PROJECT MANAGEMENT IN DISTANCE EDUCATION

Allysson Barbosa Fernande[1], Jeckson Santos do Nascimento[2], Éverton Marques da Silva[3], Itamar Ernandes[4], Vanessa Morgado Madeira Caldeira[5], Leonardo Costa Pinheiro[6], Antonio José Ferreira Gomes[7], Maria Cleonice Santos de Melo Penha[8], Kássia Reijane dos Santos Andrade[9] and Aline Magalhães Feitosa[10]

ABSTRACT

This article sought to explore the importance of project management in Distance Education (DE), highlighting this practice when using a structured and strategic approach can contribute to the success of educational programs. The main objective of this study is to analyze the practices and strategies of project management applied to Distance Education, focusing on the effectiveness of the methodologies used to ensure the quality of teaching and student satisfaction. Through a literature review, the specific challenges of distance education were examined, such as the maintenance and selection of appropriate technologies, the organization of pedagogical activities and the promotion of interaction among participants. The results show that the application of methodologies such as the PMBOK allows not only the fulfillment of deadlines and budgets, but also the guarantee of quality in the teaching-learning process. It is concluded that effective project management is fundamental for the sustainability of distance education programs, promoting an innovative and integrated educational environment, which favors the development of essential skills for students.

Keywords: Distance Education, Project Management, PMBOK, Teaching Quality, Educational Sustainability.

INTRODUCTION

The pandemic that devastated the world in 2019 and the need for social isolation was a watershed for distance education (DE) to consolidate itself as a relevant teaching modality, especially in contemporary times, as it is a context of growing demand for flexibility and access to knowledge in different regions and for different audiences. As digital

[1]Doctorate student in Business Administration at the Facultad Interamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FICS)
[2]Dr. in Educational Sciences from the Universidad de La Integración de Las Américas (UNIDA)
[3]Doctorate student in Education at the University of Passo Fundo (UPF)
[4]Master in Education from the City University of São Paulo (UNICID)
[5]Master in Emerging Technologies in Education from MUST University
[6]Master in Educational Sciences from Universidad San Lorenzo (UNISAL)
[7]Master's student in Educational Sciences at the Facultad Interamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FICS)
[8]Master's student in Educational Sciences at the World Ecumenical University (WUE)
[9]Specialist in Education Management from the State University of Santa Cruz (UESC)
[10]Specialist in School Management and Coordination from the Faculty of Vale do Jaguaribe (FVJ)

technologies have been advancing, distance education has become a viable and effective solution to expand the reach of educational institutions, allowing students from different locations to have access to quality education. However, the complexity of offering quality education in this modality requires the integration of different areas of knowledge, making the management of multidisciplinary teams a central element for the success of educational projects.

In view of this, the management of distance education projects involves specific challenges, ranging from the organization of human and technological resources to the guarantee of the quality of the education offered. In this sense, understanding the management practices and strategies applied to distance education projects is essential for the success of this educational modality.

The present study aims to analyze the practices and strategies of project management applied to Distance Education, focusing on the effectiveness of the methodologies used to ensure the quality of teaching and student satisfaction. And as specific objectives we have: to identify the main challenges faced in the management of distance education projects; to examine the project management methodologies most used in distance education courses; and to assess the impact of project management on the quality of teaching and the student experience.

Thus, the present work is justified by the relevance of this study, which lies in the need to improve management practices in distance education projects, which have been shown to be essential for the success of this modality. From this perspective, we understand that this research will contribute to the understanding of the factors that influence the effectiveness of project management in distance education, offering contributions that can be applied by educational managers, course coordinators and other professionals involved in this area.

Considering the importance of the theme, based on what we have highlighted above, and with the exponential growth of Distance Education, educational institutions are faced with the need to manage complex projects that involve the coordination of various actors, technologies and methodologies. Thus, the central question that emerges is: what are the most effective management practices to ensure the quality and success of distance education projects, considering the specificities of this teaching modality?

The present research presents as a central hypothesis that the application of agile project management methodologies increases the effectiveness of distance education courses, as well as the effective integration of educational technologies in the management of distance education projects contributes to the improvement of the quality of teaching and

finally that the continuous training of managers and pedagogical team positively impacts the management of distance education projects.

Thus, this research is important because it offers a detailed analysis of management practices in distance education projects, contributing to the continuous improvement of this educational modality, and can serve as a basis for future investigations and for the development of strategies aimed at optimizing the management of distance education projects, benefiting both educational institutions and students.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology of the present study will be conducted through a qualitative research, using literature review as the main method of investigation. The qualitative approach for Minayo (1989) is adequate to understand the nuances and complexities of research, in the case of this article, those involved in the management of multidisciplinary teams in distance education projects, allowing a deep analysis of the practices and challenges reported in the literature.

This literature review will focus on studies published in the last three decades, ensuring that the information used is relevant to the contemporary context of distance education. Academic databases such as SciELO and Google Scholar were consulted in order to select relevant publications for the basis and development of the current research. We used as descriptors for the bibliographic search: "project management", "distance education" and "educational projects". We used as an exclusion technique, to disregard studies that did not significantly address project management in distance education, and that did not present sufficient methodological rigor.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Regarding the concept of management, Lenzi and Spanhol (2011) understand that it is a process that allows the development of activities making use of efficiency and effectiveness, the making of decisions that are related to the actions that are necessary, the choice and verification of the best way to execute them. Also according to the authors, the expansion of Distance Education (DE) in Brazil has a great relationship with efficient project management in this modality. Although distance education has been consolidated as a tool for the democratization of knowledge, it still faces challenges, such as the lack of integration and the absence of systematized management plans.

Thus, it is essential to coordinate, guide and monitor distance education projects for effective management, ensuring that the courses meet both the needs of students and

institutions. Project management (PM) is seen as a solution to the complexity of distance education, requiring sophisticated skills and the consideration of several management areas, such as media, materials, people, time, partnerships, and administration. In addition, distance education management must cover specific aspects, such as the quality of teaching, knowledge management, and academic management, to ensure the success of the courses offered.

However, Kenski (2005) analyzes the importance of media management in education, both face-to-face and distance learning, highlighting that this model involves a series of critical decisions that must be aligned with pedagogical planning. Thus, carrying out efficient media management requires the careful selection of equipment, its maintenance and availability, ensuring that there are no interruptions during educational activities. In addition to the operational part, it is important to properly select the activities and content that will be broadcast, taking into account the most appropriate media for each case. It is also necessary to consider the profile of the participants and the objectives of the course, deciding whether the media will serve only for the reproduction of knowledge or if they will allow the creation and critical expression of the students. Interaction and cooperation among participants are seen as determining factors in the quality of the courses, contributing not only to the acquisition of skills, but also to the development of social behaviors and citizenship.

From this perspective, we have Buchele; Schmitz and Dandolini (2015) who explore in detail the concepts of projects and their management within the professional context, highlighting the importance of using structured methodologies to achieve the established objectives. The authors bring the definition of a project, according to the PMI (Project Management Institute), which describes it as a temporary effort with the purpose of creating a unique product, service or result, which implies that every project has defined a beginning and an end. This temporary character, however, does not refer to the duration of the impact of the project's results, which can be long-lasting and have significant social, economic and environmental implications.

Project management is presented by Buchele; Schmitz and Dandolini (2015) as a discipline that applies knowledge, skills, tools, and techniques to meet the requirements of a project, and its practice is considered essential to transform ideas into concrete and successful results. In its analyses, PMI, through the PMBOK guide, systematizes these practices and standards, offering a common vocabulary and a set of good practices widely recognized and applicable to most projects, this guide being an essential reference for

professionals in the area, promoting standardization and facilitating communication between those involved in the projects.

Buchele; Schmitz and Dandolini (2015) also highlight that effective project management requires a flexible approach, in which each project must be planned based on its own requirements, adapting the practices recommended by the PMBOK to the complexity and specific needs of each case. In this way, including the management of time, cost, quality and risks, ensuring that objectives are achieved efficiently and that resources are optimized.

In addition, Buchele; Schmitz and Dandolini (2015) emphasize that project management goes beyond simply following a set of rules, as it is about ensuring that all efforts are directed to obtaining the expected results, respecting the restrictions imposed by the project. In this sense, according to the authors, the proper application of management techniques is seen as a means of maximizing the investment of stakeholders and ensuring the satisfaction of their expectations.

Regarding the challenges of distance education, Neto (2013) in his studies highlights that innovations bring challenges that require effective management to anticipate problems and propose solutions. Good management should involve planning and organizing resources, ensuring that they are of high quality. One of the main risks that can lead to the failure of a distance education course is the isolation of students, which can occur due to difficulty in dealing with technology or lack of familiarity with the content. This situation contrasts with face-to-face teaching, where interaction between students and teachers is constant.

Neto (2013) reinforces that the role of the tutor is crucial in this context, as he must supervise communication and ensure a welcoming environment, favoring interaction. Also according to the author, the effective management of distance education, according to the text, can represent a break with traditional teaching models, promoting self-training instead of the mere transmission of knowledge. The manager is compared to a "conductor", responsible for keeping the team united and cohesive, facilitating communication, measuring conflicts and promoting continuous improvements through regular evaluations. In addition, the manager must encourage the team's creativity and initiative.

Fonseca and Mattar (2017), in their studies, bring that Distance Education (DE) is an educational modality in which teaching occurs through information and communication technologies, allowing students and teachers to develop activities in different places and times and that in Brazil, it is present at all levels of education and requires innovations and technological infrastructure to meet qualification needs, especially adults. Flexibility and

autonomy are fundamental to the learning process, and active methodologies have been adopted to change the focus of education, prioritizing what is learned rather than what is taught.

However, Fonseca and Mattar (2017) highlight that the simple use of technologies does not guarantee student engagement. It is necessary that they feel a restlessness for learning and develop autonomy to organize their studies. One of the main challenges of distance education is to motivate students to be researchers, not just task performers. The role of the educator becomes essential, as he must act as a mediator, proposing challenges and promoting collaboration between students with different levels of ability.

However, many distance education projects, according to Fonseca and Mattar (2017), still do not take full advantage of the various possibilities offered by technologies, limiting student collaboration to uncreative forums. Active methodologies can diversify teaching activities, emphasizing communication and personalized follow-up, allowing for more dynamic and attractive learning environments. The creation of these environments, which mix transmission and construction of knowledge, is crucial, and the use of technologies must always be aligned with an educational focus to really assist in the construction of knowledge.

In summary, the authors addressed here emphasize the relevance of project management as an indispensable practice in education, capable of transforming ideas into practical and sustainable results.

CONCLUSION

This article brings the crucial importance of a structured and strategic approach in project management within the educational context. Distance Education (DE) presents specific challenges that require a harmonious integration between pedagogical planning, media management, and project management practices, according to guidelines established by PMI and adapted to the peculiarities of the educational environment.

Throughout the present study, we identified that efficiency in the management of distance education projects is directly linked to the ability to articulate the various components involved, from the selection and maintenance of media to the organization of pedagogical activities and the interaction between participants. This articulation must be guided by detailed planning and disciplined execution, with the aim of ensuring that educational projects achieve their goals within the stipulated deadlines and budgets, without compromising the quality of learning.

The analysis of management in Distance Education (DE) reveals a complex panorama, where efficiency and effectiveness in the management of educational projects are essential for the success of this teaching modality. Project management not only facilitates the democratization of knowledge, but also ensures that courses meet the needs of students and institutions, promoting meaningful learning.

Media management emerges as a critical issue, as the appropriate choice and use of technologies directly impact the educational experience. The careful selection of resources and the promotion of interaction between participants are essential to ensure a collaborative learning environment, where the development of social skills and citizenship becomes a reality.

In addition, the implementation of structured methodologies in project management is vital to optimize resources and maximize results. The flexible approach, which adapts processes to the specificities of each project, transcends the application of rules, constituting a practice that aims to transform ideas into concrete achievements.

There are challenges of distance education, as well as student engagement and autonomy, which require the tutor to act as a facilitator of communication. Promoting active methodologies is essential to motivate students to become active researchers in their learning process. The creation of dynamic and collaborative environments, aligned with available technologies, is crucial for the evolution of distance education.

Finally, project management in Distance Education is an indispensable practice, capable of transforming the educational landscape and ensuring that the courses offered are of high quality. With the adoption of an integrated approach, which considers the specificities of distance education, it is essential for this modality to continue to develop and meet the demands of contemporary society.
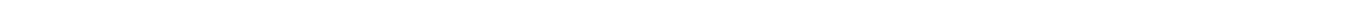
REFERENCES

1. Buchele, G. T., Schmitz, L. C., & Dandolini, G. A. (2015). Um plano para gerenciamento de projetos no contexto da educação a distância no ambiente público. *Revista de Gestão e Projetos, 6*(2), 100–114.
2. Fonseca, S. M., & Mattar, J. (2017). Metodologias ativas aplicadas à educação a distância: Revisão da literatura. *Revista EDaPECI, 17*(2), 185–197.
3. Kenski, V. M. (2005). Gestão e uso das mídias em projetos de educação a distância. *Revista e-curriculum, 1*(1).
4. Lenzi, G. K. S., & Spanhol, F. J. (2011). Gestão de projetos em educação a distância. *Revista Novas Tecnologias na Educação, 9*(2).
5. Minayo, M. C. de S. (1989). *O desafio do conhecimento: Metodologia de pesquisa social (qualitativa) em saúde*. [Publisher not specified].
6. Neto, L. R. (2013). Alguns desafios da educação a distância enfrentados pelo gestor. In *Anais do 11º Encontro de Pesquisa em Educação da Região Sudeste*. São João del-Rei, MG: Universidade Federal de São João del-Rei.