines, updating the pedagogical projects of the courses, and fostering the creation and development of tools for monitoring and assessing the quality of UAB courses. These tools could, in fact, provide evidence of the impact of the training on the development of the country, on regional realities, on the lives of graduates, their families, and their communities.

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