



DISTANCE LEARNING FROM THE PERSPECTIVES OF THE STATE, DEMOCRACY AND PUBLIC POLICIES, DIMENSIONS AND SCALES OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

**ENSINO EaD NAS PERSPECTIVAS DO ESTADO, DEMOCRACIA
E POLÍTICAS PÚBLICAS, DIMENSÕES E ESCALAS DO
DESENVOLVIMENTO REGIONAL**

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Ivani Schuster¹ | Airtón Adelar Mueller²
Sérgio Luís Allebrandt³ | Nelson José Thesing⁴

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¹ PhD candidate in Regional Development (UNIJUI).
Porto Alegre – RS, Brazil.
Email: ivani.schuster@ufrgs.br

² PhD in Sociology (FUB).
Professor at the Regional University of the Northwest of the State of Rio Grande do Sul.
Ijuí – RS, Brazil.
Email: airton.mueller@unijui.edu.br

³ PhD in Regional Development (UNISC).
Professor at the Regional University of the Northwest of the State of Rio Grande do Sul.
Ijuí – RS, Brazil.
Email: allebr@unijui.edu.br

⁴ PhD in Regional Integration.
Professor at the Regional University of the Northwest of the State of Rio Grande do Sul.
Ijuí – RS, Brazil.
Email: nelson.thesing@unijui.edu.br

ABSTRACT

Distance Learning has experienced substantial growth in recent decades, consolidating itself as a significant component in the global educational landscape. In parallel, it is observed that public educational policies could engage more deeply with the theme of regional development. Thus, it is assumed that DL needs to be present in all dimensions and scales, creating opportunities that can generate innovations and transformations by providing access to education, stimulating democracy, social inclusion, and sustainable regional development. Therefore, this article seeks to provide references that can assist in adapting policies related to DL in a way that is coherent with Brazilian regional development needs. In this sense, based on the method of Depth Hermeneutics, a comprehensive discussion was developed on the characteristics of DL in times of digitized and interconnected societies, however, marked by social disparities and regional disparities in development and opportunities. Given this, the need arises for a movement that requires the implementation of strategies guided by participatory and territorially based planning, without losing sight of the central role of the Union as an entity capable of equalizing existing regional disparities. Thus, Distance Learning has the potential to be a catalyst for social and regional development, transforming education into a meaningful learning process for social inclusion, professional qualification, the achievement of citizenship, and the reduction of regional disparities in opportunities.

Keywords: Distance Learning; Public Policies; Regional Development

RESUMO

O Ensino a Distância conquistou um crescimento substancial nas últimas décadas, consolidando-se como um componente significativo na configuração educacional global. Em paralelo, constata-se que as políticas públicas educacionais poderiam dialogar em maior profundidade com a temática do desenvolvimento regional. Assim, parte-se do pressuposto de que o Ensino a Distância necessita estar presente em todas as dimensões e escalas, criando oportunidades que podem gerar inovações, transformações ao proporcionar o acesso à educação, estimulando a democracia, a inclusão social e o desenvolvimento regional sustentável. Desse modo, busca-se neste artigo, proporcionar referências que possam auxiliar na adaptação das políticas relacionadas ao EaD, de forma coerente com necessidades de desenvolvimento regional brasileiras. Neste sentido, com base no método da Hermenêutica de Profundidade, se elaborou discussão abrangente sobre características do EaD em tempos de sociedades digitalizadas e interconectadas, todavia, marcadas por disparidades sociais e por disparidades regionais de desenvolvimento e oportunidades. Diante disso, aponta-se na direção da necessidade de um movimento que requer a implementação de estratégias orientadas por um planejamento participativo e territorializado, sem perder de vista a centralidade da União enquanto ente capaz de equalizar disparidades regionais existentes. Logo, o EaD tem o potencial de ser um catalizador de desenvolvimento social e regional, podendo transformar a educação em um processo de aprendizado significativo para a inclusão social, qualificação profissional, conquista da cidadania e redução das disparidades regionais de oportunidades.

Palavras-chave: Ensino a Distância; Políticas Públicas; Desenvolvimento Regional

INTRODUCTION

Distance Learning (DL) has become an important process in the field of education in Brazilian society in recent decades. This movement highlights the need for new perspectives, which indicates the purpose of this study: to seek an understanding of DL, as well as to understand the interaction and influence of this teaching modality and its various perspectives. It is understood that global society is becoming increasingly interconnected; therefore, the relevance of DL and its impact in these areas becomes even more perceptible due to the high degree of competitiveness and income concentration, challenging social inclusion.

Thus, when examining the interactions between Distance Learning, the State, democracy, public policies and regional development, the importance of understanding the dynamics of DL becomes clear. The State, along with the implementation of public policies and democratic practices, plays a crucial role in shaping the educational system, and DL is an aspect that should not be neglected in this context.



Its continued growth and expansion have allowed a larger portion of the population to access quality education, regardless of their geographic location or personal situation. However, it is crucial to recognize that the effective implementation of Distance Learning programs depends on the establishment of robust public policies, adequate funding, cutting-edge technological infrastructure, and specific programs for teacher training in the online environment.

Public policy perspectives are essential elements for fostering regional development. Distance Learning, in this context, emerges as a valuable tool, capable of reaching remote areas more efficiently and effectively. By enabling this broad reach, DL promotes a significant improvement in the quality of education provided, facilitates access to knowledge and, consequently, contributes to the construction of more equitable and just societies.

With the broad and positive impact of Distance Learning in the most inaccessible regions, it clearly becomes a valuable tool for promoting an inclusive learning environment. This teaching approach immensely expands educational opportunities, offering easier access to education and contributing to the advancement of more territorially equitable and therefore cohesive societies.

The benefits of Distance Learning are not limited to the educational field, but also positively affect the regional economy. By cultivating a more qualified workforce, the integration between DL, the State, and effective democratic practices lays the foundation for a resilient economy capable of addressing challenges and seizing emerging opportunities.

This study underscores the relevance of Distance Learning as a potential instrument for promoting a more equitable and uniform society, while simultaneously contributing to economic development by preparing students for the demands of the global market. Furthermore, it aims to highlight connections between DL and the theme of regional development, considering that opportunities for socioeconomic development are not uniformly distributed spatially, nor can they be dissociated from possibilities for education and professional qualification. The provision of DL acts as a democratic catalyst, enabling the inclusion and access of diverse groups previously marginalized in the educational landscape. This becomes particularly evident when considering the backdrop of the enormous regional disparities that characterize Brazil.

Therefore, the relevance of this study extends beyond the field of education, encompassing crucial areas such as public policy, economics, and regional development. Based on these points, it is essential to continue exploring and critically analyzing these intersections between Distance Learning, social inclusion, public policy, and regional development. The findings provide a roadmap for outlining an equitable and efficient plan to improve the quality of Distance Learning, benefiting not only individuals but also communities and, more broadly, regions.

DISTANCE LEARNING, PUBLIC POLICIES AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Decree no. 5,622, promulgated by the Presidency of the Republic of Brazil (2005) regulates Article 80 of Law no. 9,394, December 20, 1996, which deals with Distance Learning. The decree establishes guidelines for offering courses and programs in the DL modality, aiming to guarantee the quality and regularity of educational activities in this format. These guidelines cover aspects such as the authorization and accreditation of institutions to offer DL, the evaluation and monitoring of courses, as well as the infrastructure necessary for their implementation. This regulation thus seeks to promote the development and democratization of education through DL, ensuring that quality standards are maintained, as stipulated by Brazilian educational legislation.

Bearing in mind the guidelines established by the aforementioned decree, the landscape of Distance Learning in Brazil has been shaped by updated laws and regulations that reflect technological and pedagogical transformations. One of the main updates is Law no. 13,415 (February 16, 2017) which promoted significant changes to the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (LDB). This legislation reinforces the importance of DL as a recognized educational modality and establishes criteria for its provision, guaranteeing the quality and effectiveness of this kind of courses.

Moreover, Decree no. 9,057 (May 25, 2017) regulates Decree no. 5,622/2005, improving the rules for offering courses in the Distance Learning modality. This new decree brings important updates, such as the definition of minimum quality standards for DL courses, the mandatory periodic evaluation and monitoring of institutions offering DL, as well as the guarantee of equivalence between diplomas obtained in the face-to-face modality and in the DL modality.



These updated laws and decrees reflect the commitment of Brazilian government to promoting the development and democratization of education through Distance Learning, while also establishing safeguards to ensure the quality and credibility of courses offered in this modality. In this way, the regulatory landscape continues to evolve to meet the demands of society and keep pace with innovations in the field of DL.

According to Tonelli, Medeiros and Almeida (2015), Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have made an immense contribution to humanity in various spheres of activity, especially in the field of education, which has undergone significant evolution under the impact of these technologies. Technological advances incorporate educational practices of unparalleled relevance, particularly in the context of Distance Learning, with direct repercussions on how it intertwines with the perspectives of the State, democracy, public policies, and regional development.

Specifically, Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have radically transformed the face of Distance Learning, enabling more interactive, flexible, and inclusive learning methods. These methods have enhanced opportunities for students, regardless of their geographic location or personal circumstances, improving access to and quality of education, which, in turn, unequivocally highlights connections between the theme of regional development as collective entities and the individuals who live in them.

Vermelho, Moore and Kearsley (2013) explore a wide range of topics related to Distance Learning in their book 'Distance Learning: Online Learning Systems', focusing on online learning systems. The work addresses fundamental issues from basic concepts to advanced practices in this field. The authors offer a comprehensive and up-to-date analysis, providing valuable insights for educators, researchers, and professionals involved in DL.

Expanding further on this discussion, Almeida and Silva (2014) delve deeper into the study of teacher training in Distance Learning and how it is possible to establish connections between theory and practice in virtual spaces. In their paper 'Teacher training at a distance and the perspectives of articulation between theory and practice through online environments', the authors conduct a thorough debate about how these digital environments can help improve pedagogical skills and effectively implement educational concepts.

According to Almeida (2014) the convergence between Distance Learning and the strategic use of online environments becomes crucial for promoting a broad understanding of the relevance of ICTs in the process of building policies aimed at DL. By analyzing the interaction between the online environment and the development of pedagogical skills, the research highlights how these issues relate to public policy strategies and regional development.

Continuing the discussion about the improvement and effectiveness of Distance Learning in the preparation of educators, the studies by Moore and Kearsley (2005) provide an enlightening view of the impact and involvement of DL systems in the current learning process. Complementing this perspective, Castells (2001) offers a meticulous analysis of the interconnected society, highlighting the importance of access to information as an essential component in the context of education.

According to Moran (2000) Distance Learning is a concept that demands broad and deep understanding, as discussed in the Distance Learning Bulletin of the Ministry of Education. The author highlights the need for a comprehensive definition that encompasses the various educational modalities and practices mediated by distance. Moran emphasizes the importance of considering not only the technological aspects, but also the pedagogical and social aspects involved in DL, highlighting its capacity to promote the democratization of education and access to education for diverse audiences. Additionally, the author emphasizes the need for careful planning and appropriate strategies to ensure the quality of the educational process in the DL modality, emphasizing the role of technological resources as facilitating, but not exclusive, tools for teaching and learning.

Amarilla Filho (2011) emphasizes that Distance Learning represents more than a convenient alternative; it is a pragmatic response to the demands of an increasingly connected, diverse, and globalized society. The author argues that, by overcoming geographical and temporal barriers, DL becomes a powerful instrument for democratizing access to education, providing learning opportunities for a wider spectrum of individuals, regardless of their location or personal circumstances.

In this context, virtual environments emerge as key components in the architecture of Distance Learning, serving not only as spaces for interaction and learning, but also as facilitators of the teaching and learning process. Amarilla Filho (2011) emphasizes the importance of these environments as dynamic and flexible platforms, capable of accommodating a variety of pedagogical and technological

approaches. To achieve the maximum potential of DL, the author highlights the need for a robust methodological and didactic approach. This involves not only the careful selection of technological tools and resources, but also the design of teaching and learning strategies that are adapted to the virtual context. He argues that, by adopting a student-centered approach, with an emphasis on interactivity, collaboration, and active engagement, it is possible to optimize the effectiveness of the educational process and achieve significant results.

In short, Amarilla Filho (2011) sheds light on the transformative potential of Distance Learning, while also highlighting the importance of a solid methodological and didactic approach to maximize its benefits. His work resonates not only in academia but also in educational practice, offering valuable insights for educators, instructional designers, and professionals involved in the design and implementation of DL programs.

Belloni (2002) discusses the evolution of Distance Learning over time, from its origins to contemporary practices, highlighting the technological and socio-educational changes that have influenced its development. In addition, the author explores fundamental concepts of DL, such as flexibility in access to knowledge and the use of communication and information technologies to overcome geographical and temporal barriers. The critical and reflective analysis carried out by the author contributes significantly to the academic debate on DL in Brazil. Her work offers important insights for understanding the complexities involved in the implementation and development of this important educational tool, providing support for improving policies and practices related to DL in the Brazilian context.

Belloni (2023) addresses the challenges faced by Distance Learning, such as the need to guarantee the quality of teaching, the adequate training of tutors, and the digital inclusion of all students. She also highlights the potential of DL to democratize access to education, promote the continuing education of professionals, and meet the diverse educational demands of Brazilian society. Furthermore, the author discusses the main concepts associated with DL, such as flexibility, student autonomy, and the use of information and communication technologies. She examines how these concepts are applied in practice and how they contribute to the effectiveness and reach of DL in Brazil.

Access to Distance Learning in Brazil is a crucial tool for the democratization of higher education, enabling individuals from diverse regions and socioeconomic backgrounds to have opportunities for academic training and professional development (Arruda; Arruda, 2015). Thus, the combination of the role played by DL systems and the relevance of access to information in the current connected society is crucial to understanding how teacher training can be optimized and improved in the contemporary DL scenario. The introduction of ICT in the classroom can significantly contribute to students' knowledge performance and transform their understanding of issues and innovations in the collaborative learning process. We cannot forget that collaborative learning allows us to discover new relationships and question rules, acting with improvisation, thus making them more diverse and innovative.

Moving forward in this discussion, the evaluation of interventions in this specific online continuing education environment emphasizes the connection between theory and practice as a guiding principle of this formative process. This precept is strengthened through action, by virtue of the thoughtful and imaginative dialogue originating between pre-service teachers and teacher educators, as outlined by the learning spiral model (Kolb, 2015). Therefore, online continuing education, in its essence, reflects a total fusion between theory and practice, facilitating a space for reflective debate and collaborative creation.

Valente, Moran, and Arantes (2011) explore Distance Learning in their book 'Distance Learning: Points and Counterpoints', where they analyze various perspectives and debates related to this educational modality. They examine the varied aspects, challenges, and opportunities presented by DL, offering a comprehensive and detailed analysis of the topic. The work not only investigates the theoretical foundations of DL but also its practical application, addressing points of convergence and divergence in the educational landscape. Therefore, the book provides a valuable contribution to the understanding and reflection on the various elements that permeate DL, serving as a source of essential insights for educators, researchers, and professionals involved in this teaching modality.

Medeiros and Oliveira (2014) address educational disparities between different regions and discuss the potential for convergence of these inequalities. The authors highlight the importance of understanding and confronting these disparities to promote more equitable and inclusive development. They propose strategies to reduce these inequalities, seeking to achieve educational convergence between regions, which can significantly contribute to the social and economic progress of the country.



The connection between public policies, the state apparatus, and Distance Learning (DL) is carefully dissected by the academic works of Aghion and Howitt (2009), as well as Lindblom and Woodhouse (1993). Aghion and Howitt (2009) insightfully examine how innovation, a crucial topic in DL, is shaped and influenced by government-established policies and state actions. Complementing Castells (2001) the interconnected society and the importance of access to information in the context of DL, the analysis highlights how the interaction between its systems and facilitated access to information in the current connected society is essential for understanding the optimization and advancement of educator training in the contemporary landscape of DL.

In this context, Lima and Araújo (2021) reinforces the aforementioned approach, allowing us to discern how technological innovations and transformations influence the learning process and contribute to creating more effective and suitable Distance Learning environments for teacher training. Thus, the networked society and ICTs are fundamental factors in the pursuit of improvement and effectiveness in teacher training in DL.

The in-depth study and analysis of these contributions enriches the understanding of how the interaction between public policies and Distance Learning, not only in terms of planning but also in the impact of innovations, constitutes an essential element for understanding the effectiveness of programs in this teaching modality.

Emphasizing the discussion on understanding the interaction between public policies and Distance Learning, another relevant perspective is to address regional development. Krugman (1991) contributes significantly to this topic with his work in economic geography, which can be applied to the context of Distance Learning.

Krugman (1991) insights help explore how Distance Learning has the potential to foster regional development by offering educational opportunities in geographically disadvantaged areas. Thus, by enabling access to quality education for diverse populations, regardless of their location, DL contributes to reducing regional inequalities and strengthening human capital in a variety of contexts.

This perception of regional development aligns with a broader notion of development, according to the reflections developed by Amartya Sen in several of his works (Sen, 2010, 2000, 1992, 1989, 1987). According to these works, development consists of removing deprivations of liberty, expanding capabilities,

and increasing people's agency potential. Furthermore, according to the same author, the expansion of freedoms simultaneously implies an end and a means. Expanding capabilities and reducing deprivations of liberty is an end in itself and can be taken as a synonym for development, which is done through the concept of functionings. On the other hand, the expansion of freedoms is also a powerful means to achieve more and better development, through the action of the State, the market, and through individual and collective agency. Therefore, it seems undeniable that DL carries with it both potentialities. Whether as an end in itself, expanding the freedoms of populations inhabiting socially and geographically peripheral regions, or as a means for such individuals, communities, and regions to utilize the human capital resulting from DL to remove other deprivations of freedom in their regions.

In this sense, the discussion presented in this work seeks to generate a comprehensive and holistic understanding of how Distance Learning interacts with the State, public policies, and regional development. This thorough examination highlights both the value and the challenges that DL presents, seeking to emphasize significant points for collective reflection. These include digital transformation in education, the issue of equality in access to education, the quality of DL and digital inclusion policy.

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES

The research path includes qualitative research, which examines the role of Distance Learning in various dimensions, encompassing the fields of public policy, democracy, and regional development. It seeks to highlight how the State regulates, finances, and evaluates DL, how it promotes democracy by providing educational access in remote areas, and how it influences regional development, including human capital formation, professional qualification, and the development of citizenship.

In this sense, Depth Hermeneutics (DH) (Thompson, 2011) was chosen, a qualitative method that seeks to provide a comprehensive approach to a given phenomenon, however, with the intention of going beyond the description typical of phenomenology. This, according to (Veronese & Guarerschi, 2006), often stops at observation. With DH, the aim is to go further, potentially including a propositional dimension, that is, a contribution to the field-subject under investigation.

In DH, we will be *proposing* meanings, which we may often interpret as ideological. But for that, we will need to argue and debate, in an exercise of argumentative and communicative rationality. If we affirm something, through interpretation, we have the obligation to *justify it*, to base that interpretation on arguments that are intelligible to all partners engaged in the action (Veronese & Guarerschi, 2006, p. 87).



This method comprises three distinct phases: socio-historical analysis, formal or discursive analysis, and interpretation/reinterpretation. These phases do not need to be conceived and developed sequentially; however, they are complementary forms of analysis to be used according to the context and objectives of the investigation, constituting a complex interpretative process (Veronese & Guareschi, 2006).

The first two phases served as an anchor for the preceding item, in which we sought to characterize, in a broad sense, the theme of Distance Learning and some of its implications for the themes of democracy, public policies and regional development, considering that territories are not homogeneous entities in terms of development, opportunities and freedoms, according to Sen (2010, 2000, 1992, 1989, 1987).

The interpretation/reinterpretation phase constitutes, let's say, the icing on the cake of the method in question. According to Thompson (2011, p. 375), it 'implies a new movement of thought, [...] proceeding by synthesis, by creative construction of possible meanings'. In this sense, in light of the reflections produced previously, aiming to construct a robust and perhaps original reinterpretation of the phenomenon in question, we seek to build important insights to understand the environment of Distance Learning, to point out new, more inclusive initiatives in public and educational policies, anchored in a foundation on development in a broad sense, applied to territories whose realities are unequal. However, it is assumed that such regional disparities are not natural, but socially constructed and, therefore, capable of being modified. In this case, the qualified dissemination of DL is pointed out as one of these possibilities.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

This study analyzes the interaction between Distance Learning (DL), public policies, democracy, and regional development, highlighting the importance of understanding these relationships to adapt DL to the current context and anticipate its consequences. Given the rapid changes in the job market, DL needs to focus on acquiring specific skills, such as digital, socio-emotional, and critical thinking skills, and recognize the need for lifelong learning.



A close partnership with the business sector is crucial to maintaining the relevance of Distance Learning, ensuring it aligns with labor market demands through internships, collaborative projects, and student mentoring. The State plays an essential role in guiding, regulating, and supporting the development of DL including formulating effective policies, providing adequate incentives, and guaranteeing quality and accessibility. Technology is fundamental to the success of DL, highlighting the importance of digital inclusion to ensure that all students can participate effectively, regardless of their location or available resources.

It is essential to include digital literacy in Distance Learning curricula to ensure that students can effectively use technological tools. Emerging technologies, such as machine learning and virtual reality, can significantly enhance DL but it is crucial to guarantee the privacy and security of student data. Assessing the skills acquired in Distance Learning is essential to certify the quality of programs and prepare students for future challenges, requiring varied assessment methods such as online tests and practical evaluations. DL should also promote the use of open educational resources available on the internet to ensure equitable access to knowledge.

Distance Learning should include mechanisms to recognize skills of the students and offer certifications recognized by the job market. Assessment and recognition of competencies are essential to preparing students for future challenges. This requires effective evaluation processes and public policies that guarantee the quality and recognition of DL programs. By addressing aspects such as multidisciplinary integration, preparation for the future of work, digital inclusion, and competency assessment, DL can provide quality educational opportunities aligned with the demands of the 21st century and contribute to equitable regional development, the promotion of democracy, and the transformation of future education.

Distance Learning offers flexibility, but it is crucial to ensure student support, including academic and technological support and the creation of learning communities. Institutions must guarantee accessibility and offer additional support for students with special needs. By providing effective support, DL can improve the quality of education and increase student retention and satisfaction. To maximize its potential, it is essential to address challenges and manage all aspects of DL, from integration with the job market to student support. With appropriate strategies, DK can

transform education and society.

The expansion of access to education through Distance Learning carries with it the potential to promote social inclusion, increase literacy rates, and build robust human capital. These factors are key elements for regional development. As DL develops, the role of the State expands correspondingly and proportionally. Public policies must go beyond simply supporting the training and implementation of DL; they must also ensure that the quality and efficiency of this modality are preserved.

This implies the regulation of Distance Learning Institutions, the establishment of quality standards for education, and the promotion of policies that guarantee equity in access to training. Furthermore, it is essential to create laws and regulations aimed at protecting the rights of students participating in Distance Learning and ensuring the credibility of the courses offered. Implicated in the process of democratizing access to education, DL actively works to expand educational inclusion. This allows people, regardless of geographic location, age, occupation, or other factors, to have access to high-quality learning opportunities.

In the context of regional development, Distance Learning has the capacity to reduce the educational deficit present in rural and isolated areas. This aspect, in turn, can improve literacy levels, create jobs and, consequently, stimulate economic growth in these locations. Distance Learning also demonstrates enormous potential as an instrument for the implementation of public policies aimed at socioeconomic development, in the sense of expanding freedoms (Sen, 2000).

Through Distance Learning, the State has the opportunity to promote education and training programs that are perfectly aligned with the specific demands of regional development. This strategy can be fundamental to addressing and, eventually, mitigating complex problems, such as socioeconomic inequality, whether between individuals or between regions. This aspect reinforces the importance of the continuity and expansion of DL policies, allowing more and more people to have access to quality learning opportunities.

In this sense, Distance Learning, as a teaching modality with the potential to generate impacts on regional development, is subject to particularly relevant national-level policies, since more dynamic regions already have a greater reach in offering education at different levels. In other



words, despite bottom-up development perspectives being fundamental to regional dynamics, in the case of DL, it is top-down dynamics that have the greatest potential for positive results. This can be achieved through direct provision by the federal government, or through the induction and articulation of public, private, community, and cooperative actors (Biolchi, 2025).

In reiterating the importance of this continuity and expansion, it is essential that the State act proactively in overcoming the challenges associated with Distance Learning, and that it incorporate a perspective that considers the regional dimension of the problem. To this end, several actions can be taken, such as ensuring appropriate technological infrastructure, safeguarding the quality of DL, developing inclusive policies, and promoting research and innovation in this area, particularly in those regions that are most disadvantaged compared to others.

As we delve deeper into this discussion, it is important to emphasize that, while Distance Learning offers numerous opportunities, it can also lead to isolation and a lack of interaction among students. This makes it essential to promote public policies that encourage initiatives to foster more meaningful social interaction and collaboration among students, teachers, and local communities.

One of the biggest challenges in the successful implementation of Distance Learning is ensuring equitable access to technology. Public policies must be dedicated to improving infrastructure and connectivity in the most remote and rural areas. Besides, it is fundamental a commitment to ensuring digital inclusion for all students, regardless of their socioeconomic status.

Another aspect that represents a challenge for the State is ensuring an efficient evaluation and accreditation system for Distance Learning institutions and courses. The transparency and reliability of these processes are crucial to ensuring the credibility and quality of this teaching modality. According to Oliveira (2023), multidimensional strategies for evaluating learning in online courses are fundamental to guaranteeing the effectiveness and quality of the educational process in this modality.

Multidisciplinary integration and curriculum flexibility are another area of focus. Traditionally, the teaching model is characterized by a strict division between different disciplines and a rigid curriculum. However, in light of multifaceted contemporary demands, it is essential to rethink and redefine the educational structure. The idea is to encourage the interrelation between areas of

knowledge and provide students with greater autonomy in choosing subjects and educational paths.

Following this line of thought, promoting collaboration and partnerships between educational institutions of various nationalities becomes essential. This will facilitate the exchange of knowledge and best practices in Distance Learning. By confronting these challenges and exploring new possibilities, DL can adapt to the current and future needs of students, as well as the demands of the job market.

The result will be the education of professionals who are better prepared and qualified to face the complexities and challenges of development, not only regionally but also on a global scale. Furthermore, expanding access to Distance Learning promotes the democratization of education, minimizing geographical barriers. This means that students in remote areas or with limited resources can have the same opportunity to benefit from high-quality education, thus ensuring less inequality of opportunity, or, according to the terms of SEN (2000) less inequality of capabilities and freedoms, based on their spatial location.

Similarly, Moore *et al.* (2013), when considering a series of issues not only related to Distance Learning but also to the broader role of education in contemporary society, indicate global challenges and practices, including population aging and the exponential increase in knowledge production each year. These challenges, in turn, shape the landscape of DL and reinforce the need to adapt and innovate continuously to maximize its benefits and overcome emerging obstacles. This further highlights the critical role of DL in democratizing access to education and as a catalyst for sustainable socioeconomic development, making it essential in our interconnected society.

In this sense, Distance Learning has the potential to be a catalyst for rethinking the relationships between education, the State, democracy, and public policies. The direct result of this can be the democratization of access to education, ensuring that individuals from diverse geographical and socioeconomic backgrounds can obtain knowledge and training at the higher education level. Therefore, the role of the State and public policies at the federal level becomes even more relevant and demands a careful analysis of the strategies and approaches employed in the implementation of Distance Learning.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The study highlights the correlation between Distance Learning (DL), the State, democracy, and public policies, emphasizing their interaction with regional development. Maximizing the benefits of DL requires a deep understanding of these interactions to promote more inclusive and efficient regional development. When DL is effectively integrated into regional development strategies, supported by appropriate public policies, it can boost regional inclusion and equity. Encouraging the participation of all stakeholders is essential to expand the benefits of DL and promote regional development in a comprehensive and effective manner.

This research focused on analyzing the interaction between Distance Learning and regional development, against the backdrop of a democratic state that plans and implements sectoral and regional public policies. The crucial role of the state, particularly the federal government, in regulating and guiding DL is highlighted, promoting policies to guarantee inclusive and quality education in all regions. To achieve this goal, public policies are needed that encourage the implementation and expansion of Distance Learning, especially in remote areas or those with limited access to education. This requires investments in technological infrastructure, teacher training for DL, and the creation of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure the quality of this teaching modality.

The research highlights the importance of teaching strategies adapted to the local context to promote equality in education and sustainable development. This requires a strong commitment from governments and educational institutions to an educational agenda that values and invests in Distance Learning. Beyond access to technology, state involvement and the creation of appropriate public policies are essential to ensure that DL is inclusive and promotes the development of students' skills, meeting the specific demands of each region.

It is essential to adopt a holistic approach to Distance Learning, considering its interaction with the state, democracy, public policies, and regional development. This maximizes its potential to meet the diverse educational needs of communities and promote inclusive, equitable, and sustainable regional development. In addition to reshaping pedagogical approaches, innovative public policies are needed to support DL and protect students from risks such as digital exclusion. Democracy plays



a crucial role in shaping these policies. DL can be a powerful instrument for social and regional development when supported by appropriate public policies and a robust digital infrastructure, requiring a clear understanding of the socioeconomic, cultural, and regional dilemmas associated with this educational modality.

The study highlights the need to adapt public policies and pedagogical strategies to effectively meet the demands of Distance Learning. It also emphasizes the importance of collaborative and participatory strategies for the development and implementation of DL involving all stakeholders, from government to educators, parents, and students. Additional emphasis on digital inclusion is recommended, which is not limited to IT infrastructure but also includes the development of digital skills among students and teachers. Public policies for DL need to be based on solid research and a precise understanding of the specific needs and challenges of different regions and communities, in order to implement strategies and planning practices to achieve an inclusive, democratic process of professional qualification and citizenship, creating conditions for regional development.

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