

## **GOOGLE'S DRIVE POSSIBILITIES FOR CLASSROOM AND DISTANCE TEACHING**

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The technological revolution in which our society constantly is involved creates new labor and social demands. Demands that have to be answered with immediacy. As members of the education system, we train and instruct students within a comprehensive perspective. Train them from the traditional literacy and from the Information and Communication Technologies. The Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) enable the creation and development of new strategies for teaching and learning in education but especially in distance education.

Lack of knowledge about ICT's is about to be considered a serious training deficiency, even as a new form of illiteracy. Now the users of ICT's have managed to move from mere spectators and Internet consumers to contributors of Web based contents and services. That's why it's essential the access to new technologies, and universities must play an important role.

We have to train and provide tools and platforms easy accessibility to the students and simultaneously boost cooperative networking and virtualization of the learning process. ICT's are a prerequisite to achieve an interactive learning environment. ICT's also are essential for long distance education. It plays an important role in education today being a complement for traditional methods. However, ICT's should be used as an enabler, as the teacher is always who must guide their use through the educational process.

Universities, colleges and schools have today a double challenge: To develop innovative strategies to improve the teaching-learning process and to develop active methodological skills needed to learn both as an individual and a member of working groups exploiting the right technologies and collaborative tools. One of the biggest

challenges for teachers is to make use of free access applications available on the Web to allow the student to use the vast majority of resources offered by the information society. Likewise, they will learn to value of free possibilities available on the Web. Teachers have the responsibility to introduce students in this online pool of free resources, sometimes well unknown. All of this foster the development of personal skills to the students. It promotes the exchange and integration among students and teachers making real the teamwork. Working with these tools and methods the students will develop skills and competencies that they will use in their jobs in the future. The support of the faculty members is crucial throughout the student's education, nevertheless, we recognize that the optimum would be to use these tools and techniques in the regular classroom work.

Setting up frequent work teams in the distance universities is a must, they are essential to stimulate students because the physical separation makes them difficult the necessary interaction. Also, is well known that improving interpersonal relationship, minimizes abandon rates. Open university student work teams develop skills such as critical appraisal of works, knowledge sharing, capacity evaluation and self-assessment and intellectual maturity. Ultimately empower them to achieve "collaborative learning in virtual environments" (ACAV).

In this context, the objective of this article is to analyze and explain how Google APPS works. Google APPS is a suite of free tools offered by Google in the network. It enables online collaborative work from a technical and academic point of view. It is a tool of easy accessibility, and simplicity to produce and access information. It is not necessary to have great computer skills use it. Foster current models of distance learning. It facilitates and improves communication between teachers - students and students - students

Google APPS is a free platform, freely available on the Web. All the apps are available on the cloud. One of these apps and perhaps the most popular is Google Drive, a virtual disk starting 5 GB, but you can increase that capacity for free to 15 GB. It helps to enable sharing online documents in the cloud.

Google APPS provides many useful tools such as word processors or spreadsheets. It also has numerous options for the teacher as for creating tutorials, record videos and classes. You can also edit, design and share images from any mobile device, from the network and from the Google APPS. Their use is applicable in the workplace, in the classroom and in the academic environment.

Google Drive allows the teacher and the students to do tasks as works self-evaluation or cross-evaluation between teams. Another use is that it allows teachers and students to interact synchronously and asynchronously. Its structure facilitates the realization

of collaborative works, personalized and group instruction, the assessment and self-evaluation of students works. Work teams can make annotations and corrections online, working simultaneously on the same document. It helps the teacher the introduction of peer reviews, according to criteria established by the teacher or coordinator. This last option gives the student the possibility to develop labor skills needed to access future works in the enterprise arena.

Google Drive also lets you store your work in different formats. Share bibliographic information. It is possible to work different hypotheses among the member's team. In addition, it is possible to share doubts in real time. Enhance research based on the networking between different universities. The users can edit files in real time also from any mobile device: Tablet, Smartphone or computer. The teachers become members of the working group not only to monitor but also as participants in the development of investigations or researches. This way of working changes the teachers' role, changed from checker to an active member. Teachers may suggest, modify or transform the approaches in real time. This encourages the learning process to promote abstraction and speculation.

One advantage of storing information in the cloud is to protect the files against any eventuality as loss or breakage of the mobile device being used. Another is the automatic update of the document made by any member of the group. Within Google APPS you can connect with other applications such as image editing PicMonkey, Mergy to combine PDF documents in PDF, HelloSign, to add a digital signature to a document, etc. To use this tool you need to have or create an email account on Google, Gmail and directly access the any site Google site such as [www.google.com/drive](http://www.google.com/drive)

Within the Google suite, let's use google drive as an example, next to the name of the user appears a dropdown with different apps offered by Google. The first option is the configuration, with the possibility of converting files uploaded to Google APPS format editor. You can also choose language, share photos, videos, links, and agenda. You can create and upload files and folders such as text documents, spreadsheets, forms, drawings, or even access to Google Maps ... Every file or folder can be shared with any user with read and/or write privileges, based on the access granted by the administrator of the group, in this case the teacher. The program also enables to the coordinator track the latest files used, and monitor who is accessing it.

The teacher could invite other teachers or tutors from his university or from other universities. This interaction enriches the teaching-learning process and fosters networking. This reciprocal influence benefits the development of critical thinking and improvement works to introduce new ideas with other approaches.

InGoogle APPS all team members can work online in real time reinforcing the teamwork despite the geographical distance. Different group members could work in real time on the same presentation, so each member of the group can modify the slides and make a presentation globally. This competition is very useful in the business world, more and more internationalized.

In the virtual classroom, Google Drive can be used for students to submit to their peers the results of the work performed. It also features a chat room where team members are interconnected in real time. This room can be used as a window of comments and notifications that will be displayed to the unconnected members when they connect and enter in that file. Also it allows to open a window of suggestions within the document itself to make comments and corrections between teachers and students and among students themselves, allowing the development of a fully collaborative work. This is of great interest for the teachers as they can interact with all members of the team (students, teachers, guest lecturers or tutors) on equal basis. This option instructs collaborative participation in the group, prompting the intellectual process and critical thinking. The teacher by introducing thoughts and comments, get better feedback on the learning process improving the remedial competencies of the student.

In addition, the teacher / student interaction provides an opportunity to review and comment on the sources used for the development of the work. The teacher can improve the selection criteria of the literature, especially those available on the network, helping the student to discriminate those of questionable origin.

Another interesting contribution of Google APPS to work within text documents, it is the search engine in the web. Google APPS also allows creation of a personal dictionary to include words specific to the learning matter. It has a translator (53 languages) and a dictionary definition. Finally, also provide other tools classified by themes: education, instruments for enterprises, productivity, communication, utilities, fully integrated into the same screen.

One very appreciate tool for teachers is called “on line Forms”. With this you can develop surveys, evaluations, self-assessments ... With the evaluations and self-evaluations forms you can follow the progress of students in the learning process. This gives the teacher the possibility dynamically of introducing amendments, or not, in the didactic approach, depending on the results obtained.

Moreover, the options available in the forms are quite complete. You can choose to design open surveys (text answer) or closed (kind of test), to Include check boxes, to ask for answers from a list. The designer of the form can determine the scale. Specify whether a question is mandatory. They can use to formulate for small online random

tests in reference to the knowledge acquired by the students' questions measuring the response times and you can publish and display the results obtained in a public link on the web.

You can create online tests and, if desired, add the AutoCorrect feature. You can also send the results to the teacher and students by email. The respondent may, if required by the pollster, edit their answers to modify.

Based on the work being performed, it is possible to connect to as much as 300 external applications called from Google APPS suite. In geography, for example, you can use Drawings Google to incorporate drawings a document. Mind maps can be developed with Mind Mapping or MindMup. Access Google-Maps to capture images, maps, plans, etc. ...And all this stuff can be included into the student or teacher work.

Google APPS have various video and audio editors. They are useful to improve the process of learning tool. Give the student the chance to put in images the knowledge acquired. It also allows the student to know the difficulty of obtaining images; to get the necessary permissions to use it, and infuse them respect for intellectual property. PowToon accessible from Google APPS, it is an online application that gives you the ability to create animated videos in minutes; Movenote is most useful for teachers as for students; with it you can create tutorials, record classes and hang them on the network, add links or images ...

Another graphic tools you can access from Google APPS suite are AutoCad360 and AutoCad WS. Both allow to edit and sharedrawings from AutoCad DWG 2D and 3D and DXF files from any mobile device.

In the field of geography, in conducting fieldwork, you can use Google Maps for mobile, marking geographical landmark and then can be exported directly to Google Drive, and edit it with any of the available drawing tools. This option facilitates the creation of materials from both the teacher and by the student. Google APPS also has photo editors as Pixlr Editor or PicMonkey (in English), among many other options for image processing.

LucidChart, is available to draw flow charts, mind maps, working with an unlimited number of people in real time as the updates are synchronized instantly. the application also has templates, maps, etc., and is useful for performing slides and presentations to use in the classroom, not only in the field of geography but of all disciplines.

GeoGebra is free math software, which is also possible accessed from Google APPS suite, usable in education at all levels. It is useful in the field of Geography from all those matters that handle statistics: Economic Geography, Population Geography, Human Geography ...The materials are interactive and its can be shared online and be used by anyone on their official website.

Google Drive it is a very useful resource for teachers and students in the virtual classroom. Documents are stored in the cloud, accessible from anywhere and from any mobile device. It can be used both in classroom teaching and in distance learning virtual classrooms. It facilitates the participation among students and teachers at the virtual level, trying to solve those problems arising from the non on-site learning process.

However, we see some cases of reluctant students with these new technologies, as they claim about the difficulty to start working in this environment what finally becomes a real limitation on their use. In the case of the Open University should keep in mind that students are very heterogeneous in age, education, etc., so that their computer skills are also very diverse. Therefore, it is essential to force and coach them to improve these skills about computer tools. By introducing the use of new tools and promote the collaborative networking among students / students and student / teacher teaching-learning process is improved. Also this gives to the student some prerequisite skills for their future labor life.

Google APPS suite has great potential and educational value for the teachers in higher education. It allows encourage interaction. It helps build links between students and teachers. It facilitates student relationships outside the virtual classroom.

Teachers and college tutors, have an indispensable role in the introduction of ICT. They are responsible for the personal attention to each of the group members and to the whole team (group and individual learning). Attaining and improving the interaction between the components of the group. The implementation of an agile and fast attitude in resolving the issues raised by the students are unavoidable duties of teachers in the information society. It should be required a specific methodology and training for the teachers that works on the online/virtual training field, without prejudice to the classroom training, on the contrary.

The education system and in particular the universities, must adapt quickly to exploit new tools available on the Web This requires a methodological change in the teaching-learning process, where both live classroom teaching and virtual teaching will be present, even in the traditional universities. One option does not displace other nor should it move it. Big mistake would be for the entire education system does not exploit the synergies between them.

The teacher must analyze the variety of students currently going to universities; particularly into open universities. Here the student is generally older than students in traditional universities are. The vast majority of distance learners do not belong to the generation of young technology, “(...) do not feel prepared to use computing resources in their studies” (Suriá, 2010, p. 1180). Therefore, it should strengthen the university

itself, within each subject, courses and work sessions to enable students to acquire skills in ICT's. This training will be invaluable for these students to overcome the so-called computer illiteracy, to adapt to the new methodological trends and to gain experience in developing skills in teamwork in virtual environments, which is what is germinating in today's society.

