THE ORGANIZATION OF TEACHING WORK IN DISTANCE EDUCATION (DE): SOME CONSIDERATIONS FROM A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the work of the tutor in Distance Education (DE) focusing on the challenges presented to the tutor who works in this educational modality. The growth of distance education especially after the promulgation of LDBEN 9.394/96 is one of the main factors that indicate the need to investigate in greater detail the organization of the teaching work in this modality. For this purpose, we performed a case study with eleven teachers tutors in a private institution. The result of these questionnaires showed that despite the difficulties and challenges in this educational process, distance education is presented today as an alternative to the democratization of access to education in the Brazilian context

Keywords: Teaching work; Distance Education, Research, Tutorship.

Introduction

The increasing use of technological resources has become a challenge to society due to new skills and knowledge required. In education, technology causes changes in the relationship between teacher and student and sends the teacher to the field of these resources, to make use of them, resizing the educational relationship.

With the advent of the Internet and the emergence of computer networks, distance education has benefited, since, in earlier times, used as tools printed brochures and the radio. Currently, new techniques organize educational relationship between teacher and student. As Alves writes (2005 [1], p. 11), "the educational relationship puts face to face, a historical form of educator, on one hand, and a historical form of student (s) on the other." The use of media and information in education makes the distance more complex, requiring a process of segmentation in education or teaching activities.

Distance Education in Brazil is presented in an emergency scenario with higher education courses designed to meet the demands of formal education and the democratization of access to education.

Technological innovation allowed the spread of courses and ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) contribute as a tool in technical and pedagogical work. The teacher in this modality requires specific knowledge to develop their activities in virtual environments.

1.The organization of teaching in distance education: initial considerations

In this article, Didactic Work Organization is understood by activities such as acquisition of knowledge, being conceptually as a category subject to other more central, such as labor and technical organization of work.

According Abbagnano (2007 [2]), work in the marxist conception, is an activity intended to modify the natural things or to transform them into means of subsistence. From the moment the organization is to be produced in the field of education, it

implies intentionality, planning and action, finally working with knowledge in teacher-student relationship.

The name "Didactic Work" is the way, throughout history, the educational activity was made (SAVIANI, 2010 [3], p. 12). The educational process is a spontaneous activity for a systematic transmission of knowledge. The definition of "Curriculum" for Comenius, is translated as an educational proposal for society (ALVES, 2010 [4], p. 42).

Since changes in work organization, didactic processes are closely related to structured related processes of society, we have affirm that educational relations change. This way, we intend to conduct our studies from a universal point of view: How does educational relations happen inside the didactic work organization in a private institution of Distant Higher Education?

Considering the definition of Educational Relations of Alves (2005) [1], we will work on this research with the subjects in the educational relationship, namely teachers tutors who work with Educational Resources in a Physical Space in a specific Distance Education system.

Reiterating that we understand that the Didactic Work Organization involves three aspects - Educational Relations, Educational Resources and Physical Space - the proposed research objectives to analyze the organization of the teaching work developed by the tutor in Distance Higher Education.

As specific objectives, we point out: to characterize the profile of the educator of Distance Education, to identify and characterize the places where the organization of the teaching work occurs in distance education and to describe the major procedures presented in distance education.

To achieve these objectives, we used a qualitative approach by having as objective the study of a local phenomenon, trying to find the meaning and interpretation that it has (Chizzotti, 2003 [5], p. 221). This type of research requires the investigator's involvement with the social practice of the group, for this we used the questionnaire for data collection, having this way quantitative and qualitative data (SOUZA, 2007 [7], p. 25). While Caleffe and Moreira (2008 [6], p. 95) state that questionnaire is a tool that teachers can use with greater frequency for data collection.

These questions had the aim of checking the relations in the Didactic Work Organization of the reality to be investigated, considering the use of technological resources in the work of the tutor and the process of knowledge mediation.

The field of work was conducted with the Presence Tutor who is directly with the student helping him with the classes, in a place that is the physical space available for the appropriation of the content.

To analyze the existence of Didactic Work Organization in this context of Distance Education, the questionnaire was sent by email to the tutors. Below is a description of the research subjects and the technique used to obtain the data.

It is important to state that these tutors are spread all over Brazil. For this reason, it is necessary the use of a questionnaire sent by e-mail. Five tutors participate in this research. They work in Curitiba city, in the graduation course of Pedagogy. The theoretical contributions in this article anchor on the contributions of authors who discuss the historical concept of work, division of labor, education, teaching, relationships, educational and pedagogical practices.

Clearly, the teaching activity has been transformed during centuries, the scientific area indicates deeper understanding of the substantial changes that relate to structural changes in society, which we seek to demonstrate below.

2. The organization of teaching at the institution studied

At this point, we analyze the responses to the questionnaires conducted with teachers tutors of Distance Education. It shows the new pedagogical relationships resulting from the current mode of production that dissolves the nature of teaching, harming their identity and pedagogical organization, imposing a fragmented work subsumed to capital and marked by loss of control over the entire work process.

Finally, we seek to understand the organization of teaching in distance education, considering the division of work and the resources necessary for the formative process.

The questions proposed in the questionnaire intended to focus on the dimensions of teaching in pedagogical relationships - the teacher / tutor and student, teaching resources and time. To safeguard the anonymity of participants, we designated the code "T" and the corresponding number (T1 to T11) for the tutors.

The contributions of those involved were taken from questionnaires sent by e-mail and in person.

The analysis of teachers' responses when questioned: how does the relationship between teacher, student and knowledge happen in the distance education, considering in this relation the principle of mediation, the answers are clear and indicate that technological resources are the protagonists of this relationship. To analyze this question, we present the responses of all teachers surveyed tutors;

> I think it's a totally virtual relationship, through technologies such as: internet, radio, telephone, chat and e-mail (T1).
>
> This relationship occurs with the interaction by the media. In this kind of teaching, it is important to develop empathy, as an incentive to the student (T2).
> As presence education, the teacher is the facilitator and stimulator in the pursuit of building the student's knowledge (T3).
>
> The teacher transmits knowledge and if the student has no interest may seek this knowledge through research, communication channels and the books of the subjects (T4).
>
> The teacher / student relationship in the form of distance education happens at all meetings. Where the exchange of knowledge is essential (T5).
>
> The teacher-student relationship is through tutoring, radio, web, chats and other interactive communication tools in distance education (T6).
>
> It uses a lot of computer resources to compensate the gap between student and teacher (T7).
>
> Distance education presents various forms of interaction between teacher / student / knowledge. But physical contact is still needed in the classroom because it gives immediate interactions promoting immediate knowledge exchange (T8).
>
> Sometimes students are intimidated by technology and ends up chasing the information. Some students depend too much on the tutor thinking they own total knowledge (T9).
>
> The tutor is almost the teacher, it is him who is directly with the student mediating the relationship between the professor and content (T10).
>
> The relationship between teacher and student knowledge happens through technologies, they are the support for the student at the pole. The tutor plays a key role in this relationship because it helps in using these tools (T11).

The answers given by the tutors demonstrate that the emphasis is on the relationship of teachers' work with technology, there is a consensus on the use of technology in mediating the relationship between teacher and student knowledge.

This relationship can and should benefit the student, however, the teacher performs part of the totality of their work. It is identified above, only a monitoring function.

The answers lead us to understand that the work performed by the tutor depends on the technology, making it a coach teacher. The superficiality of the answers lead us to understand that the tutor is not prepared for the questioning of knowledge.

Another issue identified in the responses referred to mediation as a pedagogical practice. For the studied tutors, mediation comprises the use of technological tools as a resource in the learning process. If the emphasis is on the use of technology as a resource only, at what point the tutor actually acts in the formation of the subject? What is really up to the tutor?

To answer this question, Mill and Fidalgo (2007 [8], p. 1) explain that the "teacher-tutor participates in the teaching-learning more as a facilitator and motivator in the relationship of students with educational material," he would be responsible for the pedagogical mediation and the student´s knowledge construction.

We face a very different way of education, there is the relationship between teacher and student artifacts, as technology designed for this type of education. "There is not a direct interaction between teachers and students because there are artifacts between them. Do not have to deal with people, but with machines". These are the considerations of Peters (2009 [9], p. 71) by presenting the need to break with academic tradition. No doubt capitalism gives different ways of teaching, therefore new pedagogical relationships - mediation - and new ways of teaching. Due to this context, teacher's work is determined and controlled by the mediation technologies. Saviani (2007 [10], p. 6) points out that the need to strictly control the productive work becomes the parameter for the education which comes to the dominant form of contemporary education and responsible for the reproduction of the mode of production capitalist.

The notes of Braverman (1981 [11], p. 157) confirm this point of view: "human instruments are adapted to the production machinery according to specifications that resemble nothing more than the properties of the machine specifications."

The use of resources is in favor of the relationship between teacher and student knowledge. The above reports allow us to realize the importance of using technology. The educational relationship should be rethought in the face of technological advances and the use of ICT in distance education. According to Alves

(2009 [12]), teacher didactic procedures and the programmed contents for the transmission began to be dictated by the fundamental educational technology. The technological tools used for knowledge mediation redefines the educational relationship.

The tutor's function is defined by Gonzales (2009 [13], p. 21) as "professional teacher who has simultaneously two essential characteristics: knowledge on the field of technical and scientific content and ability to stimulate the participant to seek answers." The tutor is a mentor in the process of knowledge, teaching and student learning; he is "the motivator / mentor who will monitor and assess student learning throughout the process" (BENTES, p. 166, cited by Litto and ANT , 2009 [14]).

In our view, the tutor's role goes beyond the vision essentially technical, transcends the function of expert tutor. He is an educator with the distance function of educating the student.

We understand that the technologies are essential in distance education, however when they become only tools for mediation, the big challenge is the role of the teacher, to overcome the technical mechanisms and incorporate the knowledge historically built to human development.

3. Final Considerations

This article intended to analyze the present relationships in the educational organization of teaching in Higher Distance Education.

Advances, especially in the industrial and technological field, generally impact on work and on the organization of teaching. Thus, the authors believe that the capitalist mode of production makes teaching a secondary form of work in modern society.

In this context, the process of historical work as an educational principle goes on. The development of productive activities conducted and consolidated a new art of teaching, characterized by specialization of knowledge and defining new educational relationships.

In the analysis of surveys conducted with teachers, we find that there is a clear sense of their role, especially in the functions of tutorship.

[A1] Comentário: Mas o tutor não é presencial? Como ele faz para educar a distancia? O tempo todo foi falado do tutor no polo.

From the data obtained from the questionnaires and the theoretical framework discussed in the research, we understand the human formation in the context of productive restructuration and of the excluding globalization, what from the point of view of Frigotto (2008 [15], p 25), "it is the dramatic structural crisis of wage labor which produces sterilization of lives. "

Given the purpose of our research and after the analysis of empirical data, the relationships present in the educational organization of teaching in distance education are:

The division between the technical and pedagogical issues indicates the precariousness of the teaching labor and the relations among learners. The relationship between tutors and students is made through technological resources, which is configured in a mediation process.

However, data from field work shows that the tutor is not always prepared to assist students in their knowledge questions, making the mediation process mechanical and technical because tutors are institutionally prepared to perform only the technical work. We emphasize the need for the tutors to act as teachers, providing conscious activities that promote knowledge to students.

Technologies define the entire organization of the teaching work in distance education, but the textbook is still the main instrument of this process. The teaching resources are configured to the point of replacing the teacher's work, the emphasis in the teaching process is defined by the courseware. Given the empirical data, we believe that the use of technological resources in education demonstrates an emptying of socially meaningful content.

We identified the use of technological resources as tools in education guided by market logic, as well as time and space for socialization of knowledge. The educational relationships are limited according to the time, space and materials, but this way they fulfill the needs of the institution, although the teaching labor becomes subordinated to the listed resources. So, it characterizes control over a teacher's learning process.

The data indicates that technological mediation prevail over the processes of teaching and learning in distance education. The place occupied by technology today

indicates the fragility of the teaching work. We emphasize the need for social recognition of the work of the tutor and the urgent need to develop a process of teaching for emancipatory education.

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