



# Chapter 37

## The Innovation Process In Distance Higher Education

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### ABSTRACT

The innovation process takes place from its implementation or restructuring according to the institution's vision. Innovation is the ability to transform an idea, product, or service, according to Carreteiro (2009). Starting from the premise that Distance Education aims at the transformation of the individual, it is closely related to communicational technological advances, which is a process of constant innovation. The article is bibliographical research

and is justified by the significant growth of this teaching modality in the country. It aimed to understand what innovation is in the context of distance higher education. The article is divided into 04 parts: a brief history of Distance Education, innovation, innovation strategies, and innovation as a business model. It is concluded that innovation must make use of strategies that dialogue with the entire organization to achieve the desired results. For this, it is necessary to review paradigms and that all those involved seek innovation continuously and procedurally under the organization's mission.

**Keywords:** Innovation, innovation strategies, distance education.

### 1 INTRODUCTION

Today, distance education has gained vertiginous space in the Brazilian education scenario. Because it is a modality mediated by communication resources, this article aims to discuss the subject with a focus on innovation, more precisely in the context of higher education.

Distance Education (EaD), since its inception, has been innovating according to the technologies of each era. Currently, with the advancement of communication technologies, it has been gaining more and more technological resources for its strengthening and accessibility thanks to technological innovations according to Mattar (2011).

With a focus on innovation, research becomes relevant through the innovation process that meets Distance Education, because, as well as innovation that has transformation as its essence, EaD also has the mission to transform education.

In this sense, this article aims to understand what innovation is in the context of distance higher education as an element of transformation and, also, to contribute with reflections on the innovation process in DE.

This article is divided into four parts. The first make a brief history of Distance Education showing the 03 generations of this teaching modality. The second part of the article discusses innovation, which can be understood as a set of ideas capable of modifying an idea, product, or service, highlighting, above all, innovation in Distance Education.

In the third part, the present study addresses innovation strategies in the educational context. In the fourth part, the research shows innovation as a business model which it is capable of promoting significant and strategic changes to achieve the desired results. Finally, the final considerations on the process of innovation in Distance Higher Education are based on the authors of this research.

## **2 METHOD**

The research is justified by the great growth of this type of education in the country. According to data from the Brazilian Association of Distance Education (ABED), in 2018, the number of enrollments grew by 20% in undergraduate courses across the country. In addition to higher education courses, the survey also includes open and vocational courses. Both saw a 300% jump in enrollment.

The following study is bibliographical research that, according to Vergara (2016), is analytical research carried out through books, magazines, and electronic addresses that can be accessed by the general public.

## **3 BRIEF HISTORY OF DISTANCE EDUCATION**

The history of distance education began a long time ago, at the time of the colonial empires. At that time, according to Takahashi (2004), those who wanted to study for a specific qualification should go to the major city or choose materials that came by mail.

For Mattar (2011), the history of Distance Education is marked by three distinct generations. According to the author, each one of them used the available technologies of the time with which they strengthened DE. They are:

First generation: correspondence courses – EaD, especially correspondence teaching, effectively emerged only in the mid-nineteenth century, due to the development of means of transport and communication, such as trains and mail. Therefore, we can point out that as its first generation, the materials are primarily printed and sent by mail. [...]

Second generation: new media and open universities – The second generation of EaD is characterized by the use of new media, such as television, radio, audio, and video tapes, and telephone. An important moment in this generation is the creation of open distance education universities, influenced by the Open Universit, founded in 1969. These open universities will make intense use of media such as radio, television, videos, cassette tapes, and study centers carrying out various pedagogical experiences. [...]

Third generation: online distance learning – A third generation introduced the use of videotext, microcomputers, multimedia technology, hypertext, and computer networks, characterizing online distance learning. Today, media integration converges on multimedia technologies and the computer. [...] (MATTAR, 2011, p. 4-6)

From the third generation, the history of Distance Education started to have new airs with the use of the computer. Thanks to it, the teaching and learning process became more dynamic and dialogued,

allowing greater interactivity and the possibility of interaction between the subjects involved in this modality.

In Brazil, EaD has grown in recent years and gained a lot of space in higher education institutions. According to the Brazilian Association of Distance Education (ABED), in its census carried out in 2018<sup>1</sup>, 20% of undergraduate enrollments throughout the country are through the distance mode. In open courses, corporate and non-corporate, the number of enrollments grew by 300%, evidencing the expressive growth of EaD in Brazilian education.

EaD also stands out in qualification and professional training programs in the public sector. According to Abbad (2014), the country has resorted to the distance mode to offer continuing education to public servants thanks to the flexibility it offers to civil servants, who can access and study at any time and place, reconciling with the routine of the public service.

Veloso (2011, p.15) points out that communication technologies also help in the formation of a new society, which seeks information, “as one of the main factors in the formation of the 'information society’”. In other words, a society immersed in the processes of change and technological advances, characterized by “new attitudes, new communication practices (such as e-mails, lists, blogs, chats, among others), new models of thought, values and undertakings that unite the most diversified interest groups (p. 45). However, communication technologies deserve due attention in their expansion process. For Lima (2001), the new media make possible a way of communication aimed at the many, that is, at mass. For interactivity to be interactive, communication models must focus, according to the author (2001), on culture and dialogue with users.

In this sense, the advancement of communication technologies must follow the path of dialogue, providing interactive communication, in search of new means of building knowledge, and adopting innovative strategies and models that constantly allow innovation in Distance Education, since it is influenced and marked by the advancement of technological innovations.

#### **4 INNOVATION**

Because it is a modality that uses communication technologies massively today, innovation is a very important element, both in the management aspect and in the educational aspect of distance learning. The term innovation is quite broad in the academic literature, as the terminology transits through several areas. For Terra (2007), innovation should be seen as an evolutionary or disruptive change. According to the author (2007, p.42), “in any dimension, which aims to prolong the life of organizations, it must be understood as innovation”, involving processes, people, technologies, markets, and partners.

According to Tidd et al. (2008), innovation should be understood as a means of establishing relationships that seek to foresee opportunities and, naturally, use them to take the best advantage of them.

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<sup>1</sup> EAD.BR Census: analytical report on distance learning in Brazil 2018, available at: [http://abed.org.br/arquivos/CENSO\\_DIGITAL\\_EAD\\_2018\\_PORTUGUES.pdf](http://abed.org.br/arquivos/CENSO_DIGITAL_EAD_2018_PORTUGUES.pdf)

In other words, this relationship is based on the principle of doing something better, or even doing something completely new successfully.

Carreteiro (2009) explains that innovation is the ability to transform an idea, product, or service. The author points out that the process of innovating is closely related to the organizational strategies that seek to improve and add value to the business. For him (2009, p.38), innovation “is the transformation of ideas and/or use of inventions, which result in useful applications and conducive to improvements”.

Therefore, innovation involves several activities within an organization that permeates several areas, from its creation to its management. It is a process that involves people and systems to obtain productivity and efficiency in their activities.

Therefore, the adoption of innovation becomes a differential in the organization, including a competitive factor with institutions in the same segment. For this, the institution must promote differentiated strategies that surprise the target public, as well as the competition, with innovative proposals and solutions.

In the educational context, innovation can be understood as a set of “professional formalization and communication tools, which build bridges between the knowledge of each one and that of others, between research and experience, between tradition and exploration”, according to Perrenoud (2002, p. 98).

For Saviani (1995), innovation in the area of education must propose changes in the existing model, a change that involves methodological issues, including the systems that help in management. The author suggests that innovation should “put the educational experience at the service of new purposes (p.30)”. Therefore, in this perspective, the adoption of innovative strategies will require educational institutions to abandon old educational methodologies to make way for new ones. educational models.

With this brief conceptualization of innovation, one sees the need to break paradigms to take the first step toward innovation. This implies transforming the way of thinking, acting, and working. In addition, the search for innovation must overcome standards and be worked on continuously, through strategies toward the goals established by the institution, systemically, and following the mission, vision, and values established by the organization.

## **5 INNOVATION STRATEGIES**

To start working with innovation and, consequently, its processes, it is necessary to use strategies. According to Tidd et al. (2008), strategies are a systemic process that seeks to implement, develop, evaluate and, as a result, adopt them as a path to innovation.

In the educational context, these innovation strategies imply a practice of processes and intervention. Naturally, these strategies aim to carry out new activities and change old customs. According to Fullan (2007), strategies must be able to transform the environment where they were adopted in a procedural way to achieve innovation.

Fullan (2007) argues that the innovation process does not happen promptly. For him, innovation adds 03 areas where it intends to be adopted. The first refers to the use of new materials or technologies. The second area is linked to the use of new strategies and the last, in turn, to changes in beliefs, that is, without the adoption of change, transformation, and breaking paradigms, the innovation process may not achieve the idealized results. and possibly not happen.

Therefore, innovation strategies must develop a new vision within the institution. In the context of higher education, this vision must focus on new forms of management and new pedagogical approaches. However, according to Fullan (2007) to achieve innovation, its adoption must be understood by all in the 03 areas defined by him, as the change occurs in the fields of conception and behavior of individuals.

For Levy (2003), the concept of innovation in Distance Education must consider, a priori, the process of change, which involves the organization's vision, as well as its structure, that is, the involvement of physical, technological, and human resources. In human resources, the author (2003) highlights the involvement of all employees; managers, teachers, administrative and operational technicians; in the adoption of innovation.

Based on this concept, based on existing strategies and innovative strategies, the innovation process begins to be designed efficiently. Levy (2003) draws attention to the planning and development of policies that guarantee the development of innovation and, above all, a learning program for its effective implementation.

Another point to consider is creativity. In innovation processes, creativity is a very important element for innovation to be implemented. According to Carreteiro (2009, p. 38), it is a “product of the human being, as a generator of new ideas, concepts or theories”, that is, creativity is a driving element to innovate through creative ideas.

## **6 INNOVATION AS A BUSINESS MODEL**

Innovation strategies must be designed from their planning, execution, implementation, and evaluation, essential management and administration tools of a business. In Distance Education, these tools are crucial to ensure success in managing and offering courses, including the adoption of innovation in the organization.

The only way to secure a company's future is the ability to innovate better, more continuously, and longer than competitors. Innovation is fundamental for the growth of an organization in an environment as it is an agent of change. (ROCHA, 2009, p.25)

For Rocha (2009), a business model in which innovation is the starting point aims at transformation, that is, through innovation, the organization can grow, change, create something new and conquer new customers and, in EaD, that's exactly what it is: change.

The search for innovation must propose changes, solutions, or means that minimize the challenges imposed on organizations in their daily lives, from administrative issues to pedagogical issues, involving

all agents, personnel, processes, and systems, of the organization whose focus is the customer, in the case the student.

For Tidd et al. (2008), innovation must promote significant and strategic changes to achieve the desired results. The authors explain that innovation only happens when everyone involved in its processes is involved and, naturally, when paradigms are broken. This involvement is sustained through qualifications and training.

## **7 CONCLUSION**

In this research, it is concluded that innovation is an element that cannot be neglected by Distance Education. Once understood that innovation is the ability to think and do something different, including designing a completely new product and/or service, it is closely related to EaD due to the advancement of communication technologies.

Understanding the innovation process in EaD requires planning from its creation so that innovation is present in all organizational processes. For this, it is essentially important that the people involved in all distance learning activities, in the institutions, keep in mind that innovation is a constant process with which it is necessary to review paradigms and be open to the new and creativity.

In addition, innovation must dialogue with the company's reason for existing to obtain the results outlined effectively. Dialogue must be established through strategies aimed at the best way to achieve the objectives, or even to assist in decision-making.

This study does not end here. On the contrary, based on the principle that innovation and EaD should promote transformation, this research can and should be explored from different perspectives, bringing new reflections to the educational and technological area with the evolution of communication technologies.

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