

## **A PATH TO THE DEMOCRATIZATION OF ACCESS TO HIGHER AND CONTINUED EDUCATION: DISTANCE EDUCATION IN BRAZIL**

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### **Abstract**

This paper highlights the distance education in Brazil that, with information and communication technologies and its spread in society, becomes an actual possibility, adopted by educational institutions and organizations. The great growth of this mode of teaching points to the urgent and first path for the democratization of access to higher education and continuing training, with quality, across the country. It is not just a simple insertion of technologies but also of changes in pedagogical conceptions, approaching the student to contemporary reality, increasingly connected to the Internet. There is a need for a reformulation of public policies so that the technology can converge with the education, in a collaborative way. It is highlighted the social responsibility of higher education in advancing the knowledge in issues related to culture, economy, society, science and policy to meet the global challenges arising from education, work and generation of income.

**Keywords:** Distance Education, Democratization, Higher Education, Brazil.

### **1. The use of digital technologies in education**

The use of information and communication technologies in society is inevitable, since they present innumerable advantages such as lower costs, reduction in displacements, flexibility of temporal space, among others. In this way, it is necessary to understand its impact on the educational process, whereas its use changes not only the tools of learning, but the pedagogical conception. In addition, it is important to highlight that the technological changes that impact the society and the organizations, encourage changes in way to promote and certify the learning.

It is believed that the incorporation of technologies in education will lead to an increasingly hybrid education, where will coexist the moments of virtual and face-to-face activities, allowing a greater engagement of the student and effective learning, without distinction of methodologies between traditional education (face-to-face) and distance education. For the continuing training courses the student tends to depend more and more from the virtual space and less from actual space (SQUAIELLA, 2016).

The great growth of students enrolled in distance education in Brazil, in the last ten years, shows its huge potentiality. It is needed a better adequacy of laws and of educational structure, in order to deepen this educational innovation. The technologies are revolutionizing the contemporary society, because they became part of the human condition and are present in different social instances, including education, in which the most diverse social groups can be covered, generating the opportunity for the democratization of education. By means of digital technologies is possible to overcome and transform the process of production and socialization of knowledge, because information can be manipulated in a very fast, flexible and economical manner, involving the most diverse areas of knowledge.

Nowadays, knowledge is replaced and/or updated quickly due to the speed of technological advances and the occupations follow the same path. So, higher education institutions need to update themselves constantly to offer its students a high quality education and training that focuses in mental flexibility, for the adaptation of future professionals to the different job opportunities that should arise.

It is seek to understand the paradigm change in course, which requires a change of thought and new economic and social realities, with the transition from an industrial society to other post-industrial, where knowledge is the main resource of production and of wealth.

The development and the adoption of increasingly affordable and connected equipment, in addition to the tools of the Internet, should enable new forms of use of environments, as in models of hybrid teaching or classroom reversed, in which new features are adopted as tactics to a more active and creative learning. Many barriers must be overcome to achieve success of this transformation, requiring the development of public policy and business initiatives that contribute to the expansion of education and of technologies. The situation of distance education in Brazil, which is in a moment of expansion and growth, is causing significant impacts on access to top-level and continued training and can be considered as the beginning of a disruptive innovation in the democratization of higher education.

## **2. The recent growth of de in Brazil**

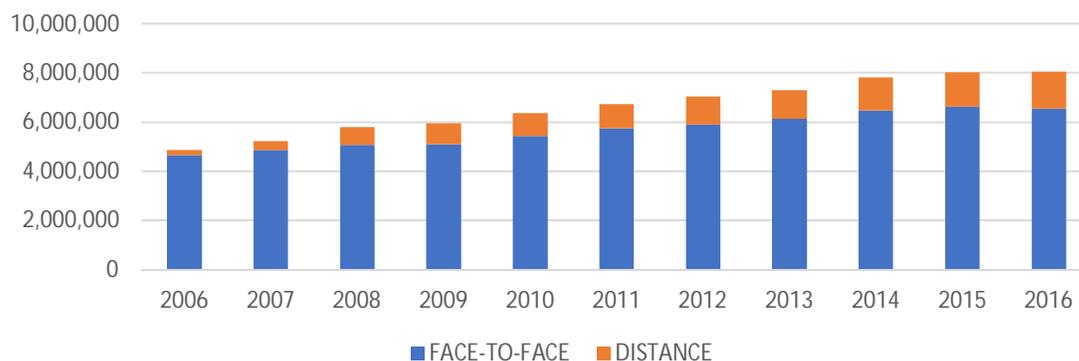
The distance education (DE) is a methodology of education that has existed institutionally since the 19th century and presented, in the last 40 years, a huge growth, mainly in developed countries (LOBO NETO, 1998). In the late 1990, from the consensus that a country, with the size and the characteristics of Brazil, would have to break away from the conventional system and try to seek alternatives to ensure initial and ongoing education as a right for all, the DE has taken new impetus. To this end, it was defined by law 9,394/1996 (Law of Guidelines and Bases for National Education) that the government had the role of “encouraging the development of the distance education programs at all levels and courses and of continuing education too” (BRAZIL, 1996). However, it was only with the participation of the private sector, regulated by Decree 5,622, 2005 (BRAZIL, 2005), that has occurred an enormous growth in distance education. Fortunately, today we live in a moment of transition in the area of education, in which the methodology of distance education is seen as a reality, with a renewed dimension, reaching a greater number of users and gaining increasing credibility.

Currently, there are a large number of institutions that are providing distance education to meet the rapidly expanding educational market. Through the media it can be seen the amount of courses and spaces of support for the students – face-to-face support poles - that spread through the most diverse regions of the country, pointing to the ease of access to teaching and learning.

The last survey released on the courses in higher education presents data concerning the year of 2016, and these enables to evaluate the growth of the distance education in the period of ten years, therefore 2006 to

2016. The analysis of the census data of higher education of 2016 (MEC/INEP, 2017) let's see the enormous growth of distance education. It is observed in Figure 1, that of the total of 4,883,852 registrations at the higher education in the year 2006, 4,676,646 (95.8%) were in face-to-face courses and 207,206 (4.2%) in distance education. However, in 2016, of the total of 8,048,701 registrations, 6,554,283 (81.43%) were in face-to-face courses and 1,494,418 (18.6%) in distance education. That is, the distance education had a jump of 1,287,212 (721%) of students enrolled in the period of 10 years. It should be noted that the number of enrollments in undergraduate distance courses grew 7.2% between 2015 and 2016, while in face-to-face courses this growth was negative 1.2%.

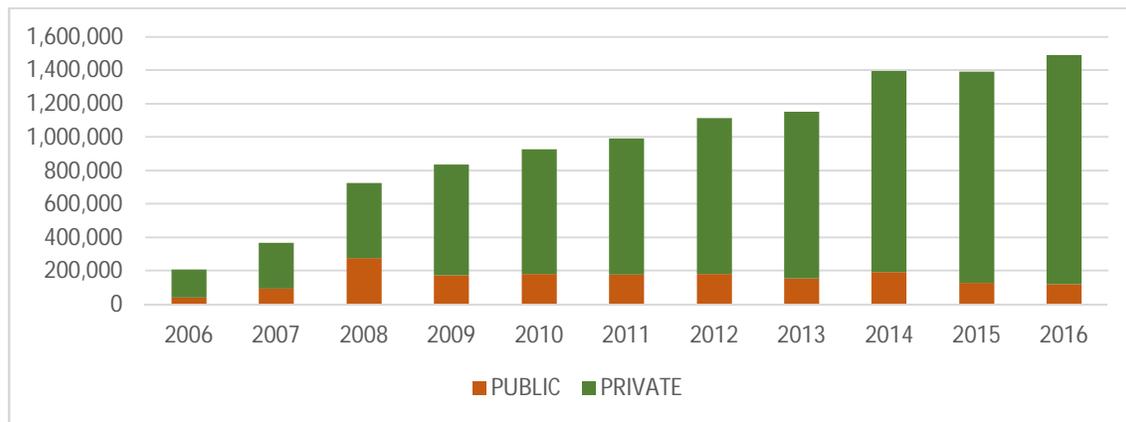
Figure 1. Evolution of undergraduate higher education enrollments by type of education – Brazil (2006 - 2016)



Source: Brazil, 2017, adapted by the authors.

It is observed in Figure 2 that of total of 207,206 students enrolled in distance education, in 2006, 20.3% of students (42,061) were enrolled in public institutions, while 79.7% (165,145) were enrolled in private institutions. In 2016, the total of 1,494,418 students enrolled, 8.2% (122,601) were in public institutions and 91.8% (1,371,817) in private institutions (MEC/INEP, 2017). This denotes the difficulty that public institutions have to respond to the challenge, keeping outdated methods and pedagogical processes, while the private sector is more agile, incorporating information and communication technologies, as well as the current pedagogy. In the medium and long term, if this process be continued, the institutions of higher education could be totally outdated, fact what can now be seen in basic and secondary levels of public educational sector. Further, this numbers highlights the potential for expansion of distance education.

Figure 2. Evolution of higher education undergraduate degrees by administrative category – Brazil, 2006 – 2016



Source: Brazil, 2017, adapted by the authors.

The growth of distance education in Brazil, which occurred mainly in the private sector, is due to several factors such as: the lowest cost to the student, urban mobility limitations and increased possibility of insertion of multimedia resources in modern pedagogical practices. Thus, directed mainly by private institutions, the offering of distance courses grows apace, with appropriate strategies to keep the students active, offering updates and news in a world in constant transformation and dynamism (SQUAIELLA & RIGHI, 2015). In this strategy are the most current and advanced technologies, such as: internet 2.0, electronic games, chats, second life, mobiles, among others.

### 3. The role of higher education and the productive structure of work

Currently the corporate world has experienced great and important changes due to the impacts of a globalized world, that drive the markets and companies to make the necessary changes needed to update themselves. The challenge is to reconcile the qualification of professionals with the optimization of resources, by means of planning, with a focus on performance and best results. In this scenario, the knowledge has become an important tool for ensuring competitiveness and excellence in professional training (DRUCKER, 1994).

To understand the qualitative leap between the information society and the knowledge society is essential to understand the technological change that occurs in digital technology. Making an association between the development of the Internet and society, it is possible to relate the information society with the first generation of Web 1.0, where the information was transmitted only in one direction – one to one or one to all. In contrast, the knowledge society is related to the generation Web 2.0, that gives priority to communication between many, in all directions (VOIGT, 2007).

In current society, the construction of knowledge is very important and requires continuing education, so that organizations can make the knowledge productive, considered as a means to achieve social and economic results. It is not enough for the individual to follow the technological changes, it is necessary to have the ability to innovate, implement and generate new knowledge. To do this, it is highlighted the importance of learning to learn, a process that will be used throughout life.

The intellectual capital is a fundamental resource for organizations and is considered as an "intangible right", the product of development of all employees of a company (STEWART, 2002). He brings comparative intellectual advantages that generate wealth, such as: knowledge, information, intellectual property and experience. The real investment is no longer on the machines, but on the worker, creating international competitiveness, in stages and in productive specialties (DRUCKER, 1994). In this way, the success of an economy must result from a good knowledge management, that increases the productive performance in the public and private sectors (BATISTA, 2012).

Within this context, Brazil needs to pair to the international scene, to fit properly in the new knowledge economy. In it, the production capacity does not depend on more capital and equipment only, and the information and knowledge assets are increasingly relevant. In this new economy, the success is the result of the mobilization of these assets in a community and support for the company.

Thus, the need for a new worker profile, with expertise and technical skills and capable of managing digital knowledge for its practical action in organizations and adding value to them. For that, it is needed to be aware of the rapid changes and transformations of society, highlighting the importance of creativity and the "learning to learn" in the training of future professionals. In the schools of the future, students will be their own instructors, and will have computer resources as a personal tool.

It is necessary to think about higher education in entirely new bases, in which the center is the student, with his effective needs and professional engagement, while the teacher and tutor take on the role of articulators and stimulators of his learning, as well as help mediate existing knowledge and the social reality in which he lives. This is one of the very principles studied in distance education, in which the relationship between teacher/tutor and student has a new configuration (SQUAIELLA, 2016).

The technology provided by social application of computing offers unprecedented opportunities for collaborative and directed learning and throughout life. The result of this transformation is that the boundaries between formal and informal education, between home and school, between teachers and students, among other situations, become increasingly porous. All this has an increasingly important role, in that the technological resources tend to assume in the process of teaching and learning, with a greater availability of programs, of applications, of opened educational resources, of virtual learning environments and etc (SATHLER, 2016).

It is lived at a time where knowledge is replaced and/or updated quickly. This generates the emergence and disappearance of professions, in a cycle of knowledge faster and faster (PASTORE, 2014). In short, only those who have mental flexibility will have opportunities, as a result of an education of good quality. Going on flexibility, workers will be able to adjust themselves by leveraging inclusive from the new forms of learning, such as that offered by the enormous number of distance courses made possible by the Internet.

Nowadays, the University becomes progressively more attractive and necessary to enter and stay in a highly competitive market (PENA, 2005). It is needed to discuss it because the process of scientific and technical synchronization is more complex, where companies increasingly keep expertise internally, distancing the traditional education structures of the border areas of knowledge, which may suffer from the lack of updating.

The consolidation of democratic ideals around the world amplifies the demand for a higher education for society, and even to those segments that were not covered in previous times (PENA, 2005). The university can play this role if it takes over your sync with the generation of knowledge and becomes more democratic. This production is very fast today and the same production can predict its own obsolescence, requiring a proactive position of these institutions, with the intense research development and extension to the community, with the use of new information and communication technologies. The higher education and continuing education becomes increasingly a condition required in the labor market and the distance

education is an alternative with great potential, as it adds advantages linked mainly to lower costs and greater precision in the transmission of knowledge.

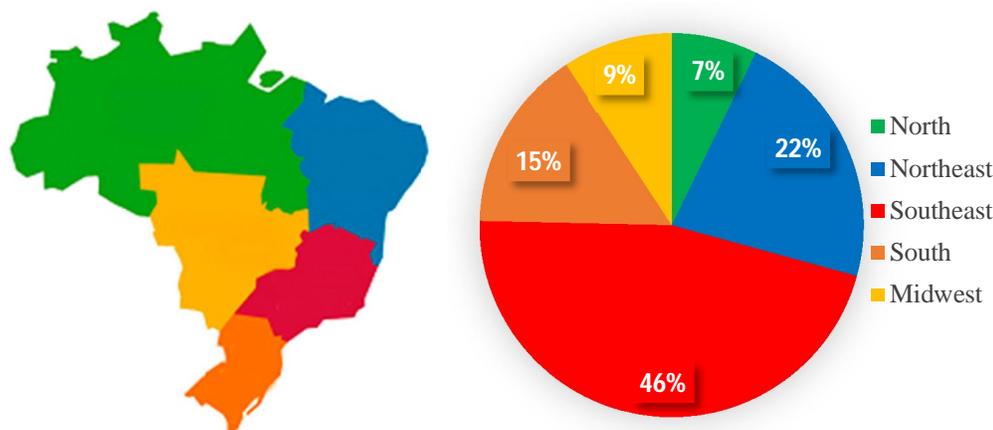
In traditional education is accomplished a teaching process that has at once artisanal and industrial characteristics, on a small scale, with little quality control and dependent on the teacher. The distance education employs computational resources that lead to almost suppression and trivialization of the distance, with huge advantages in a country of continental size and occupation very unbalanced, like Brazil. All this take place in addition to the differentiated scales of teaching, at the same time, massive and individual, as well as makes it possible to produce education with homogeneity of content and new means of transmission of the message.

In today's business environment, the fast pace of the productivity requires rapid production and educational institutions are being invited to prepare students with skills and abilities "instantly productive". Today employers are seeking workers, able to respond creatively to unexpected situations (VALENTI, 2015). Also, the ability to adapt to telework is required, with new demands of discipline, of autonomy and of specific knowledge of information and communication technologies.

#### 4. Geographical distribution of the education in Brazil

With an area of 8,515,767.05 square kilometers (km<sup>2</sup>), Brazil presents great diversity among its five main geographical regions (BRAZIL, 2016). The Southeast region, composed of four states which together add up to 85 million inhabitants, is the most populous and economically developed. In this region are concentrated 46.3% of face-to-face undergraduate courses (private and public), in the country. Furthermore, considering the number of enrollments in the courses, the Southeast region concentrates 46.3% of students (3,020,865), followed by the Northeast with 22.1% (1,444,368), by the South with 15% (1,009,048), by the Midwest with 9.3% (606,523) and by the North with 7.3% (473,479), as shown in the Figure 3.

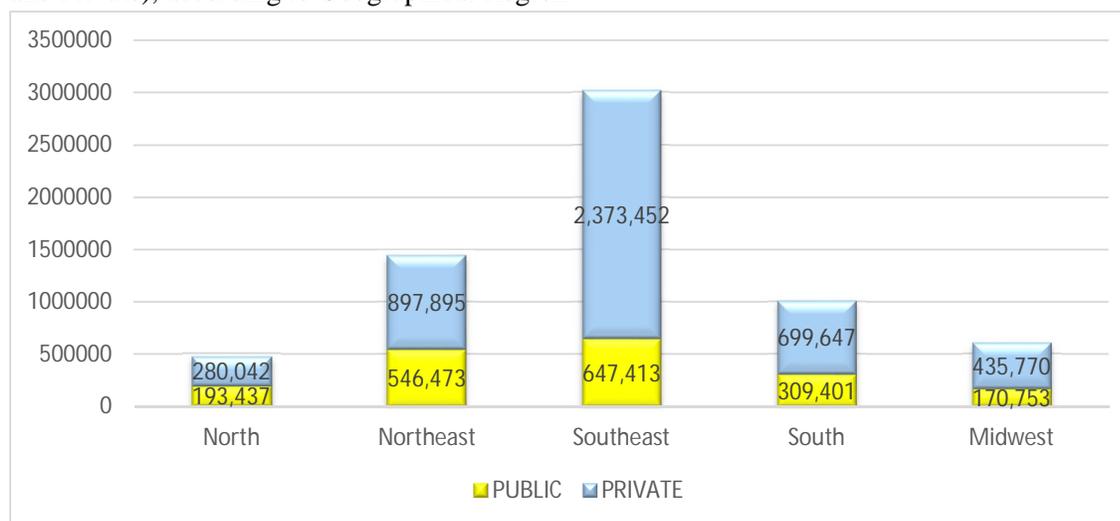
Figure 3. Percentage of the number of face-to-face tuition fees, by geographic region



Source: Brazil – 2016, adapted by the authors.

In Brazil, the proportion of enrolments among undergraduates on the private network for each student on the public network is 2.5, considering the face-to-face courses (MEC/INEP, 2017). In Figure 4, the predominance of enrollments in private institutions is more pronounced in the southeast, midwest, and south region.

Figure 4. Number of Undergraduate Face-to-face Enrollment Classes by Administrative Category (Public and Private), according to Geographical Region



Source: Brazil – 2017, adapted by the authors.

It is highlighted that, in 2016, the State of São Paulo (southeast region) concentrated 25.3% of enrollments in face-to-face courses (public and private), which represents the largest number of total enrolments (1,660,777). Only 16.6% of these students were enrolled in public institutions. In this way, the Higher Education Census 2016 points that are more than 1,384,095 students enrolled in private institutions only in the State of São Paulo (MEC/INEP, 2017).

Unfortunately, much still needs to be done. The loss caused by the inefficiency of the Brazilian public sector in education is not limited only to the lack of development of their educational institutions. Also, it extends to the authorization processes of private institutions that are subject to bureaucratic and slow procedures of authorization of operation, since the release of approval can take from 2 to 3 years, showing the need to de-bureaucracy of the approval process so that the Brazilian system be able to offer more vacancies, in addition to the change of the cultural internal process of transformation in regards to distance education.

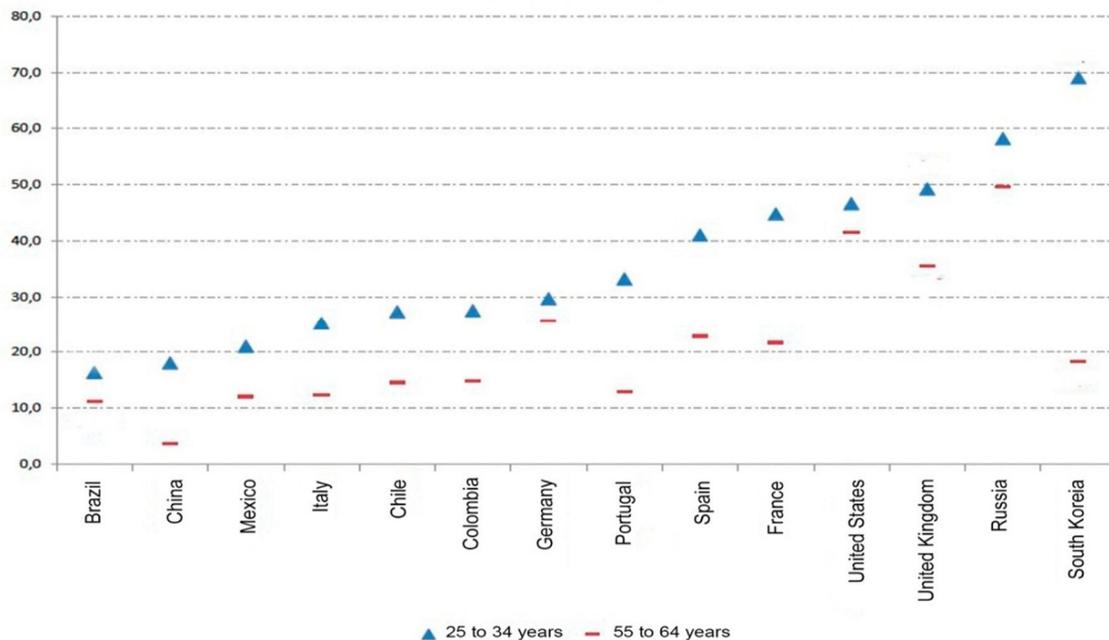
The growth of distance education will be important alternative to achieve the goal 12 of the National Plan of Education/ PNE 2014-2024. This goal is the elevation of gross enrolment rate (total enrollment) for 50% and the net rate (population between 18 and 24 years) to 33% by the year 2024. It should be noted that must be assured the quality of supply and expansion for, at least, 40% of new registrations, in the public segment (MEC/INEP, 2016). However, in 2014 the net rate was 17.6%, which means that the rate of enrolment in higher education needs to be almost doubled to reach the net rate of 33%, in accordance with the PNE. As reviewed previously, the private education gains more and more strength, being hard to achieve the 40% of new registrations in the public segment. Thus, there is a need for urgent action to achieve the goals of the PNE, being the distance education the viable alternative and potential to raise the level of education of Brazilian population.

The data of Higher Education Census of 2015 (BRAZIL, 2015), allow the observation of the development of the actions of the Brazilian institutions regarding distance education, in quantitative terms. Studies based on educational experts, point to the evolution of the qualitative aspects of this teaching methodology, which shows itself as a propeller of an education with quality and in a continuous manner, that fits in the reality of current society, which requires a new professional profile. In this way, the distance education overcame its

initial low credibility, in which apparently represented a palliative, emergency and even marginal solution, compared to conventional systems.

The expansion of higher education in Brazil presents backwardness in relation to the other countries of the world, including in relation to Latin American countries such as Chile and Colombia. In Figure 6 it is found that the percentage of the population with a background in higher education, aged between 25 and 34 years is 16.3% in Brazil, while in Colombia is 27.7% and in Spain is 41.5%. Considering the older population between 55 and 64 years, it turns out that in Brazil this percentage represents 11.2%, while in Colombia 16.1% and in Spain around 21.2% (MEC/INEP, 2016). Thus, PNE's goal of increasing the number of Brazilians with higher education is an urgent measure and is currently difficult to comply with if it maintains the same growth rate in recent years and if there is no radical change in education.

Figure 6: Percentage of population with higher education by age group



Source: MEC/INEP – 2016, adapted by the authors.

In a country of continental dimensions such as Brazil, it is worth noting that DE makes possible the inclusion of many people who previously had no access to higher level courses, because, due to the high cost of infrastructure, educational institutions are concentrated in major urban centers. The possibility of supporting the students in face-to-face traditional support poles, whether it is for the exclusive use of the institution or in partnership between institutions, enabled and facilitated the internalization of education to the various regions of the country.

## 5. Legal restrictions

For the development of distance education it was essential its regulation by Decree 5,622 of 12/19/2005, when it was equated to the traditional education, from basic education up to the higher level (MEC/INEP, 2016). This resolution was essential to increase the confidence of the private sector in DE, as it represents today the protagonist in the implementation of this innovative modality of teaching and learning.

The legal instruments make up a set of important data for verification and maintenance of what the competent organs considers as quality in distance education. It must be noted that it is not enough only the approval of an institution to start the supply of DE. It is required the authorization of the courses, specifically, and the opening of the face-to-face traditional support poles, when applicable, as it has already been discussed.

It should be noted that the face-to-face education recently experiences a crisis, that is expressed by its stagnation in Brazil, due to the high cost of operation, the reduction of financing as the FIES (Student Financing Fund) and the ProUni (University for All Program). Also, the lack of interest of a generation of digital natives for this mode of teaching and learning, and other factors that reduce its primacy, leading to hybrid solutions, with the growing participation of DE. The FIES is a State Fund that only subsidizes needy students enrolled in private face-to-face schools. If the FIES could meet the students of distance education, the growth in the number of enrollments in this modality would be even greater. It is not understandable that this student state funding program doesn't cover the two sectors of teaching and learning, face-to-face and distance, in equal conditions of competition and operation. Due to the lower cost of the DE, the same amount of resources could have a very positive social impact, several times greater than the achieved today.

Returning to the approval of courses, the implementation step is usually preceded by a planning phase that can take up to five years. For this reason many larger institutions buy small institutions, which already have accreditation for the offer of distance education in order to circumvent the process and be able to grow faster. This type of action led to a concentration of the Brazilian market in four or five major groups, which contradicts the assumptions of equity, quality and affordability of distance education (CARDOSO, 2015). For these unjustifiable reasons, the government itself is responsible for triggering harmful processes for more equitable competition.

More recently, the resolution n.1 of 11 of March 2016, enacted by the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC), the National Council of Education (CNE) and Board of Higher Education (CES), which establishes the guidelines and national standards for the provision of higher education programs and courses in the modality of distance education (CARDOSO, 2015), not favoring major advances to the more open and flexible educational practices of this mode of teaching. So, despite the existence of legislation, it is still needed a process of improvement and consolidation. However, the Brazilian education, as a whole, is experiencing a transformative process that generates the need for more aggressive and innovative updates, with new settings and corrections, in addition to those that the laws have already defined. Within that framework, questions are made if the requirements of the existing legislations are enough to create a decent and adequate structure so that the distance education can be able to replace face-to-face education. This would allow the student to develop their cognitive, social, emotional, ethical, and professional capacity, constituting, therefore, an important tool for the construction of knowledge in contemporary society. Indeed, new adjustments are still needed in the current legislation, so that the distance education can present a greater degree of expansion and a more effective path to democratization of access to higher education and continuing education.

The autonomy of the universities is another important issue in order to propose a disruptive education that advances with quality in this scenario of rapid technological changes. The current learning process should be different from the traditional. There is no more sense in that class, where the student is just a spectator. In the past "the world was ready "and the knowledge was crystallized, reflecting that environment, and the school only transmitted it. Today, the world is under construction, the knowledge is provisional, and learning should be meaningful, with the teacher promoting it, through continuous challenge to the students.

Society is changing as a whole and also in its way to teach and learn. In an environment of increasing interconnectivity, the education is still the most appropriate way to transform society into a more free and

uplifting future, adequate for the transition from the industrial management model to the information and knowledge.

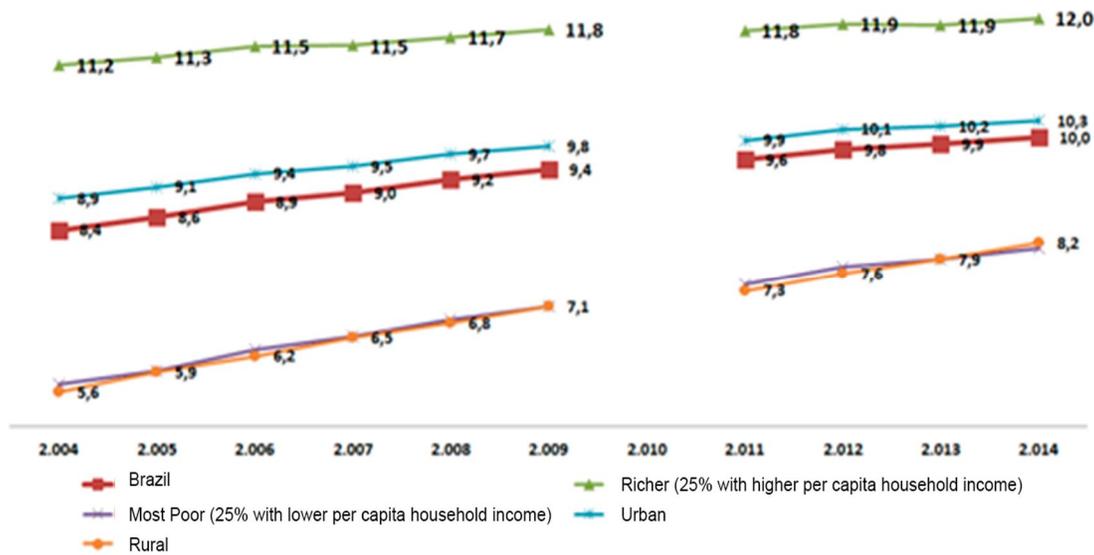
## **6. Socio-economic results of students: access to higher education and income**

The pattern of development of Brazil in recent years continues to grow and advance, considering social policy and structural improvements in the labor market. According to the analysis of the National Survey by Household Sample (PNAD) of 2014, held by IPEA (Institute of Applied Economic Research), the following indicators remain in its structuring base: real growth of labor income; decrease of their inequalities; the increase in schooling and the general conditions of life of the population; and the reduction of the differences that separate blacks from whites, men from women, rural workers from urban workers. However, it should be emphasized that the intensity of improvement of the balance could be greater, especially for questions related to inequalities, in its multiple aspects (CALIXTRE & VAZ, 2015).

The advances in Brazilian education are fundamental for social changes, however, despite the growing number of students enrolled in higher education, the speed of this numeric advance is below the required to achieve the targets set in the National Education Plan (PNE) for the year of 2024. In addition, it is a great challenge for public policies to achieve the eighth goal of PNE, which establishes an average of 12 years of studies, by the year 2024, for rural populations, of minor schooling region, of the 25% poorer, in addition to make equal the education between blacks and non-blacks. It is believed that the increase in schooling for the population between 18 and 29 years will have a positive impact for the whole population, because upon reaching a certain level of education in youth, the individual develops skills to continue studies throughout its life.

To understand the current frame in Brazilian education, the data for the years 2004 and 2014 is compared, according to the latest record issued by the IPEA. Considering as a parameter the years of schooling, it can be seen in Figure 7 that the inequalities between the populations of urban and rural areas are relevant. Populations in the countryside have increased its schooling in 2.6 years between the years of 2004 and 2014. It is important to note that the average deviation among the different groups studied was not huge, not explaining the much greater social inequalities in practice. Following the recent pace of growth, this indicator should reach 10.8 years in 2024. However, the urban population, which showed an increase of 1.3 years in 10 years, will reach 11.6 years if continues at the same pace until 2024. Only young people who belong to the 25% of the richest households have reached the threshold of 12 years of study in 2014. Yet, young people who belong to the 25% of the poorest households have reached the level of 8.2 years in 2014 and, if they have the same growth of the analyzed decade, could reach the index of 11.4 years (CALIXTRE & VAZ, 2015), that is, they will reach the target set in the PNE.

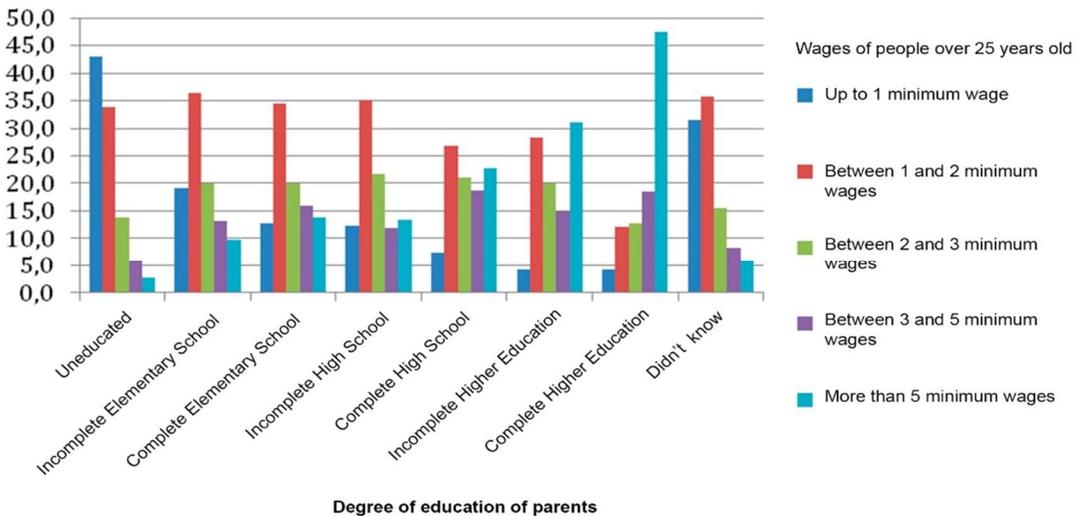
Figure 7 - Average years of study of the population between 18 and 29 years, by income and residence situation - Brazil 2004-2014.



Source: IPEA – 2015, adapted by the authors.

Considering the years of schooling of students, it turns out that there is a great relationship between socio-occupational mobility of children in relation to their parents. In 2014, 41% of the children of parents who finished only elementary school, completed high school. However, among those who finished high school it was found that only 27 percent completed higher education. On the other hand, 70% of the children of parents who have higher level, also completed higher education. Regarding to worker's income, as shown in Figure 8, it was identified that only 2.9% of the children of parents without education have gained more than 5 minimum wages, while 47.4% of children of college students have earned this value. In contrast, 43 percent of the children of parents without education earned up to 1 minimum wage and, among the children of university parents that percentage was 4.2% (IBGE, 2016).

Figure 8: Percentage distribution of people of 25 years old or older who lived with their father when they were 15 years of age, employed and earning income (%)



Source: Brazil – 2014, adapted by the authors.

The educational level is an important factor for the development of a society. As checked, the level of education of parents is an important factor in the education of their children. It is highlighted that distance education presents itself as an important alternative to the entrepreneurship and local development in a country of big territorial extension, with huge regional diversity and lack of development, such as Brazil. Raising the level of education of the current generation is a fundamental measure to the future development of the country.

Between 2014 and 2015, the total number of formal jobs had a reduction of 3.3% (SEMESP, 2016) concentrated in the less skilled and young segments which reinforces the importance of higher education for the development of society, being necessary the transformations of public policies that contribute both to the expansion of access to higher education, and to the access to technologies and computer networks. The qualitative leap of access to these technological resources will be an important measure to the DE, and this is a way that can make viable the current plans for higher education in Brazil.

## Final Considerations

The lack of planning in the process of industrialization and urbanization of Brazil led to several problems of a social and economic nature, including: education, inequality, exclusion, in addition to violence, unemployment, housing and health (MAURO et al., 2016). These problems, which are rooted in Brazilian society since the period of its colonization, persist and are aggravated with the advances of globalization. The ideology of globality without borders, which occurs through technological networks of communication, despite producing the effect of homogenization, also produces social exclusion. To overcome this chasm, the utopia of education creates a practical and reformist action to obtain knowledge as an individual and collective purpose (AUGÉ, 2016). Education can improve the quality of life of local populations by boosting productive activities and access to markets. It is important to highlight the importance of DE in Brazil, as an alternative to supply the shortage in training in higher education for regions that are not supported by traditional face-to-face educational institutions. DE presents itself as a more democratic education mode that, by adopting the resources of information and communications technology as a means to obtain knowledge,

breaks the barriers of space and time. The projections made by estimate in 2017 by Educa Insights show a growth in the next six years, until 2023, that the DE will overcome enables improvements in labor productivity and increases the income levels of people. Thus, it can be observed that EAD contributes to the formation of human capital and, by increasing the entrepreneurial capacity of students, contributes to territorial development.

In a fair society, all individuals should have the same opportunities in life, regardless of their family origin, opinion that must be contextualized, although it can represent a position in education and income mobility in Brazil. The increase in social inequalities in the country is a result of the lack of investments in education, with the results of social mobility, in 2015, being more modest than expected because it is observed that the level of education of the people has a great relation with the level of education of their parents. This should impact the average yield of future generations. This vicious circle must be progressively overcome by public policies that promote education in a continuous and permanent manner. In this task, DE can fulfill an important role by enabling overcome temporal and spatial barriers that represent the biggest factors of social, economic, and territorial distinction.

It is necessary to promote the formation of a transcultural individual, since the one who interests himself for all cultures of the world is not alienated. The time has come for a new planetary mobility, a new utopia of education. Utopia, because it does not match to the state of the current world. It can be reformist if there is a radical project. It will face institutional conservatism, economic argument and the skepticism which undermines any project that is registered in time (AUGÉ, 2012). Although DE is based on the use of communication technologies, which allows a great alienation of its users, if it is based in a radical reform, this modality of teaching will play an important role in this transformation of education. It is necessary to overcome the cultural, economic, and social barriers that make possible the progress in the Brazilian education.

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