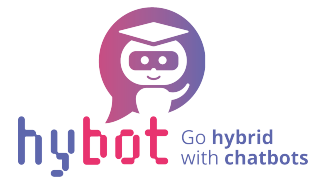




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hybot

Enhancing hybrid teaching in higher education through chatbots

## The Horizon Group – an approach to Hybrid Teaching in Brazil



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## INTRODUCTION

This case study presents the ongoing work and research from the Horizon Group in Hybrid Teaching and Distance Education.



Screenshot of the Grupo Horizonte website.

## GENERAL CONTEXT OF THE HYBRID TEACHING PRACTICE

- Implementer: Grupo Horizonte (Brazil)
- Lifetime: Ongoing since 2007
- Reference: based on the interviews with Professor Daniel Mill and Dr. Glauber Santiago
- Compiled and structured by Universidade Aberta



## DANIEL MILL



Image shared by Daniel Mill.

Daniel Mill is Professor at the Federal University of São Carlos (UFSCar, Brazil), where he works as a Distance Education (EaD) lecturer and manager. He has a doctorate in Education from UFMG, with post-doctoral studies at the University of Coimbra and the Open University of Portugal. He is a member of the Graduate Program in Education and the Graduate Program in Science, Technology and Society. He is the leader of the Horizonte Group (Study and Research Group on Innovation in Education, Technologies and Languages) and, as a researcher, has a particular interest in the intersection of the following themes: teaching work, technologies, languages, cognition and distance education.

## GLAUBER SANTIAGO



Image shared by Glauber Santiago.

Glauber Santiago holds Bachelor in Law and Master in Production Engineering degrees. His dissertation focused on quality management in musical organizations. He also holds doctorate in Production Engineering, with a thesis on a proposal for diagnosis of the competencies of the music educator in undergraduate course projects. He works in the musical area as a professor at the Department of Arts and Communication (DAC) of the



Federal University of São Carlos (UFSCar) in the areas of perception and musical notation, language and musical structuring as well as musical creation, among others. In his production of didactic material, there are books and methods for teaching keyboard, flute, Orff Xylophone and introduction to Traditional Harmony, virtual learning environments, video classes on music and various software related to musical learning. As a researcher, he has been working with themes related to music education, technologies and EaD. He is the leader of the research group Technologies Applied to Music Teaching and Learning and vice-leader of the Horizonte Group.

## INITIAL SITUATION

The Horizonte Group began in 2007, at the Federal University of São Carlos (UFSCar), under the name Group for Study and Research on Distance Education (GEPEaD). At that time, one of the main objectives was to promote research on the potential of Distance Education in order to legitimize it and, consequently, advance the process of incorporating the modality in the institutional heart of the UFSCar. Later, the GEPEaD became the Horizonte Group, once the developed action fronts went beyond the limits of DE and began to encompass a series of activities involving the intersection between education and technologies.

## CURRENT REASON

Currently, the Group carries the name “Horizon”, given its perspective that aims to search for utopia in a path towards development that never ends. It is possible to say that, as Grupo Horizonte, there was an increase in the number of members, as well as in actions to promote innovations in education, technologies and languages. As GEPEaD, the Group was limited to the participation of members of UFSCar itself. Currently, Horizonte has researchers from several Brazilian institutions and other countries.

Operating on different fronts, Grupo Horizonte brings several benefits to its members, which, of course, includes the students who are part of it. Among the works developed, it is worth mentioning the International Congress on Education and Technologies (CIET) and Meeting of Researchers in Education and Technologies (EnPET), the Specialization Course in Education and Technologies (EduTec), the Critical Dictionary of Education and Technologies and of Distance Education, among others. In the midst of these actions, Horizonte contributes to continuing education through courses, workshops, exchanges of experiences, study groups, etc. It also contributes through internationalization proposals that promote reciprocal exchanges between doctoral students who go abroad to carry out part of their research; or even foreign researchers who, working in Horizonte, bring significant contributions to the members. No less important are the research that results in publications and enables students to have a very fruitful scientific experience, also enabling the dissemination of the results of studies developed by these students – studies that result from Course Conclusion Papers (TCC), research of scientific initiation, master's dissertations, doctoral theses and others.



## OBJECTIVES

Objectives of Grupo Horizonte include the provision of elements for a better understanding of the influences or participation of technologies (old or emerging) in educational and communication processes. In particular, Grupo Horizonte contributes to the scientific training of its members; produces and disseminates the research of national and international relevance; promotes spaces and training proposals with significant impact; creates research and training networks between national and international researchers; promotes the reduction of inequalities in access to knowledge and technologies, particularly in Brazil; contributes to the training of teachers of Basic Education and Higher Education.

## HYBRID TEACHING SCENARIO

The hybridization of Grupo Horizonte is expressed by the constant use of technologies that break time and space. Consistent with its work, the Group makes available the most varied resources and possibilities in order to connect national and international researchers, regardless of their country of origin or their current working conditions. Furthermore, Horizonte understands that the intersection between education and technologies can enhance teaching-learning processes, contributing to the construction of more hybrid scenarios and exploring the best of face-to-face and virtual environments and their critical dimension.



Towards connecting international research groups under Horizonte (image shared by Daniel Mill).

## INTERACTION AMONG PARTICIPANTS

There are several forms of interaction between the members of the Horizonte Group. There are study groups, articulations with a view to holding events, joint action in the specialization course in Education and Technologies at UFSCar, international partnerships, sandwich doctorates abroad, the organization of scientific publications such as books and articles, the orientation of scientific works (scientific initiation, Master's, doctorate, etc.), among other forms of interaction. It should be noted that all these spaces or action fronts that enable interactions between members rely on digital technologies that hybridize human relationships, breaking between current and virtual, or between online and offline.



Start page of the course Education and Technologies/<https://edutec.ead.ufscar.br/> (own screenshot).

## HARDWARE AND SOFTWARE USED

It is too complex to accurately list all the hardware or software used by Grupo Horizonte, since, involving several researchers, there is a multiplicity of studies, experiences and proposals covering a profusion of resources, applications, techniques and others. In any case, it is possible to list some hardware and software that are very present, especially in the actions that make the Group's hybridization possible. In this sense, we mention Moodle, LimeSurvey, Google Meet, Google Drive, Google Calendar, Skype, Zoom, NVivo, Iramuteq, VantagePoint, Mandala (software developed by the Group), MuseScore and others.



## CONTENT CREATION

Firstly, the various scientific productions that result from the research of the members of the Horizonte Group are highlighted. As a clear example of the efforts on this front of the action, the Critical Dictionary of Education and Technologies and of Distance Education is mentioned. Still, within the scope of research, there are several publications in books, events and periodicals. Regarding the production of technologies, in addition to innovative experiences with existing resources and methodologies, Mandala, a software created by Horizonte with a view to managing pedagogical flexibility in virtual or hybrid courses, is mentioned.

## ASSESSMENT

Teachers, as well as students and other members (there is no hierarchical asymmetry as in other academic contexts) are assessed through their contributions, engagement, interest, attachment to the proposed objectives, concern for social development and the reduction of inequalities, scientific production, performance in training proposals, creations, etc.

## QUALITY ASSURANCE

Grupo Horizonte evaluates its actions at all times, either through questionnaires answered by members or people affected by its actions, regular meetings, or through quantitative and qualitative analyzes resulting from surveys carried out by the members themselves. It is understood that evaluating practices, in their different dimensions and under the eyes of various subjects, contributes to the constant improvement of actions and activities promoted by Horizonte.

So far, a general assessment confirms the importance and efforts of Grupo Horizonte in the sense of promoting innovations in education, technologies and languages. All this, reveals the possibilities of fruitful use of technological resources in the educational field, without losing sight of the critical dimension and avoiding extremism. Horizonte is situated in a middle ground that avoids technophobia and technophilia, in order to contribute to the construction of an education that is increasingly democratic and aligned with contemporary social demands.

## TRANSFERABILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

Grupo Horizonte seeks to ensure the sustainability of its actions by prioritizing the use, for example, of Open Educational Resources (OER), free software, Creative Commons licenses, and others. The search for innovations in education, technologies and languages also converges towards the construction of equitable and sustainable educational proposals that not only reproduce, but contribute to social transformation and development. In fact, through training, experiences, exchanges, etc., the Horizonte Group seeks to become



sustainable by socializing the knowledge produced and, thus, contributing to training new researchers to assume their roles in social development.

### TIME COMMITMENT

Grupo Horizonte started as GEPEaD in 2007. Thus, it has been in existence for approximately 15 years. This time was decisive in the maturation and expansion of the activities developed. With regard to the action fronts specifically mentioned, CIET: EnPET takes place every 2 years; the EduTec specialization course has biannual offers; other activities such as training proposals, scientific dissemination, orientations of different natures, etc. depend on various factors.

### FURTHER REFERENCES

- Grupo Horizonte: <https://www.grupohorizonte.ufscar.br/index.php/Horizonte>
- Congresso Internacional de Educação e Tecnologias (CIET) e Encontro de Pesquisadores em Educação e Tecnologias (EnPET): <https://ciet.ufscar.br>
- Curso de Especialização em Educação e Tecnologias (EduTec): <https://edutec.ead.ufscar.br/index.php/EduTec>
- Dicionário crítico de educação e tecnologias e de educação a distância: <https://www.grupohorizonte.ufscar.br/index.php/Horizonte/livro/26/Dicionário-Cr%C3%ADtico-de-Educação-e-Tecnologias-e-de-Educação-a-Distância/0/2>.