Distance Education, Information And Communication Technologies And Teachers' Training In Brazil.

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Article 1 of decree nº 5.622 of December 19th, 2005, ruling art. 80 of law nº 9.394 of December 20th, 1996, establishes guidelines and national educational basis. According to it, distance education can be characterized as: “an education modality in which didactic-pedagogic mediation in teaching and learning processes occur using information and communication media and technology enabling students and teachers to develop educational and learning activities in different places and at different times”.

To contextualize this paper, we took as basic definition, the one established by the aforementioned decree of 2005, since, despite the critics to the concept of distance education, there seems to be a consensus among authors that it is a way of teaching and learning occurring in a space-time separation between teachers and students.

It is well known that distance education has been present in the world and in Brazil for quite some time and in different manners. However, it is undeniable that since the first experiences of correspondence courses in the beginning of the last century, the 90’s have been the most productive years in terms of events and achievements to consolidate distance education as a teaching modality ruled by legislation, in order to be promoted with the improvement of information and communication technologies (ICT) and disseminated by means of the Brazilian education system, specifically by means of higher education institutions. Distance education is now consolidated as the most exemplar education modality incorporating new digital technologies, and this has turned it into an example.

In the foundation of the initiatives that reflect the consolidation process of distance education in Brazil, there is a highlighting theme that is discussed in papers and researches of the area: the incorporation of information and communication technologies in educational processes and its capacity to encourage changes in teaching and learning processes, and consequently, in teachers and students' roles.

Considering that early training is very important, our objective was to research if the incorporation of information and communication technologies and/or distance education in the curriculum and titles of educational programs and courses of education in bachelor programs at the University of Sao Paulo.

For this purpose, we verified the presence of the following key terms. Distance Education; Digital Technologies and Education; Technology and Education; Teaching Technologies among degree programs, as well as syllabus of the courses in the curricula of bachelor courses at the University of Sao Paulo.

After verifying if those words were present, we developed an analysis of the overall context of the course, looking for hints to corroborate the issue of distance education and/or ICTs as triggers to develop changes in early teachers' training programs.

The research design focused on the formal curricula of the courses, even though we consider that training is not limited to this content. Therefore, we did not have the opportunity to observe practice experiences, academic, scientific and cultural activities, research groups and extension programs that will eventually discuss the issue of ICTs or distance education.

The research was conducted using documentary analysis. This technique favors the observation of presence or absence of the theme in question, which in this case was analyzed among the curricula structures of the bachelor courses considered in this study.

The data was collected at the website of the University of Sao Paulo (www.usp.br), in the webpage of the Undergraduate Department [Pró-reitoria de Graduação] (www.usp.br/prg), in the specific web page of each unit offering a bachelor program in the system "Jupiter Web". "Jupiter Web" is the web portal containing all the academic information of the University, with information about courses, groups, terms in which courses are offered, credits, hours, registration, etc.(https://sistemas.usp.br/jupiterweb).

The Bachelor courses' curricula at the University of Sao Paulo are, and continue to be modified in order to accomplish ongoing instructions of the Program of Teachers' Training [Programa de Formação de Professores], defined by the University in 2004, according to the national guidelines for teachers' training, and also in order to be aligned with the own institutions needs regarding higher education.

That is why, it is important to point out, that the results of this analysis could be considered a "photograph" in a given moment, that reflects the configuration of education programs and
degree courses in the courses of bachelor programs at the University of Sao Paulo, regarding the incorporation of Distance Education and ICTs.

In this perspective, the most widely used concepts or expressions among the analyzed courses were technological resources and education, technology and education, information and communication technology resources to support teaching, media and education.

Distance education is specifically addressed in some courses, as in the case of programs offered at FFCLRP, the Nursing College of Ribeirao Preto [Escola de Enfermagem de Ribeirao Preto], IFUSP, FEUSP, ESALQ and EACH. Some courses offered at ICMC, FEUSO and FFCL at Ribeirao Preto approach the impact of ICTs and distance education in the teachers' work.

Some issues like: students as "digital natives", training needs of the knowledge society or the cyberspace, conceptions of pedagogic mediation, collaborative and network learning and the role of distance education tutorials were not explicitly mentioned among the analyzed programs.

Practice activities such deployment projects, development and assessment of incorporation experiences of ICTs and distance education in the context of the activities planned in the courses, were undervalued aspects among the analyzed educational programs.

The data collected from the analysis of the courses offered in bachelor programs at the University of Sao Paulo, showed that the issue of distance education as well as the incorporation of information and communication technologies for teaching and learning processes are not expressively and uniformly represented in these contexts.

It is important to emphasize that the most important teachers' training units, as FEUSP, FFLCH, ECA and FFCL in Ribeirao Preto, were the ones that offered more courses that included a well organized discussion of distance education and inclusion of digital media in education.

Another interesting feature from these education programs is that the topics related to ICTs and distance education are approached from different points of view. However, the main approach is related to the evidence that there is an ongoing change in contemporary society and that this change is highly determined by new information and communication technologies.

Despite the presence of the technology discourse as instrumental reason or discursive practice around which everything must be fitted; the degrees and programs analyzed also seem to present distance education or the educational possibilities offered by digital technology as a new ally in the education and learning process.

Even though the issue of the introduction of technology in education has been considered in the national curricular guidelines for teachers' training, by means of resolution CNE/CP number 1 of February 18th, 2002, this legal instrument did not achieve the expected impact regarding this topic in training projects and curricula of bachelor programs at the University of Sao Paulo.

The introduction of distance education and ICTs cannot be considered a fast or magic solution to solve the endemic problems of Brazilian education, even if these problems are determined by quantitative or qualitative roots.

It is important to avoid the thoughtless use of distance education and ITS, since it is possible that this practice disqualify their real pedagogic potential and even compromise other traditional models for teachers' training.

Although, in all cases, whether in the classroom or in a distance education model, the teacher is still the main figure of the educational process, since he/she is responsible for all the decisions taken and of the development of the teaching and learning processes.

With this fact in mind, it is important to consider the instrumental and technocentric point of view that points technology as a determiner of educational changes, in order to advance in its overcome to construct an anthropocentric point of view of the process, redeeming the teacher and the student as the controllers over pedagogic innovation practices coming from distance education and ICTs.

In the ideal scenario, all bachelor programs would begin to offer teachers' training programs by means of training experiences with classroom and distance education technologies, in order to encourage the construction of new links with culture and contemporary society. The sooner we start this process, the more chances of success we will have. This will also reduce investment cost in programs of continuing education that are targeted to prepare teachers to use digital media with pedagogic purposes.

This process entails the generation of knew knowledge that can be potentiated if they are included in initial teachers' training programs.

To the extent that we reaffirm the importance of initial training for teachers, we reconsider the importance of programs curricula as spaces to make complex knowledge articulations, seen as a whole, and not in a reductionist point of view.

We believe that the incorporation of contents related to training using ICTs can be distributed transversally in bachelors' curricula and in teachers' training programs.

Instead of concentrating distance education and ICTs topics in one or two specific courses, these topics could be approached in all courses along the program. This approach will avoid the so criticized incongruities of theory and practice that have been related to these programs in a historical basis.

Therefore, ICTs and experiences with distance education will no longer be part of the courses syllabus but will be part of a pedagogic project in bachelor programs.

Another aspect that this transversal approach of ICTs and distance education as part of a pedagogic project will bring is a urgent articulation of education professionals regarding collective construction of experiences that promote training for all; overcoming difficulties in a collaborative perspective to share knowledge among all parties involved.

The collective dimension of this complex process could be a determinant motivation
for training teachers or professors, that face several dilemmas and have previous limitations as members of the "digital immigrants" generation.

Finally, it is important to state that this intellectual work cannot be achieved by means of individual efforts. It requires multiple players able to change the discourse and the practice in schools and with teachers, involving distance education as well as information and communication technologies. Thus, the deployment and assessment of such proposal must come from teachers belonging to groups specifically formed to support and strength sustainable development in the incorporation of digital technologies in the classroom.

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