

WAYS AND CHALLENGES OF THE TUTOR TO GRADUATE TEACHERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL

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Summary: Considering the strategical importance of the tutor in the accompaniment of each autonomous teacher student in the course Veredas – Higher Education of Teachers, we look forward to identify the progress, the difficulties and the challenges faced for tutors and independent teacher students in distance education. We make a reflection on the function of the tutor, his process of initial and continued education, practical and the influence of this in the formation of the autonomous teacher student, his relationship with the instructional materials, information and communication technologies, the process of superior formation and learning of the autonomous teacher students and his practical teaching in middle school, through the distance education modality. We study in depth the work of three tutors and theirs groups of autonomous teacher students, through the qualitative and quantitative boardings. We made interviews, documentary analysis, questionnaires, direct and participant comment, of all the tutorial activities, in all different moments of the course. In this article, we make a clipping of the main theme, reflecting on the recruiting process and selection of the tutors who act in AFOR UFU. It concludes that the selective process of the tutors needs to be improved, to be adjusted and differentiated, for better attending the necessities of the tutors, the autonomous teacher students and to the requirements of the pedagogical proposal of the course Veredas.

Key-Words: Distance Education, tutor, professional development of teachers, in-service training, middle school education, initial and permanent teacher's development

Education in the distance - EAD currently, is a potential cultural tool to promote social justice, to search information and complement new knowledges, supporting initial and continued professional development, eliminating pedagogical disparities, offering to students and teachers more possibilities and quality in teaching and learning. The interest and the motivation grow for the permanent self-instruction and standes out the importance of the technological support for the access to the information (Brazil, 1994). In this context the educational system and the projects of qualification and in-service training reaches distinct and privileged functions.

It is estimated that in Brazil, *about 810 a thousand teachers of basic education do not have higher education and has 310 a thousand undergraduate teachers, or either, those that are not enabled to exert the teaching* (Brazil, 2001, p. 22). In the state of Minas Gerais, this number comes closer to 60.000 teachers

without the adequate and desirable formation for the development of their functions in the middle school (Census 2000, SEE/MG).

How to form many professors in a higher education in a short period? It does not deal with the teaching graduation for the transmission of ready knowledge, but it emerges new perspective of qualification, in which the pedagogical process must privilege the learning and not the teaching, over all, developing in teachers and students, the capacity to learn how to learn. One of the possibilities to promote the formation in large-scale, is through the EAD, that while education modality will be able to offer alternative elements, subsidies and different ways to face the old and emergent challenges of the education.

Normal Superior: course to graduate teachers through the EAD

Veredas – Higher Education of Teachers, is a course coordinated by the State Secretary of the Education of Minas Gerais - SEE/MG, sponsored by international organisms and had its knowledge-base, produced in the “World-Wide Conference of Superior Education”, carried through for UNESCO, in Paris, 1998. Destined to qualify in higher education, teachers in-service training, of the middle school in Minas (called here of autonomous teacher student: self-directed learner teacher), characterize themselves as a graduation in the Superior Normal Course, in the modality of distance education. The objectives of the course are the development professional, reflexive and social, in the formation of the autonomous teacher student.

The course has as partners, State Government through the State Secretary of the Education of Minas Gerais - SEE/MG, some city halls that had adhered to the project and eighteen institutions of superior education (distance education institutions, called Agencies to Form - AFOR), responsible to carry the course simultaneously in all regions of the State.

The SEE/MG offered 15,000 vacant destined to the teachers of the middle school, that belong to the state public school (12,000 vacant) and municipal public school (3,000 vacant). The course initiated in February of 2002 and finished in July of 2005 - three years and a half of duration, 3,200 hours, distributed in seven modules (semesters), with 16 weeks for each module.

The course Veredas foresees the use of instructional and didactics materials, some information and communication technologies (computer, email, Internet, telephone, fax and post office) and considers a set of activities that aid to teaching and to learning: Activities of the Intensive Present Phase - it occurs during one week in the beginning of each semester; Collective Activities – group tutorial, that happen three times for module during 8 hours; Individual Activities in the Distance (autonomous learning) - carried through by the autonomous teacher students individually during 16 weeks for module; Practical Pedagogical Counsellor - period of practical training supervised for the tutor, in the classroom of the autonomous teacher student in middle school, during 15 weeks for each module; Activities of Evaluation and Exam carried through in the end of each module; elaboration of the Memorial and the Monograph for the conclusion of the course.

The components systems of the Veredas

For the implementation of the course, they must be integrated and be articulated between itself, five components systems:

a) *Operational System*: it takes care of the administrative steps of each AFOR to make possible the accomplishment of the foreseen activities.

b) *Monitoring and Evaluation of Performance System*: it monitors the course and its regular functioning, evaluates the quality and coordinates the flow of the activities to verification of the learning.

c) *Communication and Information System*: electronic performance support system, it makes possible the functioning of the tutorial system, through the Assistance Center (SEE-MG), and small sites of the Veredas in the Internet.

d) *Instructional System*: didactic and self-instructional material of the course and of the curriculum: 28 Guides of Study (from 200 to 290 pages each unit) containing texts and exercises of self-study modules, for the autonomous teacher students and orientations for the Collective Activities; General Guide of the Autonomous Teacher Student, Cultural Activities Guide, Tutor's Manual, Pedagogical Project's Manual, Evaluation of Performance of Autonomous Teacher Students Guide, Formation Agency's Guide, 22 videos (from 20 to 40 minutes each), complementary texts of the Guides of Study, destined to autonomous teacher students, for the Tutors and AFORs.

e) *Tutorial System*: it guides and it foresees the didactic-pedagogical support to the activities of the group from 15 to 20 autonomous teacher students and their permanent training. The tutor must plan a systematic and personalized form to attend each teacher student, prepare individual and group meetings, promote the distance orientation, supervise pedagogical practice of the autonomous teacher students, besides helping them on their writing difficulties of the memorial, the monograph and motivate their permanence until the conclusion of the course. It notices that the tutor has a sufficiently diversified performance, acting in some situations as counsellor, mentor, and others situations as entertainer, teacher and instructor of learning.

To take care of to these requirements, the tutor would have to present as prerequisite for the choice of tutor: be an education's professional, operating professor or that he had acted in superior education and basic education and with pos-graduation degree. What is expected is that the tutor be a prepared professional to play the functions well that are attributed to him, providing the autonomous teacher student's success and consequently of the course or it will cause prejudice to reach the objectives considered in this experience of EAD.

The initial disquiet and... research in action!

From the difficulties lived deeply for one of the authors while tutor, in the first module of the Veredas course and to notice the importance attributed to the function of the tutor in the EAD, had appeared some questions for reflection: what does it mean to be a tutor? What is the tutor's attribution and functions that must achieve through the courses of distance education? What are the differences between being a tutor and to be a teacher? How it must be the initial and permanent professional development of the tutor to accomplish practical

efficient? What is the tutor influence of the process of learning of the autonomous teacher student? How to evaluate the tutor's work?

The concern with these and other questions, has originated a doctor's degree research, still in progress, working with the thematic about the challenges of the continuing education of the tutor in Veredas course: a) How does the tutorial practice in Veredas influences the process of continuing formation of the tutor and the learning of the autonomous teacher student in the EAD? b) How does the tutor effective his pedagogical practice from the mediation of the instructional materials and the information and communication's technologies in this experience of EAD? c) What are the conditions for the tutor make possible his actions, considering the dynamic of the functioning proposed from Veredas? d) What are the challenges that this huge experience has to offer to the professors of the teachers? e) What are the difficulties lived by the autonomous teacher students? f) Does the knowledge acquired for the autonomous teacher students promote changes in their pedagogical practice? g) What is the impact and the influences of the Veredas course in the classroom of the autonomous teacher students ?

Therefore, the work is based on a avaliative deep study, of the experiences of some tutors and their autonomous teacher students in the Veredas course. It reports the reflection on the tutor's function in the higher formation, his process of initial and continuing formation, the practical and its influence in this autonomous teacher student's formation, the relation with the instructional materials, information and communication's technologies, the learning process of the autonomous teacher students and their teaching practice, through the distance education modality.

The ways to reach the end...

Considering the strategical importance of the tutor in the progress accompaniment and the difficulties of each autonomous teacher student in the EAD, the project focuses in the deep and intensive study of three tutors and their autonomous teacher students, during the presencial meetings, collective activities, administrative meetings, visit to the autonomous teacher students schools, orientation for the elaboration of the memorial and the monograph, since January of 2003 until July of 2005.

The techniques of data collection was by documentary analysis; questionnaires answered by 18 tutors; intensive observation of all the activities of tutorial of three tutors (around 420 hours) at the diverse moments of the course; direct observation of administrative activities of the tutors (240 hours); individual interview half-structuralized with three coordinators and six tutors; direct observation of 26 autonomous teacher students in classroom of the middle school (208 hours); focal interview with 26 autonomous teacher students divided in different groups.

Such elements will be analyzed from different focos of analysis, supported in the qualitative and quantitative conception. The field research was in AFOR UFU - Federal University of Uberlândia, that have 42 tutors and 627 autonomous teacher students of 52 cities of the Triângulo Mineiro, MG, Brazil.

These instruments allow us to trace the profile of the tutors and autonomous teacher students; to identify their expectations in relation to the Veredas; the difficulties of tutors and autonomous teacher students; the performance and participation in the course; the conditions where the tutor makes possible his action; the relationship of the tutors with autonomous teacher students and coordination; the course impact in being yourself, learning and doing pedagogical teachings; aspects of the physical and administrative structure; the development of the experience in the Veredas during the analyzed period, beyond other emergent informations.

In this study, was analyzed the curriculums of the 42 tutors of the AFOR-UFU, to recruit and select new tutorial members. It is important to stand out that this research continues in progress. Considering the nature of the study, its depth, the limitations of time for the field work, the text that however we present, brings a clipping in the overall theme, analysing the recruiting and selection process of the tutors who act in the Veredas course, in AFOR UFU. The authors admit that the analysis of the researched material on the selective process, are more useful to raise initial questions than a categorical affirmations or precipitated generalizations about the Veredas course, besides making possible the necessities of feedback, to suggest and adaptate of the selective process of tutors for the next versions of the project.

The first results: what will be the impact of the selection process of the tutors in the professional development of autonomous teacher students?

The coordination of each AFOR selected its own tutors, and adopted the choice mechanisms that it judged appropriate. The Pro-Reitoria of Extension, Culture and Students Subjects - PROEX, in 01/07/2002, invited through internal letter, for a meeting in 01/16/2002, coordinators and/or representatives of the UFU courses: Mathematics, Arts Course, Geography, History, Biology, Physical Education, Music, Arts, Artistic Education, Scenic Arts, College of Education; the middle school - ESEBA (education modalities: infants school, grade school and adult education) and the Technical Health School - ESTES (school of professionalizing education - courses of Nurse Aid, Buccal Hygiene, Clinic Pathology and Dental Prosthesis). The purpose of this meeting was to divulge general information about the project, documentation, registration period, to form work teams and to define concerns for the selection of tutors. The course initiated in February of 2002.

Noticed by the mentioned dates, that the PROEX had little time to make the internal and external spreading of the project, meetings, to structure of the AFOR, to select and qualify of the involved ones until the beginning of the course. It seems that everything happened in a very short period of time. Would have this been, one more project of the State Government, initiated without preparation? An audacious project as the Veredas, is not a process to happen in one or two months. It would need to have at the least, awareness and sufficient spreading on the proposal, intending to form a capacity team to accomplish it. For this, the time for the recruitment, selection and qualification of coordinators and tutors is fundamental. Miracles does not exists in the professional development of the

involved ones, not even with all current technological apparatus. It is necessary time to dialogue, to prepare tutors and course's participants, and the work in AFOR, at last, to grow along the process. In this direction, the time is decisive factor for the success or failure of a project.

The PROEX received 77 registrations, classified 71 curriculums and of these, 42 tutors had been approved for Veredas's tutorial team. The classification occurred by curriculum analysis, with the possibility of maximum punctuation of 195 points to be gotten by the candidate. Considering the variables, current functional position, pos-graduation degree, time of exercise in higher education and middle school, scientific publication and orientation of scientific work, the quantitative results of the selective process, had indicated that most of the tutors, don't achieve the requirements demanded for the SEE/MG and either for the pedagogic proposal of the Veredas. They did not present the specific abilities demanded for the professor's teachers of the initial grades of middle school, as well as for the development of the functions for which the tutors had been called to carry through in the Veredas. What will be the impact of the lack of competences and specific abilities of the tutors for the autonomous teacher students formation?

The results of the classification of the curriculums show that all the tutors had been contracted with results that had been below of 100 points. The half of the total punctuation and the arithmetic mean reached by the selected tutors was equal to 50,4 points - low in its totality. So, the tutor's curriculums was punctuated with high grades in aspects that is not significant for Veredas, or was punctuated with low grades, in aspects that were basic for the development of the course. This implies in incoherence between what the project required and the criterions chosen for the tutor's selection. What will be the impact of this incoherence for the autonomous teacher students formation?

In compliance with the current functional positions of the chosen teams, all the tutors are employee of AFOR UFU: five pensioners and 37 professors are in service, in the education units: Education College (5 tutors), Mathematics (1 tutor), Social Sciences (1 tutor), Institute of Geography (1 tutor), Biology (1 tutor), History (1 tutor), Technical Health School (1 tutor) and 27 tutors are teachers of the Middle School - ESEBA. These are professors of the infant school (5 tutors), middle school (16 tutors), physical education (4 tutors), psychologist (1 tutor) and pensioner (1 tutor). The total amount of these tutors indicates that it had clear preference for the profile of teachers of this unit of the AFOR. Many of these tutors are not in functional positions and they do not have professional experience that qualify them for professor's teachers of the initial years of middle school. What will be the impact of this for the autonomous teacher students formation?

Although the College of Education is the academic unit of the AFOR with objectives more directed toward the formation of teachers of middle school, had been few professors (five tutors in exercise and two pensioners) of this college who participated of the selection. At this time, the College of Education professors's team was formed by approximately 34 effectives, two invited from other universities, eight substitutes and around 48 professors pensioners (Diary of the College Education, 2003). Why so few professors had participated of the selection?

About the initial formation (graduation) of the tutors, the more contemplated course of graduation was Pedagogy (17 tutors), followed by the courses of Mathematics and History (five tutors), Geography and Physical Education (four tutors), Biology (three tutors), Arts Course (two tutors), Psychology and Social Sciences (one tutor). The Arts Course was little contemplated, considering the Portuguese Language, a very important discipline, comparing to the representation of the others courses. Therefore 25 tutors, most of the group, does not have graduation degree that qualifies them to form professors of the middle school. What will be the impact of this for the autonomous teacher students formation?

Relating about the postgraduation degree, eight tutors are doctors, 18 are masters and 16 tutors are specialists. On one hand this shows good level of certification, because that masters and doctors had represented 61,9% of all. In other hand, by verifying that good part of the tutors, had searched and/or studied specifics thematics of their graduation, who do not have nothing or little relation with the teachers formation or equivalent. The specific themes are: Special Education, Physical Geography, History, Linguistics, Psicopedagogy, Literature, Mathematics, Sport's Beddings, Sociology, Leisure, Human Geography, Ecology Evolution and Nuclear Bioscience, Entomology, Human Values and Control Systems (Electric Engineering), Collective Health, Analysis and Enviromental Planning, among others. The quantitative number of tutors postgraduated are not significant for a course that has for its objective to form teachers.

Besides, the pedagogic proposal of the Veredas demands of the autonomous teacher students, the Monograph elaboration. Although 26 tutors have deeply lived the research process in their master's degree and/or doctor's degree, many of those tutors had never guided the elaboration of a scientific work. Some of them do not have the research as one constant practical in their work routine, much less the habit to investigate the proper teaching situations and their classroom. Others not postgraduated tutors, never made a scientific work, nor dominate the proper knowledge that involve it. Then, how did they chose some of these tutors, if they did not have conditions to take care of to this important requirement of the course? How to collaborate with the autonomous teacher student in the construction of the specific and/or scientific knowledge that the proper tutor did not construct? Otherwise, to guide a monograph, will be enough only the knowledge of the elaboration norms and methodology of the scientific process? How to stimulate and to motivate the autonomous teacher student to search the proper pedagogical action, if the proper tutor does not have this practice? What will be the impact of these questions in the autonomous teacher students formation ?

Relating about the professional experience in Higher Education, the majority of the tutors has little or no experience in this teaching modality. About the middle school, most of the tutors present experiences that vary from 1 to 32 years, while others do not have it. What will be the impact of the deficiency experience of the tutors in higher education and/or middle school, in the autonomous teacher students formation?

The difficulties of the walking: who are the tutor's professors?

Analyzing diverse governmental educative projects, in some administrative instances, something in common with Veredas is evident: it lacks the conscience of that the programs alone can accomplish and reach its objectives successfully, if it counts on qualified professionals to materialize them. In the case of the Veredas it is not different. For better is the course, the instructional material, the structure and the investment for the education that is considers, these can fail, if it lacks answers for the questions: who are the tutors who will be responsible for this formation and in what conditions will make this?

The pretension to diminish tutors and participants coordinators of this process does not exist. Otherwise, it must be admired by the effort and commitment in which they had hugged the cause in question. But it is necessary to call the attention for the fact that, for better they are in their workstations, in their areas of specific knowledge or research, the majority of the selected tutors does not have the graduation degree, the specific experiences, pos graduation and abilities that qualify them to be the professors of the teachers of the middle school. And what would be the influences and the impact of this in the autonomous teacher students formation, who must be qualified to teach in middle school?

On the other hand, the results don't validate the selective process carried through and, for another one, shows that happened high level of inconsistency between what it was waited of the profile of the tutors, and the ones that had been contracted to works. It seems that was prioritized in the selection of the tutors, any other dimensions, less than the necessary essential abilities and competences, demanded for the current profile of the teachers formation for the middle school.

These results allow to raise many questions, without answers for the moment: the criterions defined by the Coordination Team for the selective process of tutors, had been little realistic and would have been very demanding for the found context? Would the AFOR not have tutors with better curriculums to assume the tutorial, in this course of teacher's formation? Does all the professors of the diverse modalities of professor's formation of the UFU had received the necessary information on the modality from distance education and about the Veredas project? Does the wage and work conditions proposals for the SEE/MG were interesting and attractive so that the people would feel motivated to participate of the tutorial of the Veredas? How to guarantee a quality for the autonomous teacher students formation in such a complex and diverse conditions?

Frequently we face with the politic disregard about the social importance of the education, of the teachers, their career, their initial and continued formation, their salaries and conditions of work, in the global development of Brazil. They lack interests, investments and action to provide qualified professionals for the teacher's formation. When a course is implemented as the Veredas, of superior formation, in-service training and distance education, the autonomous teacher students can not take the risk of, at the end of this, to have to supply and to correct aspects of the bad formation of professors. It is a race without principle nor end, behind the lost time... A walking that doesn't become fulfilled or it is very difficult to carry through...

An interesting challenge!

The course Veredas can be considered an advance and an innovation relating about the Higher Education of Teachers of the middle school. It presents in the format of distance education, with new pedagogic and curricular proposal, with diversified activities, significant orientations in its instructional material and to be in-service training, it is a project that can constitute an important instrument of qualification and teaching formation, in a country of continental ratio, with innumerable difficulties and different conditions like Brazil. It takes care of the necessity of proposals and politics action that can be significant and be reference so that changes happen in the brazilian educative system.

The Veredas, as well as the distance education in our country is a new experience, that will only be able to grow and have credibility if it will be accompanied by, analyzed, corrected and improved. To better attend of the necessities of the autonomous teacher student, the tutors and to the requirements of the pedagogic proposal of the course, the selective process of the tutors, needs to be improved and to be adjusted.

The seletive process must be different from what was made, demanding of the tutors a specialized formation – like a good professor - considering the point of view of wide knowledge: contents, didactic-pedagogical, curricular, social-educational contexts, experiences and practicals teaching acquired. So, the professor-tutor will be able to develop abilities and competences necessary to be a professor's teacher of the middle school. It will be possible to the tutor, to face the set of activities and steps demanded for its function, that have as goal a new reference to school education, a new teacher's function, the improvement in the learning and teaching process. It is an interesting challenge!

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