

# Mackenzie Presbyterian University



Public Policy for the Use of Free and Open Source Software in Education at the University Level: The Case of Brazil

**Professor Ana Cristina A. P. Carvalho**

Faculty of Computing and Informatics

**Professor Solange Teles da Silva**

Faculty of Law

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# Introduction

- The production and construction of knowledge require that Government secures access to both computers and computer programs;
- The role of the State is fundamental in developing public policies that assure access to computer by means of FOSS and that promote digital inclusion.

# FOSS and its fundamental characteristics

- Free software means freeware;
- In opposition to proprietary software, whose source code is only known by the business that developed it, free software is based upon a philosophy of shared knowledge, whose source code can be freely accessed by its users, with the goal of modifying and improving the code;



# FOSS and its fundamental characteristics

- Free software follows the ideals of the Free Software Foundation:
  - (1) The freedom to run the program
  - (2) The freedom to study and change the program in source code form
  - (3) The freedom to redistribute exact copies
  - (4) The freedom to distribute modified versions

# FOSS and its fundamental characteristics

- For the Open Source movement, the issue of whether software should be open source is a practical question, not an ethical one;

# FOSS and its fundamental characteristics

- Open Source is a development methodology.
- Free software is a social movement.

# FOSS and its fundamental characteristics

- FOSS is based upon a philosophy that opposes the privatization of knowledge and foments solidarity and cooperation.



# Public Policy, FOSS and the Role of Brazil

- **Public policy** is a program of government action that results in a process or a set of processes regulated by law to coordinate the means of the State and the private sector toward the achievement of politically determined socially relevant objectives.

# Teaching and the use of FOSS

- Latin American societies should reform their educational systems making them more responsive to social, scientific, and technical needs, while at the same time preventing schools from reinforcing current inequalities in status and wealth (ARMENGOL, 1987).

# Teaching and the use of FOSS

FOSS is used:

- For both distance and on-campus learning
- As an important tool in the teaching of computer science

# Teaching and the use of FOSS

FOSS can increase students' access to information



## **Public policy for digital inclusion: the priority of FOSS solutions and FOSS training**

**Digital inclusion cannot be reduced to merely the buying of computers and the teaching the use of certain software programs.**

## **Public policy for digital inclusion: the priority of FOSS solutions and FOSS training**

**Digital inclusion requires also policies that promote the increased use of FOSS that can both contribute in terms of infrastructure and in respect to digital literacy.**

## **Public policy for digital inclusion: the priority of FOSS solutions and FOSS training**

Decree n. 7.243, of July 26, 2010, created the Student's Computer Program (PROUCA) and the Special Regime for the Acquisition of Computers for Educational Use (RECOMPE). Article 2 § 3 of this Decree establishes that for the RECOMPE program, FOSS without license costs will be given priority.

**Public policy for digital inclusion: the priority of FOSS solutions and FOSS training**

RECOMPE allows for tax exemptions for businesses winning bids to provide computers to public schools and to non-profit schools for the disabled. The taxes exempted are the Industrial Products Tax (IPI), the Contribution for Intervention in the Economic Domain and contributions to the Social Security system (PIS/PASEP and COFINS).



## **Public policy for digital inclusion: the priority of FOSS solutions and FOSS training**

On October 5th 2010, Decree n. 7.325 promulgated the Memorandum of Understanding between the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the Government of Brazil for training in FOSS for developing nations.

## CONCLUSIONS

Among the various federal Brazilian policies for digital inclusion, the only ones which focus on both education and FOSS are the Decrees 7.243 and 7.325.

Sao Paulo State Government has such a policy, and also does the city of Sao Paulo.

## CONCLUSIONS

Digital inclusion is a first step for socially excluded populations to appropriate technology for the end of breaking the cycle of poverty. In this sense, FOSS favors the spread of information that is one of fundamental pillars of education (SILVEIRA, 2005).

# Thank you!

<Professor Ana Cristina Azevedo P. Carvalho>  
[anacristina.carvalho@mackenzie.br](mailto:anacristina.carvalho@mackenzie.br)