


## CONNECTING THE FUTURE: TRANSFORMING EMITEC'S INTERNAL COMMUNICATION WITH THE VIRTUAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

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### ABSTRACT

The present study sought to verify the importance of using the Virtual Learning Environment to facilitate the internal communicative process of High School with Technological Intermediation, a program linked to the Department of Education of the State of Bahia. The guarantee of a good internal communication flow favors the achievement of institutional strategic objectives. Thus, the research aimed to describe the functionalities of the Virtual Learning Environment and the favorable and limiting aspects regarding its use. This is a case study, with descriptive and telemated analysis with a qualitative approach. It was found that the Virtual Learning Environment mainly enables the centralization of communication with multimedia resources, in this way, it was concluded that the use of the Virtual Learning Environment contributes to the facilitation of internal communication. However, it is necessary to ensure that everyone involved is digitally included, as their use depends on internet connectivity and a certain level of digital skill by users.

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## INTRODUCTION

Communicating is a social need inherent to every human being, in addition to an action that is increasingly valued inside and outside companies. The act of communicating well has never been as important as it is today. Advances in communication technologies, the watchful eye of an increasingly aware, informed and critical society, as well as the effects that these aspects generate in global socioeconomic dynamics, affect organizations and challenge traditional communication models. It has become indispensable for corporate success to position it strategically.

It is a theme that speaks to several areas of knowledge, such as psychology, sociology, administration, among others. It is no coincidence that, based on this multidisciplinary, its concepts, scope and scope were reevaluated from different perspectives, prevailing the influence of the theories of administration and human relations (KUNSCH, 2016).

From then on, the vision of communication as a field of study emerged, and its concept began to be revised, and matured, into what we now know as Organizational Communication. This amplification of communication studies has resulted, inside and outside academic centers, in a greater understanding of its function and applicability, in how to use it effectively to achieve organizational objectives.

Parallel to this phenomenon, the so-called Information Technological Revolution was occurring, with its *boom* in the last three decades of the twentieth century, which would totally change the ways of transmitting information and interaction in society. This is due to technological advances in microelectronics years earlier and, lastly, to the development of computing along with the creation and launch of the internet.

This new dynamic resulted, according to Castells (2005), in a network society, or information society, driven by the advancement of information and communication technologies, with the main characteristic being the search for innovation in a constant way.

ICTs (Information and Communication Technologies) and digital media are already irreversibly part of the daily lives of people, communities and organizations in general. Due to this, it is timely to invest in approaches that aim to understand the extent and scope of the advantages offered by them, as well as their limitations.

Therefore, the complexity of organizational communication and the advancement of communication technologies show the emerging and constant need to improve and adapt internal processes to maximize results in terms of their use. For this reason, Cardoso

(2006, p. 1125) argues that "much more than in past times, it is necessary to understand the complexity that involves information and communication processes in the strategic management of organizations".

Therefore, it is urgent to visualize communication in an integrated way and position it strategically. A holistic view of internal communication, responsible involvement in the communication process by *stakeholders*, the institutionalization of an internal communication policy and the strengthening of an organizational culture consistent with this vision, are indispensable elements for the maintenance of organizational strategic objectives.

The research will use theoretical basis and data analysis according to the points of view of some communication theorists, such as Kunsch, Torquato and Pio, as well as Castells, a sociologist with representative speech about the themes related to the socioeconomic and cultural changes arising from the advances in information technology and the resulting phenomenon, whether it is the information and knowledge society, or networked.

The case study will take place with the EMITec program – High School with Technological Intermediation, which consists of an alternative proposed by the government of the State of Bahia to provide basic education in areas of distant access in the state territory, as well as in urban regions where there is a lack of specialized professionals. The program is considered an innovative social tool, and was even selected for the Banco do Brasil Foundation Award for Social Technology, receiving the certificate of social technology (CARNEIRO; EUGENIO, 2021).

EMITec is a state public policy focused on education, being "an action with a high technological cost" due to the need for investment in technology, and hiring of technical personnel to operate the equipment and the recording studios for classes. Based on the premise that the program's budgets come from public resources, it is important, among other aspects, that there is a constant evaluation of the efficiency and effectiveness of the program and communication is directly linked to this.

Also from this context, it is pertinent to carry out research that aims to scientifically subsidize the professional market, so that it, in turn, creates assertive strategies for communication management, regardless or not of being in public administration, as well as in the scope of high school. The research question that this research intends to answer is: what is the contribution of the Virtual Learning Environment to the facilitation of EMITec's

internal communication and what are its limitations? To answer this question, the general objective will analyze the contribution of the use of the Virtual Learning Environment to the internal communication of the EMITec program. To this end, this study will specifically: (i) point out the importance of organizational communication as an essential instrument for the achievement of organizational strategic objectives; (ii) discuss the impact that the advent and use of ICTs had on social and organizational relations; and (iii) describe the functionalities of the Virtual Learning Environment that serve as an aid to the internal communicative process of the EMITec program, as well as the favorable and limiting aspects regarding its use.

The EMITec program is an initiative that uses distance learning technologies to promote quality education, reaching students in different regions. In this context, the Virtual Learning Environment plays a crucial role in internal communication between students, teachers and other actors involved. This research is extremely important, as it aims to understand how the use of this platform contributes to internal communication at EMITec. Understanding the benefits and challenges faced in its implementation will allow you to improve communication practices and strategies, boosting the quality of the program and enhancing the positive impact on students' education.

In addition, the research may provide benefits to optimize the use of virtual tools in the educational context, promoting the improvement of internal communication and, consequently, the improvement of the learning experience of EMITec participants.

The Emitec program is linked to the Department of Education of the State of Bahia, and is therefore subject to the complexity of public administration. This corroborates the relevance of the research, not only because it fosters the demand mentioned above, but also because it focuses on internal communication, an area directly interconnected to the achievement of organizational strategic objectives.

Another factor is that the program's actions occur in a decentralized way, given the geographical dispersion of the work team. The solution employed is the use of the VLE as a communication channel. The guarantee of a good communicative flow between the mediators with the teaching team and, in turn, with the pedagogical coordination of the program is extremely important, since it is through this relationship that they are aligned with the fundamental guidelines for the organization of teaching and evaluative activities, as well as for the service of the class in the classroom.

For society, the research is opportune because the program aims to meet a social demand, an educational public policy in which the achievement of the pedagogical objectives teaching/learning also permeates, in the case of the object of study, through a quality mediation, and this is only possible through a real and effective interaction between the teaching and coordination teams with the mediators who are at the front, through assertive communication.

The research is also an addition to the author's previous experiences in the educational area, given that she has already worked in other programs to promote public policy for basic education, such as Mais Educação, at the municipal level, and Todos pela Alfabetização (TOPA), at the state level, which justifies the study, given the prospect of a deepening in the area.

In view of the above, the study is justified given the importance of developing a product, through scientific research, that fosters the aforementioned demand, based on internal communication, and the use of the *MOODLE platform* as an instrument to facilitate the transmission of information and communication between teams and employees.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **BRIEF HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION OF ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION PRACTICES IN BRAZIL**

In Brazil, as a result of economic, social and political advances, studies in the field of Organizational Communication were developed, first, with a focus on public relations and business journalism and, having as a driving landmark, the creation of ABRP – Brazilian Association of Public Relations, in 1954. In this decade, much has been done to promote the activity of public relations as a field of professional, technical and scientific study (KUNSCH, 2006).

However, only in the following decade, this would actually happen, through the expertise brought by large multinationals installed in Brazil, in their newly expanded public relations and industrial relations departments. These companies, in turn, replicated the North American model, culturally promoting communication, emphasizing the areas of public relations, advertising/publicity and business journalism (KUNSCH, 2006).

The socioeconomic context, at this time, demanded the improvement of the editorial and technical quality of institutional publications. Hence, in 1967, the Brazilian Association

of Editors of Magazines and Company Newspapers emerged, being of fundamental importance for the professionalization of this segment in Brazil (KUNSCH, 2006).

A year later, Proal – Programming and Editorial Advisory would emerge, with the main objective of providing consulting services to business publications, being a pioneer in the field of outsourcing this service (Ibid.). It would not take long for significant changes to occur, maturing the perspectives of Organizational Communication (KUNSCH, 2006).

In this sense, Bueno (2009, p.7, apud Scroferneker, 2011, p. 201) adds that "at the end of the 70s, the seed for the implementation of Brazilian Business Communication begins to germinate". And soon after, with the reopening of the country's politics in 1985, these changes served as a catalyst for the promotion of transparency and democratic relations with society (KUNSCH, 2006).

According to Scroferneker (2011), the company Rhodia, with the wide dissemination of its work on "Open Door policies", established a new paradigm, which in turn would be adopted by other organizations, starting the opportunity for Business Communication to be recognized as a strategic activity in the last decade of the twentieth century.

In addition, Scroferneker (2011, p 202) adds:

It is likely that this concern with strategic audiences and/or interests, especially customers/consumers, can be attributed in part to the enactment of Law No. 8,078, of September 11, 1990, of the Consumer Protection Code, which began to require organizations to develop and/or improve their communication channels to better interact with these audiences.

In any case, the process of consolidation of Organizational Communication was already underway, with the creation of the Brazilian Journal of Organizational Communication and Public Relations (Organicom), in 2004, and the Brazilian Association of Researchers in Organizational Communication and Public Relations (Abrapcorp), in 2006, (SCROFERNEKER; 2011). It can be inferred that this journey, from the beginning to the consolidation, lasted a little more than five decades, going through and being directly affected by the current transformations in the country's economic and social dynamics.

The evolution of its concept in Brazil reflects the effort of professionals, groups and institutions, from a scientific and professional perspective, in the search for the organization, systematization and professionalization of Organizational Communication.

## CONCEPT AND IMPORTANCE OF ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION

Since the dawn of human civilization, man has investigated ways to communicate and interact effectively. Consequently, communication has been the object of study and reflection by several authors and currents of thought, nationally and internationally. Various concepts, approaches and perspectives on Organizational Communication have been developed over time, from an apparently more instrumental view to a more critical position, as stated by Kunsch (2016).

In this path, the multiple denominations that it has received over time are remarkable, such as, for example, institutional, business, corporate communication, etc., this fact has resulted in a tangle of definitions (KUNSCH, 2006). This phenomenon, in turn, generated confusion and a "difficulty in understanding and conceptual consolidation of organizational communication", as stated by Oliveira et al (2019, v. 8, p. 99). In this regard, the author Curvello (2002 p. 12) explains:

New themes and concepts were added to the area's repertoire, such as organizational cultures, technological impacts, ergonomics, language, image, identity, discourse, semiotics, consumer relations, social and institutional marketing, ethics, creativity, quality, imaginary, pragmatics, among others.

We understand, therefore, that the concepts of Organizational Communication started from the maturation of research in the area, moving from a focus on public relations and business journalism to a strategic and integrated view of organizational subareas (KUNSCH, 2006).

Additionally, it is important to draw the difference between communicating and just informing. After analyzing several points of view on the limits of the concepts of information and communication, Torquato (2015, p. 67) concludes that "information has the immediate objective of increasing the knowledge of those who receive it, while communication aims, essentially, to change or influence behaviors."

This understanding is already consolidated among theorists, as Pio (2016, p. 28) states "transmitting information is only one of the communication cycles that is only complete when the interlocutor receives the information, consumes it and understands it". Therefore, communication is seen within a context of interaction.

This dynamic, according to Torquato (2015), is directly influenced by the level of knowledge, that is, by the ability not only to capture the message, but to absorb the

meaning brought by it. Therefore, as Oliveira et al (2019, v. 8, p. 100) adds, we can say "[...] that communication processes are fundamentally interactive, and happen to the extent that people construct, negotiate and share meanings".

Thus, communication is understood as a process of interaction, in which all employees must be consensually involved in the organizational objectives, and for this purpose, a good management of culturally established communication is necessary. This understanding contributed to the disuse of the view of communication merely as something instrumental, increasingly coming to be seen as organic, holistic and integrated.

Kunsch (2016) agrees by proposing a more integrative view of organizational communication, analyzing it in four dimensions: instrumental, human, cultural, and strategic. Among these, the most used is the instrumental one, where the focus is on the transmission of information and the feasibility of the continuous flow of work routines to achieve the general objectives.

The human dimension is linked to the perception of subjectivity, of the vision of each involved in the communication process and in their forms of interaction. The cultural dimension, on the other hand, suggests the urgency of considering in communication processes the cultural patterns individually, as well as, in a broader sense, the general context of the environment in which the organization is inserted and being influenced and affected. The last mentioned, the strategic dimension is subdivided into two points of view. One is represented by the traditional vision, focused on results, and the other absorbs the idea of the complexity of organizational communication (KUNSCH, 2016).

Its complexity is due, in part, to its scope and repercussion in the internal and external environment of the organization. The new social, economic, political and cultural variables arising from the various technological advances, especially informational and communicational in contemporary times, as well as the impulse to the race for innovation, influence the convergence in the idea of "renewal" of the vision regarding the way to execute organizational communication, its objectives and relevance (KUNSCH, 2016).

As a result of this scenario, the phenomenon of change in relational dynamics arises, in which those who receive information also react, making use of networks and digital media for this (KUNSCH, 2016). Hence, the challenge arises for organizations to maintain the company's image in front of its various audiences. On the subject, Kunsch (2016, p. 56) states the following:

We can no longer talk about closed communication models and strategies, much less about highly pre-planned and controlled processes. The current challenges of organizations include strategic flexibility and adaptability, proximity to audiences, narrative adequacy, and multiplicity of voices.

This is due to the fact that social changes directly affect organizations. Hence we understand that, in order to achieve success in its activities, it is necessary to adapt and dynamism in the management of communication. "After all, a company is a miniature society, a model of what happens in the world and, as such, it must be alive and dynamic, representing what has value for it" (MARQUIORI, 2018, p. 33).

Thus, communication must be thought of strategically to achieve institutional goals. Therefore, it is essential that each organization has an institutionalized organizational communication policy, with values expressed in its culture, through effective communication management and attentive to the quality of communication flows and channels.

## INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

Internal communication can be understood as a strategic activity that aims to articulate the relationships between the organization and its employees, at the sectoral and personal level, through the communication flows from internal channels and networks (KUNSCH, 2015). Communication "is something indivisible, one, integrated, organic", corroborates Pio (2016, p. 6).

In this way, a good internal communication policy favors the sharing of the company's values, beliefs, and vision, acting directly in the sedimentation of organizational culture and corporate identity. Acting in the "mediation of situations of tension and contradictions between individual human needs and those of the organization aimed at performance and the achievement of business results" (KUNSCH, 2016, p. 213). In contrast, Pio (2016, p. 16) states:

Negligent, flawed, poor quality communication also obscures the competencies of an organization, depreciates the motivation of its employees; It produces ineffectiveness and generates crises caused by the lack of commitment and adherence of employees to their strategic moves.

These effects can affect the organization as a whole, since internal communication has an integrative and organic character. Pio (2016, p. 8) emphasizes that, "either you give qualities to the communication processes, or the enterprise can go to ruin".

To avoid this scenario, it is necessary to carry out an effective internal communicative process, incorporating the active involvement of the sender and receiver in the communication, influencing their behavior (TORQUATO, 2015). This, in turn, results from the improvement of the organizational climate to the generation of employee engagement (KUNSCH, 2016).

For Torquato (2015), the purpose of internal communication is precisely to generate this consensus among the internal public. However, he states that in order to create integration between the values and needs of all, it is necessary first of all to create channels of mutual communication in which each member can identify himself, which would allow greater coherence between general social perceptions and that of the organization as an institution.

For the same author, consent comes, primarily, through a pleasant communication, which he calls "consummatory". In other words, it would be the mixture between the technical and instrumental communicative act with communication aimed at the dissemination of norms, values, internal policies and organizational culture.

In this regard, Vigneron (2000) points out the need to update the view of internal communication, beyond an instrumentalist activity, to a more integrative view, where all organizational agents are responsible for the results achieved. Through efficient communication that "[...] it is related to the modern management style and synchronized with the quality transformations introduced in labor relations" (PIO, 2016, p. 13).

Therefore, the integration with organizational objectives must be at a personal and sectoral level, that all employees must be involved in the communication process through a positive attitude and this will certainly contribute to the best performance of internal communication. However, it cannot be thought that it is an easy task, as organizations are immersed in a complex environment, communication encounters several barriers and challenges, one of which is the deficiency in integration between organizational sub-areas, due to divergences in the vision and focus between them (CURVELLO, 2002).

The use of organizational communication as a strategic tool interconnected to the maintenance of organizational culture, in which employees are active participants in the achievement of organizational goals, instigates employees to feel co-participating in the preparation, definition and achievement of strategic goals, and makes them feel motivated to contribute to organizational objectives, demonstrating a sense of belonging and identification with the company (PIO, 2016). Hence, eventually, the sharing of the decision-

making process among lower-level employees is also a point to be considered, says Torquato (2015).

Currently, employees increasingly want to participate in decision-making processes, contribute to organizational development with their knowledge, and receive proportionally to the size of their contribution (PIO, 2016). This attitude would help in the approval of employees, the global strategic vision and its objectives, influencing greater engagement on the part of employees, which would ultimately result in their commitment to organizational goals (TORQUATO, 2015).

This commitment is the result of a continuous communicative process in which everyone participates, expressing their doubts, anxieties and negotiating needs. In this way, a bilateral relationship of mutual significance between employees and the organization is induced (OLIVEIRA et al, 2019). However, it can be inferred that this vision should be inserted in the cultural component of the institution, through communication open to the participation of agents of all hierarchical levels.

Pio (2016) agrees with this view when he criticizes management models in which the objectives and strategic vision are not shared in an institutional way with employees. For her, any imprecision or gap in this sharing results in mischaracterization of the general strategic vision in the various sectors of the company. According to him, distortions can occur when going through the communication "*loops*" from the point of view of one employee or another, thus generating internal organizational dissonance regarding the conduct of communication strategies and actions.

The same author points out that, after several experiences and professional observations, he was able to conclude that it is more important to increase the commitment of the internal public to its participation in the internal process of information transmission and interaction, than specialization with the use of various communication tools and technologies.

However, it is a challenge to ensure the synchronicity of objectives, since the bureaucratic business environment can shatter the spontaneity that favors engagement, as stated by Torquato (2015). This factor is a challenge to internal communicative fluidity, and it is imperative that organizations make intervention and incentive movements through an integrative internal communication policy, perceptible in their organizational culture.

Another point to be considered, according to Torquato (2015), is the planning and investment in adequate training of the internal public to perform their specific functions.

This, in turn, previously mitigates possible knowledge gaps, reducing the individual need in the search for instrumental and functional information, inferring greater agility in the execution of work and assisting in the fluidity of the internal communicative process.

For this, according to Torquato (2015), it is important to take into account the context of the organization and its specificities, its standardization of processes, its size and how the systematization of internal control is displayed. Pio (2016) seems to agree with this position when he states that, due to the complexity inherent to organizational communication, it is difficult to measure and evaluate its quality.

The author also criticizes the view of correlating efficiency with immediate results. "It generates results within a certain time, a time schedule that must be carefully planned and integrated with a globalizing vision of strategic planning" (TORQUATO, 2015, p. 54).

However, it is of paramount importance to point out that many of the bottlenecks and noise in internal communication come from communication flows, as these directly influence the effectiveness of communication. Good management of aspects such as the volume, type and direction of communication are related to meeting the general institutional objectives.

In this intent, the next topic explains about types, networks, flows and communication channels.

### **Types, Networks, Flows and Communication Channels**

There are two types of communication, unilateral and bilateral. The first, respectively, is characterized by top-down communication and limits control by the sender, as it does not allow *feedback*. Thus, bilateral communication is preferable, which enables the feedback of communication, as highlighted by Torquato (2015). These, in turn, enable greater confluence and relational harmony by creating consensus among employees of different hierarchical positions. Therefore, the dynamic is observed in which "people will obey because they want to do it and not because they have to", according to Leyton (1970, p. 26) apud (TORQUATO, 2015, p. 70).

There are communication networks, formal and informal. Respectively, the first deals with formal interactions within an organization. The second does not use bureaucratic formalizations, but rather free collective expression in the company's corridors and among the various employees. There is also the internal network of rumors, which is characterized as informal communication, with negative potential within companies, since it can distort the

narrative of the original message and spread it to everyone, stimulating conflicts and dysfunctions (TORQUATO, 2015).

These networks make use of formal or informal channels. Formal channels are institutionalized in the company's internal communication policies and process downward and upward flows, helping the efficiency of processes through communication and interaction between sectors, employees and hierarchical levels. These can be displayed in formats: visual; auditory; visual/auditory and hypertext (TORQUATO, 2015).

Informal channels, on the other hand, "are those not planned by the board of directors that are beyond its control or even ignore the existence of formal channels" (TORQUATO, 2015, p. 71). It can be said that they are characterized by unofficial communications, in which each participant expresses himself spontaneously and not controlled by the organization, not being registered in any official mechanism.

Three communicative flows circulate within these channels, namely, descending, ascending and lateral. These are arranged in a specific direction. As can be seen in the table below:

Table 1 – Internal communication flows

<i>Stream</i>	<i>Direction of the communicative</i>	
DESCENDANT	↓	From the top position hierarchically to the lower
ASCENDANT	↑	From the bottom to the top position Hierarchically
LATERAL	↔	From the same hierarchical

Source: Prepared by the author (2023), based on Torquato (2015, p. 44).

Due to the geographic decentralization of the operational units, Torquato (2015) points out that the term "down" also includes "outwards"; and the term "upwards" can also mean "inwards".

Centripetal upward communication occurs when an employee at a lower hierarchical level goes to a superior to position himself, resolve doubts, make complaints or give *feedback*, etc. (TORQUATO, 2015). Oral and written means are the most used. Through

the information received, the manager has the possibility to investigate whether there is consistency between the internal attitude and the company's policies.

The horizontal, or lateral, flow occurs within relationships in which its members, whether sectors, departments or employees, are at the same hierarchical level (TORQUATO, 2015). In this context, oral and written channels are routinely used.

Attention must be paid to the use and maintenance of adequate communication channels, bringing fluidity to the communicative act. Although natural channels are preferable, due to their characteristic of generating *timely feedback*, according to Torquato (2015), it cannot be forgotten that there is information that, by nature, must be worked through writing or orality.

### **Problems arising from communication flows**

As already explained, ineffective internal communication generates problems in all sectors of an organization, thus influencing losses in the achievement of organizational objectives. Far from intending to exhaust the subject, some factors that constitute challenges arising from communicative flows will be listed, in which management must be attentive and create subsidies and strategies for intervention and mitigation of effects within the communicative process.

It is important to point out the existing problem in the institutionalization of the dynamics of communicative flows. As for upward flows, Torquato (2015) states that the absence of effective upward communication, in which employees at the base feel comfortable to communicate with those hierarchically superior spontaneously, is a major inconvenience for companies. As a result of this "lack of communication", employees create informal groups to meet this need for expression.

Consequently, it happens that "these networks absorb large amounts of environmental messages [...], constituting real sources of tension and altering normative behaviors" (TORQUATO, 2015, p. 45). Therefore, it is interesting to have an internal communication policy that favors communication from the "bottom up" in an effective and institutionalized way.

On the other hand, downward communication is not clear about what is expected of subordinates. Subordinates, in turn, are culturally programmed not to inquire or question, that is, they fear displeasing (TORQUATO, 2015). Therefore, it is important that employees

have timely and timely feedback, and feel comfortable expressing needs, doubts, and complaints.

Research carried out by Falcioni (2006) in small companies in the footwear sector of Fortaleza on the relationship between the level of commitment and the effectiveness of perceived internal communication, corroborates what has already been exposed, since it showed that most of the interviewees did not feel comfortable expressing themselves within the organization. What became clear in the course of the research is that the communication flows were flawed in their companies. The author concludes "that the management policies of these companies do not consider internal communication a strategic tool" (FALCIONI, 2009, p. 102).

Moraes (2020) also found the same problem when researching noise in communication flows in the purchasing sector of a Federal University, verifying that this problem in communication flows was generating conflicts due to lack of planning and determination of priorities by employees.

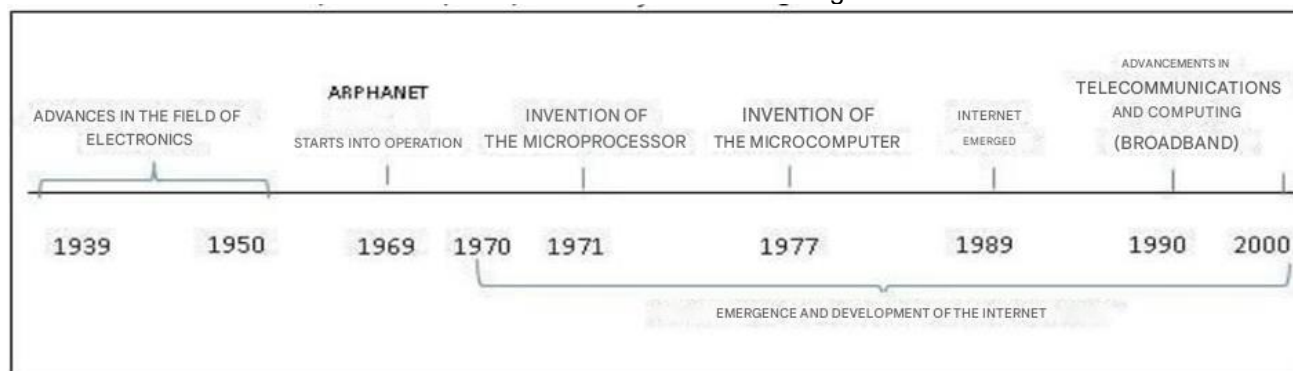
In relation to this problem, Torquato (2015) states the importance of integrating horizontal and vertical communication flows, and encouraging employee autonomy and security through timely feedback to promote a more spontaneous and effective internal and communicational relationship. This way of managing internal communication reduces failures and mistakes in communication, which avoids frustration in the relationship and leads to a more efficient internal communicative process

Therefore, the "company that uses the channels and means of communication favors dialogue, bilateral communication and feedback, giving rise to a feeling of identification with the company in the employee" (FALCIONI, 2009 p. 100). This identification is a driving factor for employees' commitment to organizational goals.

## BRIEF HISTORY OF THE INFORMATION TECHNOLOGICAL REVOLUTION

For a better understanding of the emergence and development of ICTs, as well as their meaning and importance in modern society, we will use a timeline that clearly exposes in synthesis the evolutionary milestones that were decisive for the rise of a new technological paradigm. This timeline will cover the high points, going through the technological revolution and the information revolution, resulting in a networked society.

FIGURE 1 - Timeline of the main informational technological advances of the 70s.



Source: The author (2023), based on (PEREIRA et al, 2011, p. 151 - 158).

The informational technological context available today had its boost in the 70s, with inventions that completely transformed the ways of communicating and seeing technology. In this same decade, the microprocessor and Apple's first commercial microcomputer, the Apple-1, were created and disseminated. (PEREIRA et al, 2011).

The research of the U.S. military service in the area of communication technology was significant, especially in the development and creation of what would become the internet today. These efforts aimed precisely at the creation of an information system without weaknesses, which would continue to operate even in the face of a war attack. This phenomenon, added to the efforts coming from the North American technological hub Silicon Valley, would result in innovative discoveries and launches that caused a radical change in the existing technological paradigms (PEREIRA et al, 2011).

But to reach the current conception we have today of ICTs, there was a long journey traveled, with scientific and technical efforts. All this revolution is due, in addition to the "synergy" so commented on by Castells (1999), to the inventiveness and free spirit of the pioneers in developing and spreading their discoveries (PEREIRA et al, 2011).

Castells et al (1999) state that informational technological development was not configured as an isolated phenomenon, but as a moment marked by a stage of greater scope of knowledge. From this understanding, it can be inferred that all technological evolutions in the various fields, especially in the 70s, were interconnected and interdependent, hence the justification for the use of the term "synergy" by the author, which brings to light the idea of mutuality, dynamism and cohesion.

After the 60s, during the technological revolution that began at the end of World War II, the Information Society was configured, which modified, in a short period, several aspects of daily life (PEREIRA et al, 2011, p. 152.).

Castells et al (1999) point out that the creation of the first computer and transistor was an important milestone for society, as it configured the beginning of the technological revolution of information. However, for the author, its diffusion only took place later, in the 70s. The second important factor was the creation of the internet. "These technologies have changed the quantity, quality and speed of information today", says Pereira et al (2011, p. 155). Information technology, according to Le Coadic (2004, p. 84) Apud (BEMBEM et al, 2013, p. 141), is:

It is the scientific study of information techniques - sets of methodical processes, which are based or not on "[...] in scientific knowledge, used in the production, treatment, communication, use and storage of information.

ICTs, in addition to exerting influence on social life, enable local development (PEREIRA et al, 2011 p. 155). Currently, they are present in all moments of life in society, from digital mediation in the school environment to access to opening a bank account from a smartphone. It is observed that the social, economic, political and cultural changes resulting from informational technological advances have also affected the way organizations have come to see organizational communication. As Kunsch (2016) states, the way of relating, processing, promoting and storing information has changed.

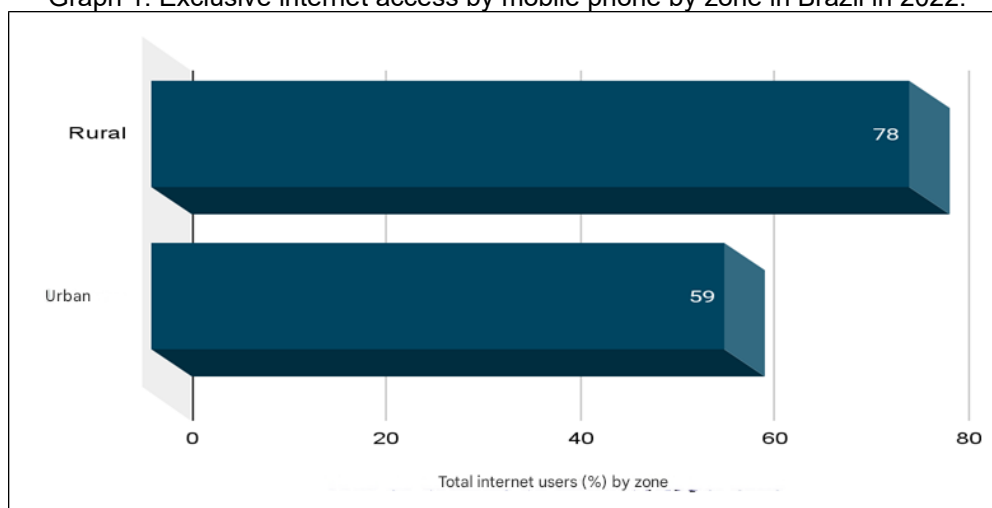
## RECENT UPDATES TO THE INTERNET ACCESS LANDSCAPE IN BRAZIL

Internet access is one of the pillars of digital inclusion. Thus, it is interesting to situate the scenario of internet access in Brazil. The ICT Domiciles survey (2022), organized by the Internet Steering Committee in Brazil (CGI.br), released through a Press Conference in São Paulo, on May 16, 2023, aims to support decisions regarding public policies regarding digital inclusion in Brazil, it is also used as a research source for several academic works. The last editions have adopted the idea of meaningful and universal connectivity, based on the premise that access should be broad and not superficial. (CGI.BR, 2023).

The results of this revealed that in 2022, 80% of the Brazilian population had access to the internet, making an approximate total of 60 million households and 149 million individuals. The survey indicated that 15 million households did not have access to the Internet, 36 million of which were non-users in Brazil. The population of Classes D and E, non-users, reached 19 million, totaling 34%, the highest among all classes. Among the reasons pointed out by the general population for not using the internet, the main ones

were the price with a percentage of 28%, followed by the lack of internet skills with a percentage of 26% (CGI.BR, 2023).

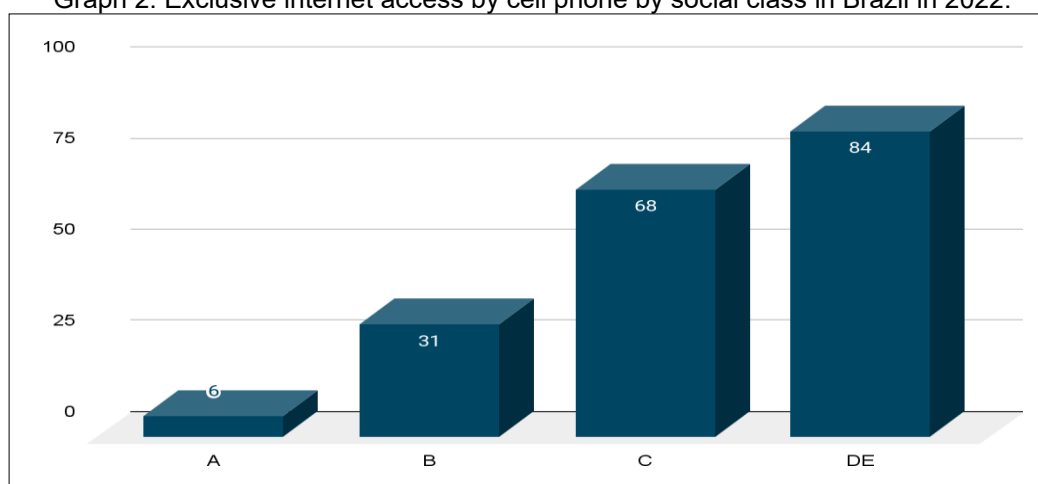
Graph 1: Exclusive internet access by mobile phone by zone in Brazil in 2022.



Source: Prepared by the author based on the ICT Households 2022 survey (CGI.br; 2023).

According to the graph, 78% of users in rural areas in Brazil use cell phones as their exclusive means of accessing the internet, a rate higher than in urban areas.

Graph 2: Exclusive internet access by cell phone by social class in Brazil in 2022.



Source: Prepared by the author based on the ICT Households 2022 survey (CGI.br; 2023).

The Northeast, in turn, is the region in which most users use cell phones exclusively, with 71% of the user population. As for social classes, classes D and E together have a percentage of 84% of users who exclusively use cell phones as a means of accessing the internet, being the highest percentage among all classes.

Coordinator Alexandre Barbosa of Cetic.br says that connectivity only on the cell phone device is limiting, as the experience by multi-devices is richer and provides greater

chances of better use of all internet tools. He states that those who use their cell phones exclusively, for the most part, belong to the disadvantaged classes, and it is a challenge to ensure digital inclusion in an equitable way (CGI.BR, 2023). In this regard, the coordinator of the CGI.br, Renata Mielli, stated at the launch of the survey on youtube:

Most internet users in Brazil access the internet exclusively through their cell phone device and that access through their cell phone is a limitation for us to have adequate use of all internet tools (NIC.BR, 2023).

In addition, Coordinator Alexandre Barbosa of the Cetic.br, stated that the research takes into account the concept of significant connectivity, which demonstrates other aspects not only the issue of internet access, but other dynamics involved in digital inclusion in a significant way, such as the device used, the user's digital ability and the quality of the internet accessed.

## MEANINGS OF NETWORK SOCIETY

For Lopes (2009), the development of ICTs is one of the fundamental components to stimulate the socioeconomic growth of the regions where they are used. At the global level, ICTs, according to Pereira et al (2011, p. 152), bring to light modifications and consequences that:

[...] converge to a society characterized by the growing importance of technological resources and the advancement of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) with an impact on social and business relations and institutions.

This society is defined as an information or knowledge society "which considers a constant capacity for innovation" according to Pereira et al (2011, p. 152). Regarding this terminology, Castells (2005) disagrees with its use and argues that, in all previous societies, knowledge and information were always sought. Therefore, this behavior, or phenomenon, is not exclusive to this current society, and states that the only differential characteristic is that its basis is found in the advances of microelectronics and computing, giving it a superior *performance* compared to previous technological systems. Castells (2005, p. 20) defines a network society, in simple terms, as follows:

[...] a social structure based on networks operated by communication and information technologies based on microelectronics and digital computer networks that generate, process and distribute information from knowledge accumulated in the nodes of these networks.

In this way, the author describes a society originating from and surrounded by technological advances in the area of information and communication, marked by the phenomenon of globalization.

## THE CONTRIBUTION OF ICTS TO ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION

ICTs are defined as:

The reality is composed of a set of systems, processes, procedures and instruments, which aims at transformation – creation, storage and dissemination of information, through various means, to satisfy the information needs of individuals and society (GARCÍA YRUELA, 1997, p. 78 apud MACIEL, 2012, p. 21).

The change in the dynamics of societies as a result of technological evolution, especially informational, is remarkable, which has brought developments to organizations and their internal communication. According to Kunsch (2016, p. 57), "[...] the digitalization of society and economic processes is irreversible and evolves technologically continuously."

The use of these technologies, especially ICTs, brings practicality to various day-to-day activities, through facilitation in the communication process. In an organizational sense, they provide more agility to the communicative process through some aspects, such as, for example, facilitating the use of several simultaneous media, the interaction between geographically separated people, among other factors.

As stated by Pio (2016), another advantage that ICTs provide to businesses is the ability to serve an immense and robust volume of sectoral, instrumental and managerial information. This requirement is extremely necessary, because the communication flow is dense and continuous within organizations, hence the difficulty in processing and storing information and communicative memory.

In addition, technologies have proposed changes in the behavior of the receiver, from a passive agent to someone who actively participates in the communicative act, thus configuring a communicator/communicator relationship, as stated by Curvello (2002).

Regarding the qualification of people, Curvello (2002, p. 10) adds:

The qualification of people also tends to increase with greater circulation and greater access to globalized information. Organizations are likely to obtain gains in effectiveness, due to the free flow of ideas and the permanent incentive to innovation. Dialogue, communication, in short, despite impersonality, tend to become more frank, due to greater interactivity. Bureaucratic and hierarchical ties tend to become more malleable.

However, in order to make good use of the functions, attributes and facilitations that one of the Information and Communication Technologies can offer, it is necessary, first of all, to ascertain the characteristics and possibilities of this technology to the detriment of the context in which it will be used (MACIEL, 2018). For this author, this action involves three very important dimensions, namely: the type of interaction allowed by technologies, the time in which communication takes place and the direction of communication.

To manage and quickly capture the full potential of these technologies, it is necessary to have trained professionals, as well as a communication policy institutionally focused on the incentive, maintenance and use of ICTs in the various organizational relationships (VIGNERON, 2000). However, what is often observed is an internal communication molded to the outdated view of communication, from the perspective of an instrumental bias, which is inflexible and not very participatory (KUNSCH, 2016).

If, on the one hand, innovation and technology help organizational communication, on the other hand, it exposes a great challenge for companies, that of adapting to this new digital reality, which is always in motion. However, it is important to incorporate into the organizational culture a new way of thinking and planning communication in this digital age, acting in a participatory and collaborative way with its external audiences and in its internal processes and routines (KUNSCH, 2016). However, this process of change to this new reality must be faced in a personalized way. Each organization will have its own specificities and needs to be observed, as well as a peculiar internal organizational context that must always be taken into account (KUNSCH 2016).

## THE MOODLE PLATFORM AND THE VIRTUAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Moodle is the acronym for *Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment* and consists of an open-source learning management system, with over 316,000,000 users worldwide (MOODLE, 2023). The platform was founded by Martin Dougiamas with the aim of creating a flexible, affordable online learning solution that could be adapted to any educational institution or organization. It has developers, certified partners and service providers that contribute to providing a system that protects data privacy and security (MOODLE, 2023).

This is done through a customizable and flexible Virtual Learning Environment. The system can be extended or modified, from aspects such as *layout* to integrations and

*plugins* (MOODLE, 2023). Plugins allow you to add additional features and functionality to the Moodle platform, as is the case with *BigBlueButton* 2023).

*BigBlueButton* is free software, released externally in 2007, and grew out of the Technology Innovation Management (TIM) program at Carleton University's Institute for Technology Entrepreneurship and Commercialization in Ottawa, Canada. Its central objective is to "support teaching with enhanced online tools that allow teachers to connect with students in a synchronized way" (BIGBLUEBUTTON, 2023).

Virtual learning environments are virtual classrooms that receive the terminologies VLE and LMS, being one of the most used tools in the distance learning modality. They display several features, from those that guarantee real-time interaction, such as virtual chat and web conferences, to asynchronous, such as discussion forums. There are several VLEs, however, taking into account the object of study, this research will focus on the Moodle platform because it is the platform used in the EMITec program.

The importance of these digital platforms goes beyond educational courtyards. As Information and Communication Technologies, they facilitate the access and transfer of information, as well as the interaction between spatially distant entities, being a useful tool for the internal communicative process.

## METHODOLOGY

The research is a case study in the EMITec program, focusing on internal communication intermediated by a Virtual Learning Environment as a means of communication between mediators, teaching teams and pedagogical coordination. Therefore, it is a detailed study of the functionalities of the VLE, as stated by Yin (2001) apud Prodanov et al (2013, p. 51), "The case study refers to the detailed and in-depth study of one or more objects".

The research, as to its objectives, is descriptive, as it sought to collect data regarding the functionalities of the VLE, that is, it aimed to record and describe them as to their characteristics and place them in a certain order. In short, a classification method was inserted, as to the type of communication promoted.

Since the analysis is descriptive, it sought to identify the addition of the VLE as a communicative channel based on results and facts, since it is characterized by a research that "seeks to classify, explain and interpret facts that occur" (PRODANOV et al, 2013, p. 51).

As for the approach, it is qualitative, since the reception of the data was through an analysis that "[...] consists of examining, classifying and, very often, categorizing the data, opinions and information collected", according to Martins et al (2007, p. 69).

As for the means, the research consists of documentary, bibliographic and telemated. Documents such as state ordinances, school organization documents (pedagogical planning project) and manuals were used. As for the bibliographic survey, a theoretical platform was elaborated which, according to Martins et al (2007), consists of a survey of theorists in the area to support the research, "which points out what to investigate, how to demonstrate the propositions of the study and guides the approach and approximation with the phenomenon itself" (MARTINS et al, 2007 p. 64). In this way, primary and secondary data were used.

According to this understanding, the research is based on the theoretical assumptions Kunsch, Torquato and Pio, due to their knowledge and experiences in the area of organizational communication. In order to contextualize the use of ICTs, it was necessary to create an environment with the theme of information and communication technology and Network Society.

Subsequently, a search was carried out in the directories of the Virtual Learning Environment, used by the EMITec Program, for functionalities that would promote internal communication, characterizing the research as telematized.

## CONTEXT OF THE OBJECT OF STUDY – EMITEC

High School with Technological Intermediation, EMITec, was implemented in Bahia through Ordinance No. 424, of January 21, 2011 (BAHIA, 2018). Through the Regular High School modality, it was created to meet the needs of communities living in areas far from the urban perimeter, far from education centers, and also in locations that do not have qualified professionals in all the required specialties (CARNEIRO et al, 2019, p. 83-84).

The classes are intermediated by satellite technology, reaching the telerooms provided by the municipalities with an agreement with the State of Bahia. Among the public served are quilombola communities, indigenous people, the prison population and those in rural areas (SANTOS, 2017). Due to this, it is seen as an inclusive and innovative social pedagogical alternative (BAHIA, 2016).

To make communication possible in a centralized way, the AVA-EMITec software is used, which consists of a Virtual Environment on the *Moodle* Platform, used mainly as a

communication and interaction channel between mediators, teachers and the pedagogical coordination team of the EMITec Program (BAHIA; [2011]).

Its structure is composed of access directories, in which the following can be observed: provision of various information regarding the conduct of teaching and administrative activities, documents related to the school secretariat, support material for classes, discussion forums, internal chat, access link to the *BigBlueButton* plugin, which in turn allows access to public chat through web conference, among others.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### THE IMPORTANCE OF USING THE VS FOR EMITEC'S INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

Among the facilitating aspects regarding the use of the VLE for EMITec's internal communication, the main one is the possibility of promoting centralized communication, which is fundamental, since most of the members (mediators) are geographically dispersed throughout the Bahian territory. This fact provides an opportunity for an amplification of participation, as Genelot (2001, apud Cardoso, 2006, p.1128) indicates that communication should be seen as a tool that reaffirms the importance of participation in the organizational culture.

The second positive aspect is the interactivity through multimedia resources, making it easy to send and receive audios, files, as well as participate in online chat through real-time communication. This is possible through the *BigBlueButton* plugin, which makes communication dynamic and *feedback* immediate. According to Curvello (2002, p.5), the "[...] organizational communication as a transactional process takes into account the presence of *feedback* as a signal of how the emission was perceived and reconstructed by the receiver".

The third aspect is the possibility of customizing the VLE to ensure timely attendance to the specific demands of the program, taking into account its characteristics (MOODLE, 2023).

On the other hand, the need for internet connectivity, and the requirement of a certain level of digital skill to access the VLE, is a limiting aspect, as there is no point in having the appropriate software and it is never, or rarely, used due to lack of internet or ability to use the computer or internet.

Considering that, although the classrooms are equipped with internet, the mediator must participate in the alignment meetings at a time opposite to the work shift, as exposed

in the mediator's schedule of activities in the teaching units, that is, outside the environment that was equipped by the program. Therefore, the mediator will have to have other environments to participate in the alignment meetings or have mobile internet.

However, the program does not provide for digital inclusion for mediators in an environment other than work. And, the lack of internet access can compromise participation in videoconferences, which is the feature that offers greater interactivity in internal communication and immediate feedback.

Hence, the challenge of ensuring constancy in the assistance and participation of mediators in alignment meetings can be seen.

## CONCLUSION

This research had as its theme the internal communication of EMITec intermediated by the Virtual Learning Environment, in which it was sought to verify the usefulness of the VLE as a support channel for the program's internal communication process. It is already understood by theorists in the area, as well as in the professional field, that communication is an essential strategic activity for the achievement of institutional objectives. Therefore, favoring the construction of communication in an integrated way must be part of the company's culture. This research aimed to describe the benefits that a Virtual Learning Environment can provide for the internal communication of EMITec, which is the implementation of a public educational policy of the State of Bahia.

To fulfill the objectives, a research of theoretical bases and documentary research on EMITec was carried out at first and, later, a telemated research was carried out through the VLE on the functionalities that corroborate the effectiveness of internal communication between mediators and teams in the pedagogical area.

Therefore, it is necessary to view communication in an integrated way and position it strategically, institutionalizing it in the organizational culture. Added to this is the importance of understanding the implications of the use of ICTs for internal communication, taking into account the context of constant technological evolution and its repercussion for organizations.

The research showed that the VLE provides important functionalities to the program's internal communication, and the members can make use of real-time communication tools or not. This is done through discussion forums, as well as internal chat and web conferencing with chat and multimedia resources, ensuring timely *feedback*.

Among the favorable points observed, there is the interactivity with multimedia resources and the possibility of connecting people in different geographical places in the same communicative space, in which they can give their opinions, suggest, send reports and answer questions.

As for the limitations, the need for internet connectivity and previous basic knowledge of computers and internet is pointed out, as it is a software used exclusively online. It was not possible to verify the profile of VLE users regarding inclusion and digital ability. However, it can be seen that no specific course or basic knowledge in computer science was required in the last selection of mediators (Bahia, 2022). In this way, it is possible that people without computer skills can also act as mediators.

In view of what has been previously exposed, it is concluded that the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) is an efficient means of promoting EMITec's internal communication, being a viable technological solution for its improvement.

It is suggested, for future research, to investigate the perspectives of mediators and teams that rely exclusively on the VLE as an internal communication tool. This investigation should cover its ease of access, difficulties encountered, as well as the evaluation of the program's usability parameters. Such an approach will allow for a more comprehensive evaluation of software usage.

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