



## **The Quality Of Social Interaction In Distance Education : An Experiment Based On User's Perspective**

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### **Abstract**

This research project, conducted by the Inter-institutional Research Group on Distance Education (GIREFAD), was aimed at the elaboration and testing of an on-line distance education course, based on the user's perspective. The course was based on the adaptation of user's support in the learning process. The main hypothesis contended that modifications to the experimental learning platform of the course, and to the modes of support offered to the learners, would influence in a positive way their perception of the course and the learning process. Even if those modifications had a positive effect on the learner's appreciation, we cannot attribute this change only to the modifications operated during the experiment. Many other factors could have contributed to this result.

The results suggest that, in distance learning situations, the learner will adapt the processes and tools offered by an on-line distance education course and adapt them to suit his learning needs and goals, according to his own practical modes or methods of learning. Furthermore, the quality of the social interaction between teacher and pupil is at the core of the learning experience and is revealed to be, in fact, an important factor in the appreciation of the distance learning experience. This relationship is an important guideline in the learner's adaptation process during the learning experience. Social interactions and exchanges between teacher and pupil will enable the learner to validate his choices and modifications relative to his use of the course's tools and processes, as well as those adaptations to his methods of learning, in order to attain his learning goals.

Finally, the choice of communication mode between teacher and pupil had an impact on the perception of the quality of social interactions during the learning process. Some of the communication tools were deemed more suited in establishing an interaction perceived by the learner as being positive and constructive.