The Implementation of Distance Education in Higher Education Institutions: A Study Based on Organizational Culture

Introduction

In a country like Brazil, where the education level is unequal, the Distance Education (DE) proves to be a valuable way of reducing the geographical distances and propitiating social and economic transformations due to the increase of the population’s educational level. In this context and following the technological innovations momentum of technological innovations in the information and communication areas, the Distance Education modality is a potential tool to overcome physical barriers to the growth of the HEIs. TABLE 1 shows the evolution of the DE's enrollments in the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) between the years of 2010 and 2011. The numbers show a growth of enrollments of 12.76% in the contingent of enrollments in the DE courses.

Oddly enough, despite the arguments that demonstrate the subjects magnitude, a large part of the researches in this area of studies have emphasized issues related to the didactic-pedagogic model (MORAN, 1994; PIMENTEL, 1995; PRETI, 1996) or to the aspects related to performance in the different virtual learning environments that are available for the distance education’s management processes (SARDELICH, 2006), and...
very little has been researched about the influential cultural elements about the DE’s implementation modality in the Higher Education Institutions.

Table 1: DE’s Enrollment Evolution in the HEIs between the years of 2010 and 2011 in Brazil.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Level / Modality</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Higher Degree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific education</td>
<td>1,072</td>
<td>2,308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complementation of studies</td>
<td>1,758</td>
<td>2,626</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor degree</td>
<td>99,889</td>
<td>162,085</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major</td>
<td>139,535</td>
<td>172,783</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor degree and major</td>
<td>149,142</td>
<td>2,295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technological</td>
<td>102,097</td>
<td>120,803</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance learning methodologies (limit 20% of the curriculum)</td>
<td>32,391</td>
<td>80,952</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-graduation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lato-sensu - specialization</td>
<td>51,876</td>
<td>108,481</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lato-sensu - MBA</td>
<td>4,561</td>
<td>23,470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scrito sensu - masters</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scrito sensu - doctorate</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance Learning disciplines (part of a more ample course)</td>
<td>20,226</td>
<td>3,579</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>602,547</td>
<td>679,484</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: DE BR 2010 and 2011 (Adapted).

From the organizational point of view, as understood by Castro and Ladeira (2009), the emergence of a DE area in Higher Education Institutions will imply in the alignment of the organizational strategies to the institutions’ customs that are required by the distance teaching and learning model.

Many educational institutions invest in new technology for the dissemination of the new forms of knowledge through Distance Education, but forget to consider a predominant factor: the culture (LISBOA, 2003). According to Tavares (1996), it is through culture that the communities meets their material and psychosocial needs and, through it, express their desires, feelings, abilities and behavior of a group or from one society to another, in which the notion of the environment means a stage of survival and growth. For Silva (2004, p. 2),

[...] culture is an adaption in itself, in a form in which a community defines its profile according to the need to adapt to the environment. It is a factor that can have influence on the organizational success or failure, not forgetting the influence that it has on people’s behavior, which determines the way that people act with relation to the difficulties that exist in the institution.

It is necessary to understand that in order to overcome the classroom teaching culture, that is already established in the High Education Institutions, the challenge is placed not only for the teachers, since it is also expected that the students will have a responsible autonomy when the teacher is not present, having this teacher the need to employ successive functions, among which the is the necessity of acquiring new competencies to favor this new teaching practice. Both, therefore, assume new responsibilities and new profiles (SILVA, 2003).

The Distance Education modality’s implementation in Higher Education Institutions demands a professional management approach, which presupposes that, other than the technological and pedagogical infrastructure, an efficient, dynamic and adequate planning, developed with the objective of meeting the students, teachers, technical-pedagogical staff, coordination and the community’s needs. To reach this objective, there is the need of institutional policies which can regulate and associate the resources of distance education planning and development with the objective criteria for planning and management (PIVA JUNIOR et al., 2011).

This research has as its objective to analyze the Distance Education implementation in Higher Education Institutions, with the purpose of mapping, based on organizational culture, the elements that have influence in this implementation. To reach this objective, the principal facilitating and hindering factors will be evidenced in a preponderant manner, showing their implications in the distance modality’s implementation process. In this study, culture is represented by its most characteristic elements, such as values, heroes, structure, communication and rules (formal and informal practices). These elements were chosen for the analysis because they represent the form that culture is manifested in the organizations.

Theoretical reference:
Organizational Culture:

According to Crozatti (1998, p. 4), culture can be understood as “a group of symbols (artifacts, language, structure, etc.) shared by the members of a group of people”. Still according to this author, the manner how people think, act and feel is conducted by ideas, meanings and beliefs of cultural nature. This concept supports Freitas’ (1991, p. 82) organizational cultural concept, that states that to talk about organizational culture is to
An organizational culture reflects the results of social inventions and it is transmitted and learned by means of socialization and by the interaction between communication and learning. It is, therefore, plausible that a cultural typology represents an organization’s identity, whose members share their values, beliefs and assumptions, imputing a facilitating or a complicating variable, which can be about the relationship between people as it can be about the entire organization (TAVARES, 1996).

Culture is a dynamic phenomenon that is with us at all times, being constantly developed and established by means of our interactions with the environment and perfected by leadership behaviors and by a group of structures, routines, rules and norms that guide and restrict our behavior (SCHEIN, 2009).

In order to better understand an organization, it is necessary to study its culture, considering the historical and cultural context in which it is inserted. It is important to point out that, according to Nassar (2000), there is a national and regional interference in the organizational culture, which occurs in the relationships, in the patterns of conduct, in the forms of management as also in each organizations’ doctrine. It is worth highlighting the concept proposed by Nassar (2000):

[...] organizational culture is a set of values, beliefs and technologies that maintain united the most different members, of all hierarchical levels, against difficulties, daily operations, goals and objectives. It is still possible to say that it is the organizational culture that produces to its several different publics, the society and the market, a set of perceptions, icons, indexes and symbols that is called corporative image (NASSAR, 2000, p. 34).

The Organizational Culture’s Elements:

The organizational culture is composed by several elements that become evident by the degree of importance that the values, beliefs, norms, myths, rites, taboos, formal and informal communication, assume in the organizations. “All these elements determine and direct the individuals’ performance that, in its turn, will determine and direct the organizations’ performance” (TAVARES, 1996, p. 2).

Fleury (2002) defines these elements in the following manner:

- **Values**: corresponds to all the actions and attitudes that the organization considers essential to be preserved, in order to reach the desired success.
- **Beliefs**: it is what one believes on; it refers to what is believed to be true.
- **Rituals, rites e ceremonies**: they are activities created by the organizations with the final objective, whatever it is, of making the culture more visible.
- **Histories and myths**: the histories are narratives about true facts or not, that happened in the organization’s life, told normally by the individuals that have been in the organization for a long time.
- **Taboos**: they are everything that is considered prohibited within the organization.
- **Heroes**: are the individuals that did or do history in the organization. They have a strong influence in the institution’s life.
- **Norms**: are a group of written rules or not, that direct the behavior and the form in which the individuals should precede so that the organization may reach the desired results.
- **Formal communication**: communication is an exchange of information and it is essential in the organization’s life.
- **Informal communication**: it is a type of communication that is not under any control or norms.

Still according to Fleury (2002), the cultural elements described above, form the company’s culture and help it to position itself more coherently. In order to understand an organization’s culture, it is necessary to know how to interpret it, know its norms, understand what is valued, know what is not allowed and be able to analyze the form how the organization reacts in front of the environment’s uncertainties. Martin (2002, p. 25) confirms with this manner of understanding when he states that “the cultural forms can give important clues to perceive what the employees are thinking and doing and in what do they believe”.

Identifying the cultural elements values, heroes, norms (formal and informal practices) and communication, it was possible to unveil the organization’s history, in which conditions it was established, the social and political factors in which it is based on, the critical situations that it encountered, the form in which the communication is used in the organization, the work distribution and organization, how the management is carried out, in other words, the organization’s structure.

In this present study, the elements that were quoted above were the object of analysis, with the purpose of investigating which of them had influence, and were more predominant, in the Distance Education implementation process in Higher Education Institutions.

Changing cultural paradigms:

The organizational changes usually happen due to the uncertainty in the environment, the external pressures, such as technological innovation, strong competition, etc. It is important to point out that the
organizations are also subject to internal pressures, such as changes in the leadership style, changes in the work’s management procedures, and that all these aspects, combined, can also promote changes in the organizational culture (BORTOLOTTI, 2010).

As for the perspectives that delineate the conception and implementation of a process of constant changes, Bertero (1976) highlights that these changes occur as processes that are inherent to the dynamics and to the action strategies defined by the organizations.

The cultural and organizational changes are intrinsically linked to the change of paradigms. “This entire scenario brings new social and emotional experiences to all the individuals in a general manner, as well as new experiences to the worker which is obliged to be receptive to whatever is new, configured in the several technologies and paradigms” (ARAÚJO; SACHUK, 2007, p. 9).

Thus, in order to disrupt a cultural paradigm, it is necessary to promote a motivating climate within the organization, for, when dealing with people and when implementing something “new”, it is essential to speak about incentive, stimulus, in a manner that people may have ample liberty to socialize and interact, given the knowledge that they already have; and that the organization may have a better capacity to innovate its practices and improve its productivity (WOOD JUNIOR; CURADO; CAMPOS, 1994).

In order to study the social body’s organs, especially those that have the necessity to have their services directed to education, particularly those of the distance modality, it is necessary to keep in mind the notion that to implement and manage innovations – understood here as an implementation of a new modality of teaching, the Distance Education – in the interior of a Higher Education Institution, it may mean simply the adoption of a group of norms, procedures and technological and teaching apparatus in the productive educational environment or have a sense of an adaptation/change of the culture in the Higher Education Institution, having as a starting point the mental model of academic leaders and managers.

As for the organizational cultural management, it is understood that it should be planned and reorganized so that all the actors involved in the process may consider themselves as managers, teachers, students and part of the technological-administrative body, being open, receptive and free of preconceptions about the aforementioned method, thus involving all of those in the Institution.

Bourdieu (2007a) points out that a social transformation is possible if it is a reflective collective action and has a large knowledge of the structures that indoctrinate the educational universe. This transforming action has a tendency of becoming a hard battle to be fought against conservative agents that will probably use all of their symbolic capital to maintain the kind of order that will favor them.

It is known that the high cultural capitals that exist in the Higher Education Institutions are based on the classroom education. So that the Distance Education may acquire its space, there has to be a change of paradigms in the sense that both the modalities complete each other, aiming to spread knowledge (MOORE; KEARSLEY, 2007). Cavalcanti (2007) corroborates with this reflection declaring that:

Especially in Latin America’s countries, the DE is mediated by technologies that are not yet available to the masses, for its implementation goes against bureaucratized educational policies, and has the necessity of heavy investments by part of the institutions and government and, mainly, the cultural resistance by part of the students and the academic (CAVALCANTI, 2007, p. 10).

Due to the recent technological transformations, our vision about time, space, what is real and what is virtual, goes through a reframing process. According to Mercado (1999, p. 34), “innovation is linked to the development educational institutions’ capacity and possibilities and subjected them to implant new programs and new technologies, being this a process of institutional and personal construction, before a technological intervention”.

Based on the assumption that an implementation process of a new teaching modality in Higher Education Institutions requires an organization’s change in terms of structure, management and, finally culture, Amarato (2001) states that changes in an organization’s structure can be of two natures: an unplanned change and a planned or strategic change. In the unplanned process or reactive, the organization tries to maintain a balanced posture, solving problems and uncertainties as they show up. Now in the planned or strategic change, it aims in reaching an objective that was planned and to influence its members.

Considering what was shown above, it is possible to understand that in the implementation of the Distance Education in Higher Education Institutions, changes of the existing cultural standards will be generate due to the combination of external and internal forces over the organization (FLEURY, 1993).

Distance Education:

The term “Distance Education” covers various forms or models, which vary according to the pedagogical and technical principles that are developed when planning their strategies. According to Piva Junior et al. (2011), Distance Education is a bidirectional technological communication process, which can be collective or individual. The classroom is no longer a privileged environment where the education is carried out, for learning does not only happen during the period of classes with a teacher. The act of learning can happen in any place and any time and in the interaction with others and with the environment.
This kind of interaction happens between the student and the teacher in the classroom, is substituted by combined actions of several teaching and technological resources and by the support of the supporting learning teacher, which, according to Vilela (2001) provides to the students an independent and flexible learning system through learning environments that go further than the limits of a classroom, breaking old paradigms and incorporating new ideas.

According to Whitesel (1998), [...] technology does not teach students; an efficient supporting learning teacher does. A virtual learning space created in an efficient manner under the supervision of an efficient well prepared supporting learning teacher can fulfill the promises that the teachers make to their students. This can help us to take what we teach to an increasing number of students that are spread over an ample and diversified geographic area.

**Collaborative Learning:**

In the DE’s modality, collaborative learning is a process that prioritizes the collaboration between supporting learning teachers and students through an interactionist approach and active participation (SILVA, 2003). Through this learning system, the students can exercise self-discipline when taking part in it, working in group environments, analyzing their own actions, taking part in discussion forums about polemic themes and when making decision about their own learning (SILVA, 2006).

For the collaborative learning to be effective, it is necessary that the proposed activities given to the student to be meaningful, authentic, compelling and that functions as a starting point for the student’s experiences, making it possible to have a highly creative solution, in an heuristic manner and that involves interactions with the other students. Silva (2003) describes what is considered the “key-components” of learning in virtual environments: a) socialization and collaboration; b) environment and context; and c) construction and significance.

**The student’s role in the learning process:**

The role of the process’ manager, here meaning the student, is what makes the most significant difference between this form of teaching and learning from that one that is carried out with the presence of the student in a classroom. As active participants, it is expected that they will follow the minimum of the guidelines and interact between themselves, manifesting if the course or a discussion is leading them in a direction that they do not feel comfortable with and taking the responsibility of developing an on-line community (TAPSCOTT, 1999). Still according to this author, the evidence shows the necessity of having the necessary disposition to leave behind the traditional limits of power that exist between the teacher and the student, with the objective of solving conflicts and taking the learning process ahead. This manner has already been described as a big equalizer, which eliminates the limits between cultures, genders and age groups.

**The supporting learning teacher’s role in the learning process:**

According to Herrlein (2004), the vastness and versatility of activity networks that install themselves in the distance modality, leads the supporting learning teacher to deal with a diverse and constantly changing reality, influenced by a complementarity of roles that makes the teacher’s activity, demanding and multifaceted. This calls for a professional that is capable of conducting the development of the students’ skills that will not be next to the teacher during most part of the time and that, besides acting in a technological evolved environment that expands his working capacity, will also establish an effective posture when managing a virtual classroom (MACHADO, 2011).

According to Carvalho (2007, p. 8), a tutor, with an effective participation in the evaluation process and in constructing the contents, becomes a fundamental element in the success of any distance course, for it is up to him to observe and understand how the student learns, creating learning strategies that are significant to the student.

For Almeida (2001), a question deserves special attention: the implementation of the Distance Education modality is intrinsically directed to the use of the educational technologies, which will demand of the student and the teacher new postures about knowledge and the cognitive learning process.

The academic educator-adviser, in the new scenario, especially constructed for DE, with a new profile and with many new demands in his profession, in the university context, is inserted in a social institution that should be a reference and an engine of change and innovation in the society (AZEVEDO, 2008, p. 21).

Therefore, considering that the implementation of this modality in Higher Education Institutions demands a change of posture, behavior, attitude, an adoption of a different kind of management model, it is possible to conclude that an effective implantation of the new educational model, of a new form of education, requires an organization’s transformation/change in terms of management, processes, structure and finally, structure (MANSUR, 2001).
MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research presents a qualitative approach, understanding that it refers to an investigation about life, people’s behavior, institutions’ stories, as well as about the organizational functions, social movements or interactive relationships that are not conducted by statistic procedures or other forms of qualification (STRAUSS; CORBIN, 2008).

With the intention of searching for the necessary knowledge to meet the objectives of this research, it was decided to interview the main actors of the Distance Education modality: directors, coordinators and teachers of courses that are offered in the distance modality.

Semi-structured interviews were carried out with nine specialists, among them were directors, courses’ coordinators and teachers that work in the Distance Education modality in Higher Education Institutions, and a documental analysis was done using the institutional documents.

The research was conducted in two Higher Education Institutions in Minas Gerais State, here denominated X and Y, with the intention as maintaining their anonymity.

As for the interviews guide, this was developed taking into account the division of questions in thematic axis that refer to the investigated cultural elements, namely: 1 – Structure; 2 – Norms: formal and informal practices; 3 – Values; 4 – Heroes; 5 – Communication. For the data’s analysis, a qualitative technique of content’s analysis with matrices of discourse analysis was used.

The content’s analysis was supported by the analysis, in its entirety, of the all the interviews’ transcripts that were conducted. Thus, the content that was analyzed worked as a form of absorbing the respondents’ perception about the research’s objectives.

In order to proceed with the interviews content’s analysis, a support tool was used, that being a qualitative data software called Atlas IT, that has as its objective to facilitate the qualitative analysis process, when there is a great volume of textual data.

It was possible, through the Atlas IT, to carry out the codification of texts and the association of several discourses and their respective codes. The software generated webs which allowed the visualization of the relation between the codes and the texts’ spectra.

The analytic proposal consisted in integrating the several positioning of the respondents about these categorizations, in order to understand which of the influential elements of greater importance when implementing the Distance Education in the Higher Education Institutions. The analysis’ composition was then delineated by a group of citations, containing information about each of the thematic axis.

Results:

Giving evidence to the five main thematic axis that characterize the cultural elements – Structure, Norms, Values, Heroes and Communication – it was investigated, using the researches that were conducted with the specialists, which of these elements had influence, in a more decisively manner, over the implementation of the Distance Education in the HEIs.

In relation to the thematic axis Structure, it was possible to observe that several factors leaded the HEIs to awaken to the DE modality. Among them, the most evident one refers to the technological advances in the educational environment and, consequently, the technological culture that is being introduced in the HEIs. The specialists’ depositions refer to the fact that the Universities, facing a technological revolution, cannot ignore it and as consequence, if they do, they will fail to enjoy its benefits, which makes the beginning of the DE urgent in the HEIs. With relation the subcategory of analysis: Factors that made the HEIs awaken to the DE, five factors that synthesize this process and its relation, as demonstrated in FIG. 1, as follows.

![Fig. 1: Factors that made the HEIs awaken to the DE modality.](image)

As for the factors that facilitate DE’s implementation, it became evident that the most important one was the fact of the decision makers believing in the modality and getting involved with it in a decisively form, in
other words, it was a “will” and a “want” of the HEI’s senior management, which really provided the implementation of this modality.

Using the analyzed discourses, it was evident that the autonomy to take the decision of offering distance courses is expressed in a form of decision making power in the HEI’s senior management.

The existing relations in the analysis’s subcategory *Factors that facilitate the implement of the Distance Education modality* form a perception structure of the specialists about the decision process to implement the DE in the HEIs, as shown in the FIG.2, as follows:

![Decision power concentration in the senior management to implement the DE.](image)

**Fig. 2:** Decision power concentration in the senior management to implement the DE.

With relation to the factors that hinder the implementation, it was observed that there were several structures found in the HEIs, which caused delays in its implementation. But the most relevant one refers to the fact that the HEI’s internal regulations, which were established for the traditional classrooms and were also being used for distance courses (forms used to request test revisions, evaluation procedures, procedures for substitution test, etc.), as evidenced in Figure 3, as follows.

![The perceived difficulties in the HEIs that caused delay in the implementation of the Distance Education.](image)

**Fig. 3:** The perceived difficulties in the HEIs that caused delay in the implementation of the Distance Education.

As for the HEIs’ strategies for the implementation and offer of distance courses, it was observed the inexistence of strategic actions to make the implementation of Distance Education viable. The specialists reported that the lack of perception of the managers as to a specific point of the DE’s management processes, was what made them not to map the management’s strategies of the distance modality that were in agreement with the various particularities that this modality requires, as also the fact that they did not establish a specific mission for the distance modality.

Concerning the thematic axis *Norms*, in the norms and procedures for the offer of DE courses in the HEIs, the training for the teacher to be able to work in the distance modality was put into evidence as a factor of extreme necessity for the practice of DE, due to the fact that virtual teaching has its singularities and it presents itself in a very different way of that of classroom teaching. As for the fact that the DE courses are treated in the
same form as the classroom teaching, it was pointed out by the specialists that this is a rule that makes it difficult to conduct some of the necessary procedures for the logistic of DE courses, contradicting some of the assumptions for this modality.

In relation to the HEIs’ culture, specifically about the thematic axis Values, there are evidences that the culture is deeply rooted and very strong, due to the predominance of older teachers, which leads to a resistance in accepting the DE in the same level as the classroom classes. The teacher’s resistance was highlighted as the process’ neuralgic point. The results showed that this resistance occurs due to the fear of the technological advances, which provides new communication resources and interacts with the teaching practice, being, truly, an industrial conspiracy that will endanger their employability and, by the fear that the DE will result in more teaching working hours than those in the classroom modality.

About the receptive scenario that highlights a certain propensity to innovation and to the adaptability to the changes in the HEIs, it is possible to observe that the modality’s receptivity was the result of the direct imposition effect of the modality that was made by the HEIs’ senior management. The acceptance by part of “some of the more important teachers of the process” is intrinsically linked to the fact that they were “invited” to take part in the implementation of the DE by the HEIs’ senior management, with whom, obviously, they would not confront refusing an “invitation”.

The thematic axis Heroes disclosure refers to the relevant implication with the DE’s implementation process in the HEIs. It is possible to notice that the senior management’s members, represented by the Dean, Directors (General and Educational) and the Courses’ Coordinators, are the “heroes” of the Distance Education modality that were analyzed. It was them that, in fact, took to themselves to sponsor the modality.

It was possible to identify the occurrence of the DE’s implementation due to the preponderance of the imposition of the modality by the HEIs’ senior management by the act of sponsorship. It is important to point out the direct influence over the modality’s imposition happened due the heroes’ desires, since the implementation is the realization of this desire, pointed out as the main facilitating factor of the ascension of the DE in the HEIs, as shown in Figure 4, as follows.

![Fig. 4: Implications of the Heroes element in the implementation process of DE in the HEIs.](image)

As for the thematic axis Communication, the specialists were unanimous in recognizing that the HEIs still do not have communication policies well defined, which involves the procedures for the distance modality’s implementation, generating deficiencies in the communication processes, which results in communication failures that affects directly the DE’s managing processes. This is the motive by which the evidence of the factor Communication Failure in the thematic axis Communication is justified. It is interesting to point out that the communication’s centralization by the senior management regarding the implementation aspects of this modality was highlighted in this axis.

Conclusions:

In this study, starting from an investigation that was performed with the participating specialists of the Distance Education’s implementation process in two Higher Education Institutions located in Belo Horizonte – MG, to identify, based on organizational culture, the elements of grater importance that have influence on the implementation of this modality in the HEIs.

The method showed itself efficient in the sense that it allowed us to unveil, by means of individual interviews with several actors that work in the Distance Education modality, the discursive contents related to the cultural factors identified in the bibliographical study. It was possible to explore the discourses of several representatives of the distance modality in the HEIs, which contributed to form content’s spectrum with the
perceptions and representative arguments of directors, coordinators and teachers of this modality, which was the objective of analysis in this research.

Starting from an analysis of the five thematic axis, evidenced in the anterior chapter, being possible to infer the heroes’ desire – read here as the HEI’s senior management’s desire –, that, by the means of sponsorship and by the act of imposition, causes the implementation process of the distance modality. Thus, it is possible to observe that the thematic axis Structure and Heroes were, based on the organizational culture, the elements that have influence with greater preponderance of the implementation phenomenon of the Distance Education in the HEIs.

It can be concluded that, by means of the power concentration in what concerns the managers’ autonomy with regards to the decision process for the offer of courses in DE in the HEIs, the senior management desires, sponsors, imposes and centralizes the implementation process of the DE in the HEIs, being evident that the decisions about the DE are centralized in the HEIs’ senior management, as demonstrated in Figure 5, as follows.

![Fig. 5: Relations and implication of the factors that synthesize the DE’s implementation process in the HEIs.](image)

As for what is referred to satisfaction with the implementation DE modality, the specialists tend to interpret it as a desire of the senior management the strengthening of the modality, which will help to break paradigms and to consolidate the change, growth and expansion of the HEIs. It is evident, however, that there is much yet to be evolved in order to overcome the obstacles that may yet be found.

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