

## Institutionalization of Distance Education: perspectives for thinking about the quality of this modality

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**Abstract:** This article discusses the articulation of aspects of distance education institutionalization with the provision of courses with quality socially referenced, from the perspective of specialists from the Southeast Region of Brazil. The data were collected in 2023 by using the Delphi technique. The results show that the institutionalization of the modality, integrating it into the organizational structure and culture, favors the courses quality from a democratic and emancipatory perspective.

**Keywords:** Institutionalization of distance education; Socially referenced quality; Delphi technique.

## **Institucionalização da EaD: perspectivas para se pensar a qualidade da modalidade**

**Resumo:** Discute-se a articulação de aspectos da institucionalização da educação a distância com a oferta de cursos com qualidade socialmente referenciada, na perspectiva de especialistas da Região Sudeste do Brasil. Os dados foram coletados em 2023, utilizando a Técnica Delphi. Os resultados mostram que institucionalizar a modalidade, integrando-a na estrutura e na cultura organizacional, favorece a qualidade dos cursos numa perspectiva democrática e emancipatória.

**Palavras-chave:** Institucionalização da EaD; Qualidade socialmente referenciada; Técnica Delphi.

## **Institucionalización de la educación a distancia: perspectivas para pensar la calidad de la modalidad**

**Resumen:** Este artículo aborda la relación entre aspectos de la institucionalización de la educación a distancia y la oferta de cursos con calidad socialmente referenciada desde la perspectiva de especialistas del Sudeste de Brasil. Los datos se recogieron en 2023 mediante la técnica Delphi. Los resultados muestran que la institucionalización de la modalidad, al integrarla en la estructura y cultura organizacional, favorece la calidad de los cursos desde una perspectiva democrática y emancipadora.

**Palabras clave:** Institucionalización de la educación a distancia; Calidad socialmente referenciada; Técnica Delphi.

Received on: 2024-08-31

Accepted on: 2024-11-11

## INTRODUCTION

The institutionalization of Distance Education (EaD, as it is called in Brazil) can be understood as a process derived from the dynamics of interactions between the educational field and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). In this sense, it includes the pressure exerted by the field through legislation and public policies (exogenous or external elements) on HEIs to offer courses in this modality, as well as the gradual and continuous adaptations made by the institutions (endogenous or internal elements) in their structural arrangement, in order to incorporate EaD systemically and thus legitimize them socially (Chaquime, 2019).

In the Brazilian context, we can say that the institutionalization of distance education, both in public and private universities, gained momentum after the approval of the Directives and Bases of National Education Law (Law No. 9,394), in 1996. This is because, from this milestone, distance education became a teaching modality to be articulated with others and implemented at all levels of education.

As Lima and Faria (2020) point out, after the publication of the Directives and Bases of National Education Law (LDB) in 1996, especially between 2000 and 2010, twelve (12) programs were launched nationwide to promote the provision of distance education courses. However, the authors point out that four of them were only proposed in 2005, which, according to them, is due to the publication of Decree No. 5,622, which regulated the distance education modality. Lima and Faria (2020) point out that the increase in distance education courses since 2005 has occurred in the private sector and not in the public sector, which has focused on providing courses for education professionals.

Regarding the public sector, we found that the institutionalization of distance education was initiated by Decree No. 5,800 of June 8, 2006, which created the Brazilian Open University System (UAB), a consortium created between state or federal universities, municipalities, and the Ministry of Education (MEC), through the Coordination of Superior Level Staff Improvement (CAPES), to offer distance education courses. Thus, by joining the UAB system, public institutions begin a process of internal restructuring, creating secretariats, directorates, centers, or sectors, as well as standards, procedures, regulations, and behaviors to systematically integrate the modality into their daily administrative dynamics, in addition to disseminating it in the organizational culture.

The expansion of the Distance Education modality associated with its institutionalization has led to a debate on the quality of the courses offered by higher education institutions, which has led to a reflection on the extent to



which Distance Education courses, especially those offered by the public sector, promote critical education that allows for the full exercise of citizenship.

The text we present here seeks to investigate and discuss the articulation of aspects of the institutionalization of distance education for providing courses with socially referenced quality. To this end, we will use qualitative data from a study carried out by the Research Network "Quality and Regulation in the Context of Open, Flexible or Distance Education in Brazil and Internationally", hereafter referred to as the Network, with specialists in the field of distance education from four public higher education institutions in the Southeast region of Brazil.

In the section that follows this introduction, we will provide theoretical support on institutionalization and socially referenced quality in distance education.

## 2 INSTITUTIONALIZATION AND QUALITY IN DISTANCE EDUCATION

Researchers who have dedicated themselves to studying the phenomenon of institutionalization of distance education in Brazilian public universities point out that it is a continuous, gradual, and dialectical process of incorporating this educational modality into the academic and administrative structures of institutions so that it becomes a natural and permanent part of their educational offerings, with the same legitimacy as presential courses (Chaquime; Mill, 2018; Pareschi; Mill, 2024; Silva; Accorsi, 2018; Schwetz et al., 2021).

There are significant challenges to this process. The literature highlights the internal resistance of teachers and managers, often fueled by prejudices about the quality of distance education. According to Veloso and Mill (2022), this resistance may be motivated by the innovative nature of the modality or by concerns about maintaining academic quality standards. In addition, institutionalization involves overcoming administrative and cultural barriers that have historically favored the traditional modality (Freitas; Veloso, 2023).

The institutionalization of distance education involves both internal and external aspects of institutions and requires significant changes. Endogenous challenges are related to the dynamics of universities, such as organizational culture, resource management, and faculty training. The literature shows that distance education is often not a priority within public HEIs, resulting in fragmented and unstable provision. Furthermore, the low representation of distance education in university decision-making bodies limits its consolidation as a permanent educational modality (Pareschi; Mill, 2024; Veloso; Moreira; Mill, 2024).



According to the review by Veloso and Mill (2022), the obstacles to institutionalization stem in part from the innovative nature of distance education, which is often viewed with suspicion by teachers and managers accustomed to the presential teaching modality. Resistance to distance learning is not just a matter of adapting to new technologies but of cultural change within institutions. Universities need to create an organizational culture that values the modality, providing adequate resources, ongoing support, and specific budget decentralization based on student costs for distance learning courses in public HEIs (Freitas; Veloso, 2023; Veloso; Moreira; Mill, 2024).

Exogenous aspects related to the institutionalization process include public policies, government regulations, and external funding. The creation of the UAB is one of the most important exogenous factors that drove the expansion of distance education in public universities. However, this expansion has been accompanied by a high dependence on UAB resources, which creates uncertainty in the continuity of course offerings. This dependence on external funding makes it difficult for distance education to be fully institutionalized in public universities since its continuity is linked to the availability of regularly unstable government resources (Rocha; Herrmann, 2019; Silva; Souza; Santos, 2023).

When distance education is organically integrated into the university structure, with appropriate financial, technological, and pedagogical support, the quality of the courses tends to improve. This happens because distance education is recognized as a legitimate educational modality with the same quality standards as presential courses. The institutionalization of distance education is, therefore, seen as a requirement to guarantee the sustainability and quality of EaD courses (Freitas; Veloso, 2023).

On the other hand, Freitas and Veloso (2023) also point out that the lack of a stable structure and an organizational culture that values the modality can lead to an uncertain supply of courses, with insufficient infrastructure, poor teacher training, and low student participation.

In order to support the government's legal acts regarding the processes of regulation, supervision, and evaluation of distance education, in 2003 the then Secretariat of Distance Education of the Brazilian Ministry of Education launched the "Quality References for Distance Higher Education" (Brasil, 2007), a guiding document for the modality. Updated in 2007 by a committee of experts, with participation from society through public consultation, the current version of the document completes 17 years without the publication of an update; however, the text still presents itself as contemporary, contributing to the debate on the institutionalization of distance education and the quality of the modality.

The references constitute a set of principles, guidelines, and criteria for institutions offering distance education aimed at ensuring that courses offered in this modality meet minimum quality standards. They are parameters for educational institutions, managers, teachers, and all those involved in the design, implementation, and evaluation of distance education courses to ensure that students receive a quality education. Furthermore, it was intended that the guidelines contained in the document would have "an inductive function, not only in terms of the theoretical-methodological conception of distance education itself but also in the organization of distance education systems in Brazil" (Brasil, 2007, translated by us). Thus, the document aims to

[...] as a central concern to present a set of definitions and concepts in order, on the one hand, to guarantee the quality of distance education processes and, on the other hand, to limit both the precariousness of higher education seen in some models of distance education provision and its indiscriminate provision without guarantees of the basic conditions for the development of quality courses (Brasil, 2007, p. 2, translated by us).

To ensure the technical-scientific and political training of higher education students in the distance learning modality, the references (Brasil, 2007) highlight the need for a systemic approach and a strong institutional commitment. The founding elements for socially referenced distance learning with quality (Brasil, 2007; Chaquime; Mill, 2018; Freitas, Veloso; 2023; Rocha; Herrmann, 2019) are deeply linked to the institutionalization of the modality:

- Strategic planning: development of policies, regulations and pedagogical projects adapted to the needs of students and linked to the institutional policy project and the institutional development plan;
- Training of teachers, tutors and technical-administrative staff: offering training programs so that professionals involved in distance education can develop the skills necessary to work in this modality;
- Ongoing assessment: implementing mechanisms for evaluating learning, the institution and courses;
- Infrastructure: provision of equipment, laboratories, in-person support centers, libraries, virtual learning environments and technological tools suitable for distance education;
- Financial sustainability: guaranteeing the initial investment and maintaining the

development and provision of courses.

In this way, the institutionalization of distance education is essential not only to increase the number of courses and places in higher education, but also to ensure that this offer is of high quality in order to meet educational and social demands.

In summary, the institutionalization of EaD can be considered as a complex process that aims to ensure the legitimacy, sustainability and quality of it, ensuring that this modality is fully integrated into educational institutions. However, considering some studies carried out in the period 2019-2024, it is largely clear that there is no reference to the quality of distance education in relation to the institutionalization process (Chaquime, 2019; Freitas; Veloso, 2023; Pareschi; Mill, 2024; Veloso; Moreira; Mill, 2024).

### 3 METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

The data analyzed in this article come from a collection carried out by the Network in 2023 for a survey whose objective was to identify, public higher education institutions (PHEIs) in Brazil, and also in Mexico, Guatemala, Argentina, and Mozambique, the existence of standards, consensus and disagreement regarding the quality of distance education.

Data collection was done through an electronic questionnaire in two rounds by using the Delphi technique (Antunes, 2014; Everling; Mont'Alvão, 2019). Thus, the research participants were experts in distance education, who, by answering the questions posed, allowed the identification of patterns, consensuses, and disagreements on the topic under study.

In the first round of the survey, the questionnaire consisted of four parts, where the first and second parts aimed to assess the profile of the participants and the organizational and financial structure of distance education in their universities, respectively. The third part aimed to explore the agreement or disagreement regarding the concepts of flexible education, hybrid education, open education, remote education, e-learning, and distance education developed by the Network. Finally, the fourth part consisted of open-closed questions about the participants' ideas related to the quality of education in general and distance education in particular.

The data collected in the first round were analyzed and categorized by the Network, and then a new multiple-choice questionnaire was sent to determine the degree of agreement of the participants with each item related to the quality of education in general and distance education, and also with regard to the essential factors to ensure it. It is worth mentioning that for each

item, the participant could justify his/her position in case of disagreement or partial agreement.

Regarding the Southeast Region of Brazil, which is the focus of this article, the four participating experts were selected based on a consultation of the Lattes Platform, with the aim of identifying their work in research on distance education, as well as at different levels of management and/or teaching in this modality. The invitation to participate was made electronically, at which time the Free and Informed Consent Form was sent.

For the purposes of this article, we focused on the data from the first round of the questionnaire regarding the participants' perceptions of the quality of distance education. In addition, we emphasized the data from the second round regarding the participants' assessment of the essential elements for ensuring quality in the delivery of distance education courses. These data were analyzed in the light of the institutionalization of distance education.

#### 4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

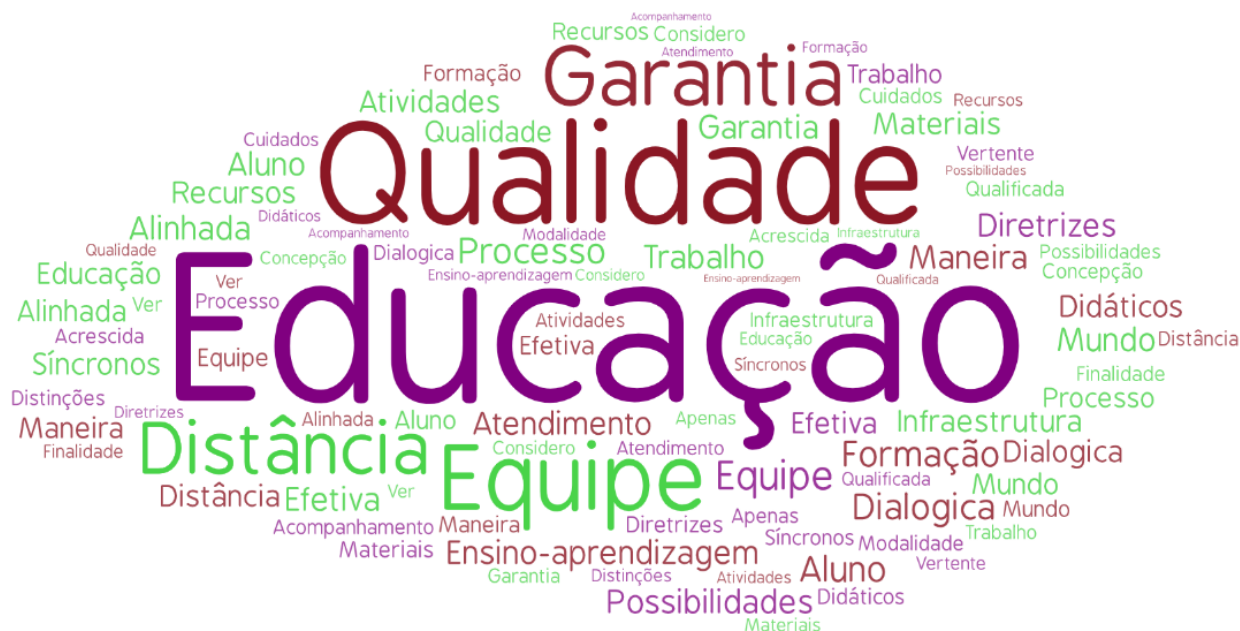
The four distance education specialists from the Southeast region, two female and two male, work at PHEIs; three have between 21 and 35 years of experience in the field, and one between 6 and 10 years; all of them work as professors and researchers in their institutions and three also work in distance education management. Regarding their state of origin, two are from Minas Gerais, one from São Paulo and one from Espírito Santo. Regarding their education, three of the specialists have in common a degree in different fields, while one of them has a degree in technology.

Regarding the levels of courses offered in the distance education modality in the associated institutions, we have technical and technological courses, bachelor's degrees, teaching degrees, extension courses, continuing education, and lato sensu postgraduate courses. The institution in São Paulo has a professional postgraduate course *stricto sensu*.

The records made by the participants in the first round about the concept of quality in distance education made it possible to construct the word cloud in Figure 1. In these records, we identified the following categories: dialogic, teaching-learning adapted to the world of work, specificities of the distance education modality, and socially referenced quality. The aggregate analysis of the categories and the word cloud shows that the concept of quality in distance education is related to the fact that, although it presents specificities in the way it is organized, the modality must be outlined by the same principles that define the quality of socially referenced education (Lima; Alonso, 2021), contrary to the market trend in education.



**Figure 1** - Word cloud on the conception of quality in distance education, from the participants' perspective



**Source:** Elaborated by the authors (2024).

Through these words and categories, it is clear that the research participants consider the technological infrastructure (equipment and Internet) as the main factor to ensure quality in distance education, as indicated by two of the respondents. In addition, the creation of a specialized team, the training of teachers to work on the elaboration of quality content and pedagogical mediation aimed at the engagement and learning of students, as well as overcoming resistance within the institutions so that distance learning is effectively integrated, are elements identified by the respondents as essential to ensure the quality of the modality. While one respondent highlights the importance of plans that are open to adaptation based on the student profile, social demands and other elements indicated by ongoing research, another emphasizes the constructivist pedagogical assumptions to ensure the quality of education, linking them to pedagogical mediation that is student-centered.

In general, the participants consider the quality of the distance education offered in their institutions to be excellent, as it enables the democratization of higher education. This excellence is guaranteed by the projects developed by those directly involved in the modality. However, they point out the lack of institutional and community support for the modality, as well as the lack of investment in technological resources.



Two of the four participants pointed out the importance of having public policies for distance education in the long term, in order to guarantee the quality of the courses offered and to institutionalize the modality, in fact, in the PHEIS, including the offer of *Stricto Sensu* postgraduate courses.

In the second round, the elements for the design of quality in distance education (Chart 1) described by the participants in the first round were presented.

**Chart 1** - Elements for designing quality in distance education

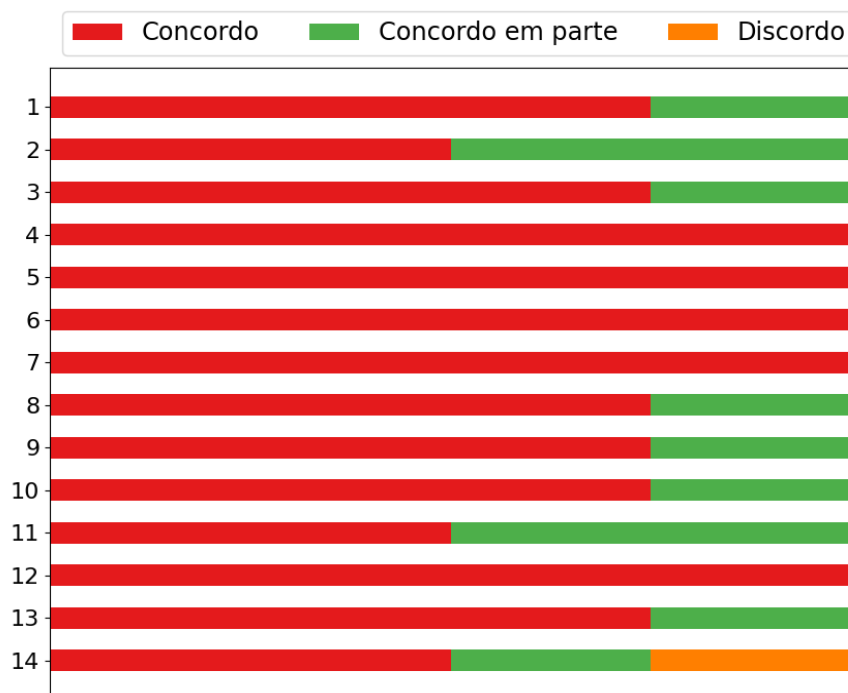
Element	Element Description
1	Adequate physical and technological infrastructure for distance education; material resources and necessary support; adequate teaching materials, media and technological resources.
2	The same quality criteria as for general and regular education.
3	Guarantee of updated political, cultural, scientific, technological and digital training for critical citizens, protagonists who value democracy; democratization, accessibility and permanence; breaks with the market aspect.
4	Policies to enhance teaching work (initial and continuing training, remuneration, working conditions, career plan and health).
5	Dialogical education in the relationship between teachers and students, support and guidance; active participation of students; teaching mediation with its own criteria and quality; creation of bonds, especially between teachers, tutors and students, so that they feel welcomed and protagonists of their education.
6	Plan and build curricula that are attentive to students' needs and learning styles to ensure meaningful, equitable and inclusive learning; use technologies in a way that contributes to pedagogical purposes, accessibility and inclusion, considering the web curriculum - (the digital one); make use of portfolios of students' experiences.
7	Planning, administrative and organizational management appropriate to the modality.
8	Qualified interdisciplinary team.
9	Applicability of lifelong learning, aligned with the world of work.
10	Based on indicators originating from educational legislation and policies, which can be verified and measured, taking into account the peculiarities of distance education.
11	Teacher-student proportion.
12	Institutionalization of academic records.
13	Expansion of space and time for learning.
14	Expensive and not all institutions are able to meet the needs of this type of teaching.

**Source:** Elaborated by the authors.



Based on these elements, the participant could agree, partially agree or disagree. If they partially agreed or disagreed, they had to justify their answer. The results are shown in Graph 1.

**Graph 1** - Elements for designing quality in distance education



Source: Elaborated by the authors (2024).

The four experts from the Southeast region unanimously agreed on five of the 14 elements that make up the concept of quality in education. These elements were: (4); (5); (6); (7) and (12).

It can then be concluded that some of the elements that received unanimous agreement from the experts are considered necessary for the effective institutionalization of EaD, namely numbers 4, 7, and 12, the latter even mentioning a specific aspect of institutionalization that concerns the internal regulations to be adopted by PHEIs.

Two respondents agreed that distance learning is expensive (item 14) and that not all institutions can meet the needs of this type of education; one partially agreed and one disagreed. For the latter, distance education is not expensive, it involves different costs and has a cost-benefit ratio in the long term.

Regarding the costs mentioned and the difficulties pointed out for the development of the modality, it is possible to refer to the instability resulting from the almost exclusive funding



by Capes/UAB, which is pointed out as one of the challenges for the institutionalization of EaD, considering its discontinuity and the outdated cost-student values. It is necessary to establish a public policy to strengthen EaD, with supporting infrastructure and, above all, financial resources in the budget matrix of the PHEIs.

In the remaining elements, there was total or partial agreement among the research participants. In two elements (2) and (11), half of the participants partially agreed with the statements presented. In six elements (1), (3), (8), (9), (10), and (13) only one participant partially agreed.

Two respondents partially agreed with the element (2), that is, that distance education should follow the same quality criteria as general and presential education. One of the respondents considered that there is no way to apply the same quality criteria to general and presential education because in distance education digital technologies integrate educational processes, so quality needs to be rethought, including the specificities of this integration. In addition, management is a fundamental issue and should also be reconsidered, according to the participant. Two respondents partially agreed that the teacher-student ratio should be considered according to the distance education model adopted (element 11).

One respondent partially agreed that adequate physical and technological infrastructure for distance education; material resources and necessary support; adequate teaching materials, media, and technological resources (element 1) are associated with quality in distance education and argued that this should be appropriate to the institution's distance education modality, considering material resources and technical, administrative and pedagogical support necessary for the development of all educational levels, as well as teaching materials, media and technological resources that are adequate and accessible to all students. Even though there was partial agreement on the element (1) for the conception of quality in distance education, this is related to structural criteria necessary for the systemic incorporation of the modality, thus being related to institutionalization and quality.

One respondent partially agreed that quality in distance education is linked to ensuring up-to-date political, cultural, scientific, technological, and digital training for critical citizens, actors who value democracy, democratization, accessibility, and permanence; it breaks with the market approach (element 3). He does not agree with the last theme because it is not possible to break completely with the market approach but to approach it more broadly. This economic perspective is in line with the results of the study by Lima and Alonso (2019, p. 14, translated by us) when they point out two different views: an economic one, in which education is





considered a productive process, and another, a global perspective, "in which the whole community participates in the process, which includes social quality with equity".

One respondent agreed with the statement in element 9, adding that lifelong learning should go beyond the work market. Another respondent partially agreed that the quality of distance education is related to the expansion of space and time for learning (element 13), but did not justify why.

Another element mentioned was the importance of a qualified interdisciplinary team (element 8). The respondent who partially agreed with this statement added that the interdisciplinary team should be qualified based on principles that can guide the collective work and be consistent with the educational purposes of the institution, the course, and the participants in general. This element, which addresses an aspect of human resources infrastructure, points to a requirement for the institutionalization and strengthening of distance education in PHEIs. The relationship between quality and institutionalization of distance education can be derived as follows.

One respondent partially agreed with the statement that one of the elements for quality in distance education is based on indicators derived from educational legislation and policies that can be verified and measured, taking into account the specificities of distance education (element 10). It is also necessary to take into account the local specificities of each region, institution and public.

In the second round, the elements of quality assurance in distance education described by the participants of the first round were presented. The four participants were presented with the elements described in Chart 2 and each of them expressed their agreement, disagreement or partial agreement, justifying their answers if they partially agreed or disagreed with the element.

**Chart 2** - Elements to ensure quality in distance education

Element	Element Description
1	Infrastructure, organization and institutional management appropriate for distance education, with data monitoring and analysis; guarantee of technological resources; quality management and process governance.
2	Constructivist methodology, with pedagogical mediation; centrality of the individual with monitoring and follow-up; personalization of learning; student support; adequate pedagogical planning; evaluation compatible with the modality.
3	Policies to enhance teaching work (initial and continuing training, working conditions, career plan and health).
4	Technologies, dialogic activities and teaching materials with quality content; efficient pedagogical support; quality materials and resources.





Element	Element Description
5	Multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary team (teachers, tutors and technical team); integrated action; distance learning actors; support from interdisciplinary teams.
6	Communication, interactivity, good communication network; communication between management, teachers and students.
7	Continuous investments/resources and specific and adequate budget; connectivity guarantee.
8	Virtual Learning Environment (AVA) (inclusive and accessible) as a space for communication, management and administration of the teaching-learning process.
9	Consider distance education modality with the same parameters as the presential one, with non-mass proposals and not from the job market perspective.
10	Accessibility.
11	Usability of systems.
12	Equity, access and student retention policies.
13	Training of administrative, management and multidisciplinary team personnel.
14	Course design and learning paths.
15	Digital inclusion policies; training students to use digital technologies.
16	Vision of educational policy focused on distance education with openness to adjustments.
17	Institutionalization of EaD.
18	Relevance.
19	Significance.
20	Standardization by the institution.
21	Interdisciplinary performance.
22	Ethics.
23	Committed staff.
24	Self-learning.
25	Reduce resistance from public institutions regarding the distance learning modality.

Source: Elaborate by the authors.

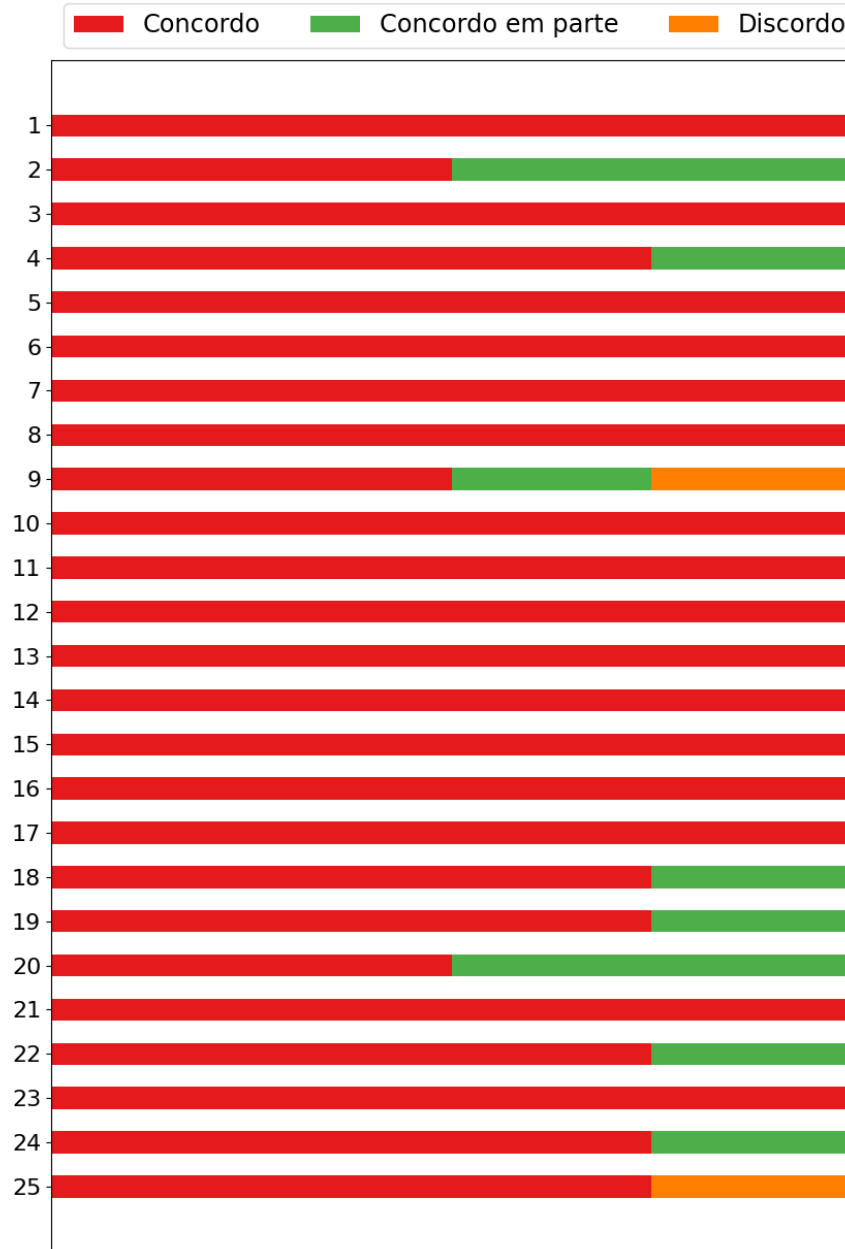
Graph 2 shows what the participants considered essential to ensure quality in distance education. There was a consensus among the participants that elements (1); (3); (5); (6-8); (10-17); (21) and (23) are essential for quality in distance education.

Considering the elements previously indicated as consensual among the research participants, the vast majority of them are configured as necessary criteria for the institutionalization of distance education, including issues related to various aspects of infrastructure - (1); (3); (5); (6-8); (10-13); (14-15) and (23), to political aspects (3), (16) and one of them more explicitly related to the institutionalization of distance education (17). Based on several studies carried out on the subject of institutionalization of distance education in PHEIs, as discussed in section 2 of this article, the elements to ensure quality in distance education presented in Chart 2 are also fundamental to guarantee the institutionalization of the modality.





**Graph 2** - Essential elements to ensure quality in distance learning



Source: Elaborated by the authors (2024).

For five items, only one respondent partially agreed with elements (4), (18), (19), (22), and (24). The other respondents agreed with these items. In items (18) and (19), one respondent stated that this characterization of the need was not sufficient. In item (22), one respondent felt that ethics must be consistent with institutional, community, and societal principles regarding the treatment of the proposed topics as well as the educational approaches used to develop the

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ethics in question. In element (24), the respondent considered that "self-learning must be part of the methodological processes of the modality, but it must occupy a commonplace with the pedagogical mediations of the different actors. It is not possible to have distance education only from the perspective of MOOCs".

With regard to element (4), one of the participants stressed the need to clarify the meaning of quality, "which applies to content, materials and resources". For two elements (2) and (20), two participants partially agreed with the statement presented. Regarding element (2), the respondent felt that it was not appropriate to limit it to one methodology, as it depends on good pedagogical design. Another stated that it is not necessary to focus only on a constructivist methodology and that the main thing is to ensure coherence between the distance education proposal of the course and the pedagogical principles defended by the institution. Furthermore, according to this respondent,

"Some characteristics are fundamental in distance education, such as: improving communication and dialogue with students in the training process; ensuring student access and retention; making technological resources available to everyone; continuous evaluation, reflection, planning, delivery and completion of the course, broadly and involving different interest groups in the course. These characteristics are not only implicit in the constructivist methodology" (translated by us).

Regarding element (20), one respondent thought that there should be standardization, but with some criticism, since not all areas of knowledge fit into the same standardization. It is necessary to have standardized processes but with due attention to the specificities of each field and of the social actors. Another stressed that it is necessary to be careful with the concept of "standardization by the institution", so as not to stifle new approaches, methodologies, and studies that could bring new advances to educational processes, in relation to the very search for educational quality.

In element (9), one respondent partially agreed and another disagreed with the statement. One respondent considered that MOOC courses have their audience according to the educational objectives they propose. Another agreed that there is no way to completely exclude a marketing vision but to expand it to provide training beyond that vision.

One respondent disagreed that the element presented is not essential to ensure quality in distance education (25). He stated that he did not see resistance to distance education from public institutions, but rather a need for guidelines and policies to ensure quality in courses.





In summary, participants from the Southeast region highlighted the following issues in both the concept of quality in distance education and the need for quality in it:

- Distance education as a public policy: constant investment in infrastructure and working conditions for distance education professionals.
- Well-trained multidisciplinary teams with integrated action.
- Curricula aimed not only at training for work, but also at training for democratic citizenship.
- Pedagogical projects and teaching materials that emphasize the digital inclusion of students, accessibility, and guarantee the permanence of all students in the distance learning course.
- AVA and course design that allows for dialog, pedagogical mediation, interaction.

Regarding the concept that the quality of distance education should be the same as the quality of presential education, some respondents argue that the specificities of distance education should also be taken into account, which are related to the essential integration of digital technologies in educational processes.

## 5 CONSIDERATIONS

Through the analysis of data related to the conceptions of professionals from the Southeast region of Brazil about the quality of distance education, extracted from the first round of research carried out by the Network, and also related to the reflections of the participants on the essential elements to ensure quality in the provision of distance courses, collected in the second round, the present study aimed to study and discuss the articulation of aspects of the institutionalization of distance education for the provision of courses with socially referenced quality.

The principles of quality in education, whether presential or distance, were highlighted: good working conditions for teachers, good infrastructure, dialogical education, and curricula that focus not only on professional training but also citizenship and democratic education. Only one respondent linked the quality of education (in general and in distance education) strictly to training for the world of work.



Although some respondents stated that it is not possible to move away from the job market-oriented view of distance education, they agree that it is necessary to expand experiences that go beyond this view. Regarding the criticism of the massification of distance education, some respondents stated that MOOCs also contribute to training in some specific situations. Regarding the resistance to this modality, one respondent stressed that there is no resistance but rather a demand for parameters that can guarantee the quality of the courses.

Some characteristics are fundamental in distance learning, such as: improving communication and dialogue with students in the training process; guaranteeing student access and retention; allowing the use of technological resources for everyone; continuous evaluation, considering the planning, offering, and completion of the course, broadly and involving different interest groups in the course.

Finally, considering several research works carried out in 2019-2024, as presented in section 2, it is verified that there is largely no mention of the quality of distance education associated with the institutionalization process. Would this quality be implicit as a result of institutionalization? This is a reflection.

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