Teaching practice in the Distance Education: an analysis of the competences required

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Abstract: With the advent of the new technologies and its multiple possibilities of use, it is verified that some institutions are starting to offer educational programs by distance. UFSC is one of the institutions that had adhered to distance education with the incentive of UAB project, since 2005. However, to teach in virtual environment requires a specific set of competences - knowledge, skills and attitudes - of the teacher, and the objective of this paper is to identify them, through an applied, qualitative and descriptive study of case research. The collection of data is documentary, bibliographical and through structured interviews. The results of the study indicate that the perceived teacher’s role in the distance education is of mediator of the teaching-learning process, where had been set 34 competences, being 16 techniques (knowledge and skills) and 18 behavioral ones (attitudes). These competences were distributed in the three identified moments of the teacher’s performance that are: the contact with the student, the contact with the tutor and the production of didactic material.

Keywords: competences. teachers. distance education.

1. Introduction

The universities, along their course, are influencing and being influenced by the environment where they are inserted. The advent of new technologies and their several possibilities of use had pushed these institutions to follow always ahead of its time. Thus, to meet this need, it appears that many institutions are beginning to offer distance education programs.
This category of education presents features that differentiate from the conventional education. According to Moore (cited by KEEGAN, 1996) the conventional education is formally applied in the classroom, with instructions taught in schools, colleges or universities, where teachers and students are physically present at the same time and in the same place, while the DE (Distance Education) is defined by Moore and Kearsley (1996) as the planned learning that generally occurs in different places through teaching and performance comes from special techniques in the design of the course, special instructional techniques, special methods of communication through electronic, as well as a special organization and administrative arrangements.

Regarding to the conventional education, being more known and widely used in all layers of society, people are just more familiar, where the dependence of an instructor, to attend a classroom, to have a pre-established time, to emphasize the emotions, to stress the body language, to make people live with each other face to face, resulting in a better exchange of experiences. To provide these advantages, the DE uses the technology.

The UFSC is one of the institutions that joined to the methodology of distance teaching. Established in 1960, the Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC) consolidated itself as one of the best institutions of higher education in Brazil and Latin America. It is in the centre of many actions in the field of research and scientific production, in interchanges and projects of academic mobility and in the constant exchanges of experiences with researchers and organizations with high competence. With the encouragement of a project of the Open University, since 2005, the UFSC has extended the quota of students achieved through the distance education.

Thus, this paper aims to identify the competences required of the teachers for their action in DE, specifically in the distance graduate course of Administration of this institution.

2. Distance Education

For some time, the use of the resources of information technology in education, training and information has been away from the discussions purely theoretical and becomes reality. The technological resources are occupying variable spaces in public and private companies, though, most of the time, so poorly defined or purely promotional, as highly valued aspect in institutional messages. However, do not seem remaining doubts about the potential for using these tools in the process of education.

Anyway, the use of new technologies in education, training and information has been received, often, with some reservations. The concern is based on the fear that there is not a compromise between the new technology and the educational objectives of the traditional school, if we suppose that solutions
like these are as an universal elixir, capable of solving all the ills of education, training and information (Klaes, 2005).

In the same way, is Peraya (1994), which reports that there is a new vision (developed from 1974), which is substantially influenced by social and cognitive sciences, according to which the Education System is now more focused on learning, instead of the traditional focus on teaching. Knowledge has been now considered as socially built by the action, communication, information and reflection as well as involving the learners.

The implications for education, training, information and professional training are enormous: the learning can be independent of time and place, beyond available at any stage of life. The context of learning will be technologically much more rich, the learners or students will have access not only to a large amount of media, also a large amount of information sources (PERAYA, 1994), leading to a real "communicational opulence", according to the author.

The growth and diversity of the distance education are enormous – the number of types of individuals who learn outside the traditional classrooms the variety from who is providing this service and the variety and effectiveness of new technologies that serve as tools for teaching. The distance education is becoming increasingly global, creating an enormous amount of new alliances with the association of traditional educational institutions with companies, governments and international organizations to provide and use the distance education.

The Ministry of Education (2005) defines the distance education as educational mode in which the mediation didactic-educational in the processes of teaching and learning occurs with the use of media and information and communication technologies, with students and teachers developing educational activities in several places or times.

This way, the evolution of electronic media can be considered one of the most responsible for maximizing the use of DE systems. As the attendance to the student has become possible in any area of the world, since he has access to the technology and, especially, in “real time”, the use of DE in educational programs has increased considerably over the years.

We realize empirically that there is a difficulty in the use of DE, in relation to the fear to try something new. This is part of the line of study by various authors both in education, psychology, and administration, because usually the new requires of teachers and other professionals involved with education a change of attitude. That is why the use of technology in education, can often be misinterpreted because there is still a created culture that gives benefit to the conventional education (SANCHO, 1998).

As the distance education broadens its scope and use new tools for delivery of teaching, the concerns about its effectiveness tend to grow. The programs of the distance education still has a lack of credibility in many countries and the students who make these courses often have difficulty in obtaining recognition of its efforts (Klaes, 2005).
Distance learning differs from conventional teaching primarily in isolation and in a greater self-discipline required of their students. Because of these characteristics, is crucial to ensure that the distance education provides adequate support to students and interactivity.

While the programs of distance education to have a reputation for being far more effective in relation to costs, the study has shown that this is true only in cases where enrollment reached high levels in relation to expenses and rates of completion, according Capper (1990).

Vergara (2006) argues that the history of pedagogy, which has focused in the presence teaching, emphasizes the importance of teacher-student relationship in the process of knowledge construction. According to the author this is one of the issues that emerge during the discussion about DE, and it is commonly placed as a limitation. The author argues that this relationship is true, but in a different way. The relationship involves, besides teachers and students, tutors, monitors, and others involved in the process.

According Belloni (2006), the role that the teacher takes the DE is the student’s partner in the construction of knowledge, that is, there happen the teacher’s transformation of an individual entity in a collective entity, where the focus will no longer be teaching to be learning.

Therefore, the author draws attention to the need for a teacher training focused on those needs, which prepare them for technological innovation and its pedagogical consequences, and for continuing education.

For that reason, the staff of teachers must be prepared for this change in modality of teaching. The profile of the student is also differentiated and this entire context requires other competences from the teachers who do not apply to the traditional model.

The teaching activity is currently, according Delors et. al. (1996), a lonely activity, as far as each professional must face its responsibilities and professional duties, that is, each teacher is largely responsible for their own training.

However, these competences to be developed, can and should be developed through programs of development of people, that besides the issue of improvement of the professional, offers benefits to the University through the management and investment of the competences and knowledge, as Dalmau (2001).

It is understood, in that case, competence as expertise – which are the knowledge and skills and behavioral competences – which are the attitudes.

Thus, Leme (2005) defines competence as the sum of technical competences and behavioral competences, as shown in Table 1 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge</th>
<th>To know</th>
<th>Technical Competence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Skill</td>
<td>To know how</td>
<td>Behavioral Competence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude</td>
<td>To want to do</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1 – Discrimination of Competences
Source: Leme (2005, p. 18)

Thus, Melo et. al. (2006) claim that teacher training should be part of a broad and consistent policy of valuing education, where the responsibility must be shared by governments, educational institutions and society, which receives the biggest benefit.

3. Methodological Procedures

With the aim of identifying which are the competences required of teachers, it was decided to conduct an applied research with qualitative basis, for the reason that intends to generate knowledge to practice application, addressed to the solution of specific problems.

This work was developed through a case study descriptive, for reasons of accuracy and impartiality, because it is necessary for the researcher to have a complete impartiality conduct.

The process of determining the course to be studied and people interviewed for the survey was intentional. According to Silva and Menezes (2000), the cases chosen must represent “the proper trial” of the universe of research. To that end, the project chosen to be studied would meet the requirements that were stipulated by the author: linked to a renowned institution, to allow access to information. On the other hand, the choice of interviewees reached the criterion of being involved with the course in examination, being part of the managing Commission or professional of the institution expert and working with DE.

According Lakatos and Marconi (1990) regarding to the means, the characteristics are a documentary research by the source for data collection consisting of primary sources and internal documents, virtual and physical files with data about the course, institutional website, reports and other documents.

For this work were collected data through four major sources: direct observation, documentary analysis, literature review and structured interviews. There were conducted 10 (ten) interviews.

The data analysis was done through the use of discourse analysis of the interviews and the establishment of relations between the documentary analyses, information obtained in interviews and the observation, correlating these relations with the theory. Thus, the analyses were not restricted to the eyes of the researchers.

4. Results
Analyzing the interviews conducted in confrontation with the theory, we realize that the teacher carry out in DE in different ways depending on the addressees with whom he is interacting. Each type of interaction involves a specific set of competences, which may or may not coincide.

The interviewees were questioned about the role of the teacher in the DE and what competences they considered necessary for the performance of teachers in such educational modality.

Thus, considering the concept of competences as the set of technical competences (knowledge and skills) and behavioral competences (attitudes), the competences mentioned by respondents were grouped following this classification.

Of discourse analysis performed, was identified that the teacher acts mainly in three stages. The first moment is the contact with the student. That happens in this way, during the recording of classes, in video conferences, seminars and in other times or virtual presence.

The second point is the contact with the tutor. This set of competences relates to the interaction with the teacher with the mentoring. This is in the planning and the recording of the classes, video conferences, and seminars, training of the tutors, solution of questions and drawing up tests.

The third time for action is in the production of didactic material, which is composed of the text-book, exercises, virtual or presence activities, in the preparation of seminars and preparation of tests.

From interviews and the comparison with the studied theory, were listed 34 competences required of teachers who are willing in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technical Competences</th>
<th>Behavioral Competences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of content</td>
<td>To be accessible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of technology</td>
<td>To motivate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication skills (oral/written)</td>
<td>Planning of time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability of using the technology</td>
<td>Knowing how to listen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedagogical domain</td>
<td>To be available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of the distance modality</td>
<td>Clarity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pragmatism (to link theory and practice)</td>
<td>Initiative to participate in the process actively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>To identify the needs of students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capacity for synthesis</td>
<td>To identify capacity of students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of the best sources for research</td>
<td>Pro-activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction of the lesson (of the learning)</td>
<td>To build relationships, links</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of the system of mentoring and its attributions</td>
<td>To instigate the research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to work in teams with mentors</td>
<td>To be open for discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capacity of detailing</td>
<td>To identify the capacity for self-learning of the student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To identify the student’s readiness for</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To take the student's competences in the construction of a learning scenario
Willingness to change

Table 2 – Set of competences
Source: primary data.

These competences were associated with each moment of the performance of teachers, again based on interviews, and in contrasting with the theory. Many of these competences occur in more than one moment, but in different levels.

Regarding teacher performance in the contact with the student, the competences identified were:

<table>
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<tbody>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of technology</td>
<td>To motivate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral communication skills</td>
<td>Knowing how to listen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability of using the technology</td>
<td>To identify the needs of students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedagogical domain</td>
<td>To identify capacity of students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of the distance modality</td>
<td>Pro-activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pragmatism (to link theory and practice)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Capacity for synthesis</td>
<td>To be open for discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of the best sources for research</td>
<td>To identify the capacity for self-learning of the student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction of the lesson (of the learning)</td>
<td>To identify the student’s readiness for technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To take the student’s competences in the construction of a learning scenario</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Willingness to change</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 - Competences required in the contact with the student
Source: primary data.

So, at the time the teacher works in contact with the mentoring, competences identified are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technical Competences</th>
<th>Behavioral Competences</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of content</td>
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<tr>
<td>Knowledge of technology</td>
<td>To motivate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication skills</td>
<td>To be available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability of using the technology</td>
<td>Clarity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4 - Competences required in the contact with the tutor
Source: primary data.

Finally with regard to teacher performance in the production of educational materials, it has the following provision:

Table 5 - Competences required in the production of teaching material
Source: primary data.

It is observed that under the technical competences, they diverge little between the moments of the teacher’s action. Competences like the knowledge of content, of the technology, of the distance modality and of the best sources for research, the communication skill, pedagogical domain and the organization are required in the three stages. While the pragmatism, the capacity for synthesis and of detailing, for example, are more specific. It is observed that these similar technical competences with regard to, mainly to the domain of the teacher on the content taught and the strategies of teaching.
On the other hand, under behavior, there is greater variation between the competences. It should be noted that attitudes like to motivate, pro-active, the identification of the capacity for self-learning of the student and willingness to change are common to all three times.

According to the interviewees and with the theory, these competences are directly related to the distance mode and the change of the presence paradigm.

5. Conclusion

The distance education will be formally installed in the system of Higher Education in 50 Public Institutions of Brazil (MEC, 2006) and because it is something new and recent, it demands still much effort, work, organization and commitment of all involved in the process. Only like this it is feasible to enforce operating conditions with quality and credibility.

It is known that there is a paradigm shift and in the mental model by the teacher for his performance in the DE. This change requires from the teacher the development of competences other than those traditionally used in the presence model. Regardless of the modality of teaching, the teacher moves from owner or from transmitter of knowledge to mediator of the teaching-learning process and, especially in the distance mode, acts as a motivating and incentive for this process.

As a result, in response to the objective of identifying which are the competences required of teachers for their performance in the DE, it has came through a list of 34 competences, with 16 technical competences (knowledge and skills) and 18 behavioral competences (attitudes).

These competences shall be subdivided in three moments of action of the teacher in DE, that is: contact with the student, contact with the tutor and production of didactic material. The technical competences are distributed more uniformly between moments of action, while the attitudinal issue shows more variation, remaining only in those that are directly related to the distance mode itself.

The identification of these competences allows the teacher to know their need for development in this context. From this list of competences can be measured in degrees how much each one is required, and then evaluate the teacher performance, for example.

Finally, so that there could be an effective policy for the development and teacher training, essential for the management of people in these institutions, the identification and analysis of the profile of competences required is essential for the training of those can be targeted more effectively.

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Factors Influencing the Dropout in the Distance Graduate Courses

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Abstract: With the intention to know the pilot-project of the course of Administration by distance of the Federal University of Santa Catarina, this paper aims to find out which are the main factors influencing the dropout of students of the first module. In terms of methodology, this research is characterized as descriptive, ex-post-facto, applied, participant, a case study and predominantly quantitative. Concerning the results, in the categories external to the institutions, it was obtained the following most relevant indicators: time to study, dislocation to the pole of teaching, not having prior knowledge about the course and adaptation to the distance mode. Concerning internal categories, the main factors were: contact with teachers, motivation and encouragement from the tutor, the relationship with the tutor, lack of tutors at the poles, the structure of the poles of teaching, interactivity of the virtual learning environment (VLE); credit hours of the course, deadline for delivery the exercises.

Keywords: Distance education, dropout, graduate in Business Administration.

1. Introduction

Souza (1999) states that the researches on the phenomenon in Brazil are still modest, however, the concern of scholars is to discover the main causes of the dropout, to propose alternatives for a solution aimed at raising the number of students who complete their courses.

Corroborating with this statement, Biazus (2004) highlights that it is important to verify and search the reasons (causes) that motivate the dropout, in order to minimize the number of students who abandon higher education, which could lead the course to carry on a constant assessment, and especially in their
inter-relationships with the community, in order to search for quality of teaching-learning and its responsibility with the society, with the aim of optimize the investments undertaken.

By means of the advent of new technology and its various possibilities of use, it appears that several institutions are beginning to offer its educational programs in the distance mode, either in whole or in part of the curriculum grade. However, seems that not all are able to achieve favorable results, because the planning of courses with such characteristics presents their specific that distinguishes it from the presence mode.

The Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC) is one of the institutions that joined to that teaching methodology. With the encouragement of a project of the Open University of Brazil (UAB), the UFSC has been extended the quota of students achieved through distance education.

Under this project, it is the pilot of an Administration course by distance in a partnership between the UAB (MEC\(^1\)) and the Bank of Brazil. Started on 10th July 2006, the course of Administration by distance of the Federal University of Santa Catarina was offered to the Bank of Brazil staff of the agencies installed in Santa Catarina, employees of UFSC and other public employees. The course began with 654 students, taking at the end of the first module a dropout rate of 16.8% (110 students).

Accordingly, with the intention of a future implementation of an efficient information system for this pilot project, this study aims to lay bare what are the main factors influencing in the dropout of students of the first module of the course of Administration by distance of UFSC.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Distance education

The technology, coupled with globalization, is one of the major causes of this new paradigm of education, creating new possibilities for dynamic information and communication. The distance education (DE), each day, wins new followers, with the development of new forms of communication, making possible the methodology of teaching in different places and times.

There are many possible definitions and presented, but there is a minimum consensus around the idea that DE is the mode of education where the activities of teaching-learning are developed primarily (and in many cases, exclusively) without the students and teachers are present in the same place simultaneously (ABED, 2006).

According to Moore (1996, p. 2) the DE can be understood as:

\[\text{the planned learning that normally occurs in different places through teaching and the results comes from the special}\]

\(^1\) Ministry of Education.
techniques of the design of the course, special instructional
techniques, special methods of communication through
electronic, as well as a special organization and administrative
arrangements.

To make come true a distance course is necessary the introduction of an
adequate infrastructure, trained professionals to perform the activities of planning,
design of materials, evaluation and support services to students and teachers
(MOARES, 2004).

In this sense, DE is presented as an important instrument of interchange
and articulation of knowledge and information between different virtual learning
communities, which shows a great pedagogical potential.

Within the proposed structure to DE, can be cited the role of the teacher
and the role of the tutor. The teacher has the primary function to develop the
methodologies used in their discipline, so that it contemplates the creation,
storage, dissemination and control of knowledge. The tutor is responsible for
monitoring the students, and the link between the student and the teacher.

The evolution of electronic media can be considered one of the most
responsible for maximizing the use of DE systems. As the student’s answering
was made possible in any area of the world, since he has access to the technology
and, mainly, in “real time”, the use of DE in education programs has increased
considerably over the years.

2.2 Dropout

Firstly it fits conceptualize dropout, which according Biazus (2004) is the
exit of the student of the university or one of their courses, either permanently or
temporarily, for any reason, except the graduation.

According to Souza (1999), the dropout phenomenon worries the
universities of Brazil and the world, making its complexity and scope as the
subject of studies and analysis by researchers worldwide.

Among the international researches on dropout, stands out Latiesa (in
SOUZA, 1999) which studied dropout in the U.S. and European universities in the
period from 1960 to 1986. This study found that the best outcomes of the
university system are presented by Finland, Germany, Holland and Switzerland,
while the worst results occur in the United States, Austria, France and Spain. In
the U.S., the dropout rates are around 50%, as occurs on average in Brazilian
universities.

Another relevant study on dropout in the Institutions of Higher Education
is of the Bordas (1996), which disclosed that the index's general dropout of the
degree courses in Brazil would be around 50%, alarmingly high, which it
supposes, that the universities are not giving due attention to the phenomenon,
wasting much of their budgetary resources with the dropout, not know how to
manage it and under-evaluated by the managers of the universities that indicate
causes that are not always relevant.
2.2.1 Dropout in distance education

To Garcia Aretio (1986) is normal that in the distance education the number of dropouts is very high.

As to the national scene, the research of the Brazilian Statistical Yearbook of Open and Distance Education - ABRAED - (2007) points out some information on Dropout in DE, in Brazil. As for factors that influenced the dropout of this student stands out: lack of time and financial situation that did not allowed continuing the course. An important information indicates that in the courses of graduation, 96% of dropout occurs in the first semesters of the course and is thus important the research since the beginning of the course on the dropout of students.

Also it is worth mentioning that many students are surprised with the consistency of the courses, as there is a feeling, usually frustrated, that the courses by distance are easier that those in the presence modality (ABRAED, 2007).

In relation to the factors influencing in the dropout of students, it was observed several studies, taking it as a basis the proposed by Biazus (2004), which presents an Instrument of Causes of Dropout, it has established a systematic evaluation of the teaching-learning process for the higher education with emphasis in courses of Accounting.

From this model, it was made an adaptation to the courses of graduation in the distance mode, according to the state of the art, as well as declarations collected from the students who abandoned the course of Administration of UFSC in the distance modality. Thus, it was obtained the table with the categories and its respective indicators below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXTERNAL CATEGORIES</th>
<th>INTERNAL CATEGORIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Socio Political Economic</td>
<td>Behavioral attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support from the company that works to make this course</td>
<td>Teaching methodology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valuation of the diploma in the labor market</td>
<td>Orientation of the course coordination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time to study</td>
<td>Motivation and encouragement from the tutor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly hours of labor</td>
<td>Relationship with the tutor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dislocation to the pole of teaching</td>
<td>Contact with teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to computer and or Internet for study</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding of subjects</td>
<td>Institutional reasons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriateness of the content with the work</td>
<td>Lack of tutors at the poles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Access to libraries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Vocation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suitability for the profession</td>
<td>Laboratory of TI at the poles of teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be graduated in another university</td>
<td>Interactivity of the Virtual Environment for Teaching and Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adaption to the university system</td>
<td>Communication media offered to contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changing of personal or professional interest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be studying simultaneously another course</td>
<td>Requirements of teaching methodology</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Factors Influencing the Dropout in the Distance Graduate Courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not have prior knowledge about the course of Administration by distance</th>
<th>Credit hours of the course curriculum</th>
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<tr>
<td>Relationship of the curriculum with the labor market</td>
<td>Individual Characteristics</td>
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<td>Student’s performance criteria</td>
<td>Health Problems</td>
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<td>Association between theory and practice</td>
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<td>Relationship between the content of the subjects</td>
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<td>Face-to-face meetings</td>
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<td>Cyclical</td>
<td>Contact with classmates</td>
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<td>Economic financial situation</td>
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<td>Influence of the family</td>
<td>Deadline for delivery the exercises</td>
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<td>Changing of residence or city</td>
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<td>Changing of marital status</td>
<td>Evaluation of the exams</td>
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<td>Responsibility in the economic livelihood of the family</td>
<td>Instructional material offered</td>
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<td>Quality of the course of Administration by distance</td>
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</table>

Source: adapted from Biazus (2004)

3. Methodological Procedures

After the previous stage, which one serves as the theoretical basis for achieving the objectives, are presented the methodological procedures used in this work.

Concerning the type of study, it is characterized as descriptive, ex-post-facto, applied, participant and a case study. In relation to the approach, it is classified as predominantly quantitative.

In the present survey were collected information of the course by distance from the institutional documents of the Department of Sciences of Management of the Federal University of Santa Catarina.

Regarding the type of cutting, this research is cross-sectional, in this case, with the students who had abandoned the first module of the course in 2006.

The primary data were collected of students who abandoned and the frequent ones of the course of Administration by distance of UFSC. The main secondary data collected are pertaining to factors of dropout in higher education, characteristics of the distance courses, and dropout rates in several courses. These data were demarcated to the formulation of the instrument of data collecting with the target audience.

Questionnaires were applied with students who dropped out, with the universe of research 110 people. This application was made through electronic mail and phone, thus resulting in the answer of 54 students who dropped out.

With that, by using a scale of assessment verbal, were sorted the items as: not contributed to the abandonment of the course, contributed little to the
abandonment of the course, contributes greatly to the abandonment of the course and contributed decisively to the abandon the course.

After the data collection comes the section of treatment. The obtained data were treated statistically by means of descriptive analysis, with the exposure of measures such as frequency, mean, median and mode. It was also used the crossing of data for analyses more complete and the analysis by correlation. These analyses were made by means of statistical softwares such as SPSS and Minitab.

4. Course of Administration by distance of UFSC

Given the demand driven by the Ministry of Education, with the purpose to meet the needs of state enterprises in terms of qualification of its public employees, the UFSC, in partnership with public institutions of higher education of various units of the federation, participates of the project of creation of the Course of Graduate in Administration, in the distance mode as a program of the Open University of Brazil - UAB/MEC.

The courses use, then, a combination of instructional materials: printed, teleconferences, video classes, Internet, videoconferences and, mainly, a system for monitoring the student by distance, with the support from tutors and mentors through call centers (0800), fax, e-mail and post mail. Such courses of short duration and in many cases, fully at distance, have shown excellent results, given a large demand from professionals in all areas.

5. Results

Following, are presented the main research results with the analysis of the descriptive factors of the categories of dropout and its indicators.

Initially, there is the analysis of the external categories to the Institutions of Higher Education (IHE).

As for indicators of the category Socio Political Economic, it is observed that with more emphasis has the time dedicated to study, which was cited as the decisive factor for the abandonment of the course by 33.33% of the respondents, another 24% cited this indicator as contributor to the decision to abandon the course. This result comes to corroborate with several researches carried out on dropout, in both the presence and the distance modality. In the latest research conducted by ABED (2006) the time factor was the most cited by respondents as well.

Other indicators that have had significant results were the dislocation to the pole of teaching and access to computer or Internet for study, which obtained about 30% of respondents saying that they had contributed to the abandonment of the course. It is worth noting that this result as to dislocation to the pole of teaching is necessary due to the fact of the final exams of each subject must be performed in presence, representing 60% of the student’s final grade. Besides,
having access to computer or internet is essential for accomplish this course, because almost all activities are asked in the Virtual Environment for Teaching and Learning, which contains the exercises, forums, chats and other tools necessary for communication with the tutor.

A further category analyzed was Personal Vocation of students who abandoned the course. Within the indicators analyzed, it was found that have showed the highest values in terms of the decisive contribution to the abandonment of the course were the change of personal or professional interest (12.96%) and be studying simultaneously another course (14.81%).

The indicator adaptation to the university system, be graduated in another university and not having prior knowledge about the course of Administration by distance, present highlight frequencies to the abandonment of the course. It should be noted that the category not having prior knowledge about the course is classified as external to the course, can also be an internal problem of the institution, because the selection and dissemination of the course may not have been sufficient and efficient.

Concerning the category of Individual Characteristics, stands out the indicator Adaptation to the distance mode, mentioned by 57.41% of the respondents as a contributing factor to the abandonment of the course, the most significant percentage in this research together with the time factor, as discussed earlier. As seen in the state of the art, the distance mode requires some characteristics of its participants, especially discipline, which means that not everyone is suited to their system.

Nevertheless, the course meets the previous expectations of the students also had significant percentage, around 40% of participants mentioned as a factor in the abandonment of the course.

The last category external to the institution to be examined is the cyclical. None indicator of this category was highlighted to the factors of the course dropout and the indicator influence of the family had results that are more significant in this category on the evaluation contributed much to the abandonment of the course with 7.41% of the answers.

Next, it presents the analysis of the internal categories

Starting the analysis of the internal categories to the IHE, there is the behavioral attitude. As a result more relevant, we have the contact with teachers, with 37.04% of the answers. In the analyzed course, the contact between teacher-student happens mainly in videoconferences, which have as their objective the interaction between these parties. Video lessons are recorded with the content of subjects, and the videoconferences are intended to questions and doubts that may arise. There have also chats with teachers. Despite the use of these tools, many students still feel a lack of more direct contact with teachers.

Other two factors cited as decisive to the abandonment of the course were the motivation and encouragement from the tutor (7.41%) and relationship with the tutor (9.26%). The factors related to mentoring, according to other studies in DE, should have special attention, because in many courses the dropout of the course is closely linked with the performance of the tutors. With that, it was carried out a comparative analysis between the performance of the tutors, through
evaluation of performance answered by students of the course, and the number of students who abandoned per tutor. In spite of the rates are not conclusive, with a correlation of about -0.2, it is realized that the result shows a trend that there is an inverse link between the factors, that is, the higher the performance of the tutor, the lower will be his index of students who abandoned.

In the analysis of institutional reasons, a factor that has been more relevant is the lack of tutors at the poles, cited by 14.81% as decisive factor for the abandonment, by 9.26% as contributed greatly and 11.11% as contributed little to the abandonment of the course. The structural design adopted by the course in analysis shows its mentoring concentrated at the headquarters of the IHE, with a team of about 25 tutors, with a ratio of 25 students per tutor. The mentoring works twelve hours a day (8:00 to 20:00) from Monday to Friday, answering by phone, fax, email or virtual learning environment. All questions of the students are answered within 48 hours. In the poles of teaching there have the coordinators of the poles and the monitors, which are responsible for administrative matters.

In addition, other indicators most cited by respondents were the structure of the poles of teaching and interactivity of the Virtual Environment for Teaching and Learning (VLE). Concerning the structure of the pole, in the beginning of the course, 4 poles were not yet constituted, which may have led to this rate of negative responses. Also, the VLE of the course has been replaced in the second semester, due to finding the little interactivity of it, it is being used the Moodle platform currently.

The last category analyzed was the requirements of teaching methodology, which presents the greatest number of indicators in this research. The highlights are the results of the indicator credit hours of the course curriculum, mentioned by more than 55% of respondents as a factor relevant to the abandonment of the course. As already mentioned the course of the Administration by distance of UFSC is of 3,000 hours and has 4 ½ years in duration, following the national curriculum guidelines. The subjects of the course are not simultaneous, taking around a subject per month. Another indicator cited by 35.19% of the interviewees was the deadline for delivery the exercises; the course uses a systematic of collection of one activity per week, to avoid the accumulation of content.

The index of face-to-face meetings stands out also, cited by 47.17%. As already explained, the presence meetings are made by videoconferences and final exams, which have two videoconferences and one exam per month. At the end of each semester, there is a seminar presented by the students and the teachers evaluate them in the poles of teaching.

Another factor cited by 38.89% of respondents was the evaluation of the exercises. This evaluation is carried out by tutors, according to a response model and information given by teachers of the subject.

6. Conclusion
The efficient management and administration require not only a competent team, but also systems and administrative routines well defined and efficient, besides information systems, planning, and continuous monitoring (UNESCO, 1998).

In search of an information system for the course of Administration of UFSC in the distance mode, this study aimed to identify which the main factors are influencing in the dropout of students of the first module of the course of the Administration by distance of UFSC.

Regarding the external categories of the institution, the following factors as most relevant indicators were:
a) Socio Political Economic: time to study, dislocation to the pole of teaching and access to computer and or Internet for study;
b) Personal Vocation: changing of personal or professional interest, be studying simultaneously another course and do not have prior knowledge about the course of Administration by distance;
c) Individual Characteristics: adapting to the distance mode, and
d) Cyclical: influence of the family.

As for the internal categories the main factors were:
a) Behavioral Attitude: contact with teachers, motivation and encouragement from the tutor, relationship with the tutor;
b) Institutional Reasons: lack of tutors at the poles, structure of the poles of teaching and interactivity of the Virtual Environment for Teaching and Learning;
c) Requirements of teaching methodology: credit hours of the course curriculum, deadline for delivery the exercises and face-to-face meetings.

After the identification and presentation of this result, we propose a detailed analysis and a monitoring of the current students to take control of the factors that could lead them to the abandonment of the course.

Finally, we point out that the dropout should not be seen only as a problem of cost of the Institutions of Higher Education, but also as a social problem. The qualitative aspects of learning and acquisition of new knowledge and skills are intangible; making the loss arising from dropout to the IHEs and to the society is immeasurable.

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