

TEACHING EMPOWERMENT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF PRINTED MATERIAL FOR EAD: A REWARDING EXPERIENCE

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EDUCATIONAL SECTOR: C: Methods and Technologies

CLASSIFICATION OF THE RESEARCH AREAS AT EAD: 4

MESO LEVEL 5: Professional Development and Support for Teachers

WORK NATURE: B: Description of the Current Project

CLASS 2: Innovative Experience

ABSTRACT

The aim of our work is to describe the development process of the teachers of the educational institution where we work for the reformulation of the printed material we use at our higher education courses, provided at a distance, which methodology is based on the assumption, firstly from Vygotsky, for whom the learning process takes place on the interaction with the other and the environment. Secondly, authors who dedicated to the preparation of the teaching materials for this teaching methodology and legal documents, as Quality Education Courses at a Distance Benchmarks (2007) Assessment Tools for the Evaluation of Higher Education Courses, organized by Education and Culture Department (MEC).

1. INITIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The objective of our work is to describe the reformulation process of the printed material used at the higher education courses at a distance offered by the educational institution we work for in the southern part of São Paulo, due to the significant period of learning and paradigm changes both for the teachers and for us, who operate in this empowering process.

It is important to underline that, based on Vygotsky (2012); we apply the socio-interactionism approach at EaD, which postulates an individual's interaction with his environment, interpreting this dialectic as an element, trigger of his socio-cognitive development. In accordance with this approach this is the

way one increases in learning encouraged by the language, since it is the generating element of superior structure development.

Moreover, we also consider EaD as a methodology itself, in which the student's learning, occurs through conscious and self-reflecting action, mediated by the self-directed learning. Thus, it has caused the need to elaborate a printed teaching material that could develop that ability, making Belloni's words substantial (2002), for whom, that didactic apparatus has to promote, lead and facilitate the autonomous learning, especially at this historic moment in which different ways of socializing coming from technology can be viewed and through them young people get into contact with new realities, passing by roots, civilizations, and epochs virtually and whatever they like.

Therefore, beyond our concern about the content, we have established that it would be appropriate to seek adequate strategies so that the student could be well targeted on his learning process.

In this respect, we provide the teachers with qualification courses for the elaboration of WEB classes, satellite classes broadcasted live throughout the national territory once a week at a date and time previously scheduled, but for the printed material, we have proposed certain autonomy, since its content would meet the requirement of the disciplines. We perceived then, despite our teachers' solid formation, that material was not fully using EaD's methodology.

Hence, several qualification processes were developed, focusing on the material reformulation formerly used and the adequate elaboration of the ones that should be produced. Our work intends to discuss the empowerment processes results, to which we based on the Textual Linguistic and the distance education.

2. TO UNDERSTAND OUR DISTANCE EDUCATION PROPOSAL

At our institution, the higher education courses offered at a distance started in October 2005, therefore, before Quality Education Courses at a Distance Benchmarks, dating from 2007. Its formulation consists of modules, offered each quarter, with three subjects in each one of them. In general, in these modules, the students rely on three didactic supports: ten WEB classes that take about fifteen minutes each, live classes, satellite broadcasted with the duration of fifty minutes, printed material we name handout, gathering together the disciplines of each module. Further, the teachers are oriented on posting extra materials on "supportive material", as texts, links, film suggestions, etc., so that the students may relate and inter-relate contents. After video classes, the students have another class for fifty minutes long, in which they must do activities related to the content presented to enable the interaction with their

classmates and the teachers in face-to-face classes to deepen their knowledge and share their views in the light of Vygotsky's postulate.

We offer bachelor study programs of a three-year average measures, therefore, twelve modules, undergraduate majors of four-year period, therefore, sixteen modules and technological courses of two-year duration, and eight modules. The disciplines are arranged to take proper account of the institutional and organizational objectives, paying attention to legislation in effect.

WEB and face-to-face classes were (and still are) of a high quality. Although in a dissynchronous way, the teachers manage to achieve their students and interact with them. We possess lots of accounts that have been very important to describe this experience:



Image 1: interaction on the discipline mail

However, our printed material was not we wish it to be. As we sought continuous improvement of this, it was organized a series of empowerment courses to the authors, so that in each one of them they could revise their material and, this way, promote in them a qualitative leap.

However, before we start the description of this work, we believe it is important to specify how and who has drawn the teaching material at our institution and what the scholars of distance education legislation about the printed material.

3. THE FEATURES OF THE PRINTED MATERIAL FOR EAD

The teaching materials printed in our institution were elaborated, mostly by expert professors, whose formation based on the teacher as a professional, and a few had access to media resources. In their concept, a certain teaching

material should favor content, depth, and scientific rigor, features of the academic works which they were used to. Thus, what they produced most closely resembled articles, dissertations or academic thesis, clearly distancing themselves from the content of the instructional learning manuals, as was our wish in accordance with the methodological assumptions of our EaD.

In the light of those problems, we reached the conclusion that we should qualify them so that they could reorient and reformulate not only the teaching material, but even their understanding of the distance education and especially in relation to that pedagogical material, aligning as far as possible with our conception of distance education and the demands of Ministry Education. Based on Belloni (2001), we know that one of the most significant competences to be developed by anyone who wishes to perform an EaD action means to mediate, given to the amount of media with which the teachers face is very diversified bringing them an increasing demand concerning their technical quality.

The redefinition of their conception about the teaching material and its role is of utmost importance, a crucial factor to the success of the student formation. Its operations should move from the monologue of the class space to the dynamism of the laboratory, chat rooms, emails, or any other kinds of interaction methods at their disposal. From the knowledge monopoly to the collective knowledge construction through our research. From individual isolation to team works, keeping in mind that they will work as partners of the students in the education process leading to social formation as an instrument of the development of civic education and promotion of citizenship (idem, *ibidem*).

Quality Education Distance Education Benchmarks, dating from (MEC, 2007) and the Assessment Tools for the Evaluation of Higher Education Courses, organized by Education and Culture Department state that the printed didactic-pedagogical material designed for distance education contemplate: transparency and comprehensiveness of information published, depth, density, theoretical coherence, and dialogism.

By coverage, we understand the extent and universality of the elaborated material. Hence, beyond the availability at our VLE (Virtual Learning Environment), we started distributing the material to the students in its printed form. Concerning the depth, even though based on the student's needs and profile the material must not exclude the universality and quality of the contents approached, that is, according to Fernandez *in* Litto and Formiga (2009, pg. 399), the material must favor encouragement to the meaning construction. According to that author, the student learns because he feels pleasure in learning, and as a result, the printed teaching material may give rise to his curiosity, thus contributing to further knowledge expansion about the contents

approached effectively. As such, they must be intended for significant learning, taking the student's reality as the starting point confronting his experience and reality with his new knowledge acquired in the course, making it emerge as critical view and more profound.

But we must bear in mind that based on the pedagogical project demanding, the material must contemplate the basic and supplementary bibliography expected, providing it with density making it possible for the student who does not have access to physical libraries gain knowledge of what the most prominent theoreticians on their respective areas of assignment state. They must meet simultaneously the profile outlined for the continued formation of the student supplying sufficient subsidies for the professional success.

The theoretical coherence is another irreplaceable aspect in the development of the didactic-pedagogic material that combined with a dialogic language encourages different forms of connectivity and interactivity between their students and the teachers. Consequently, it should be complementary and coherent to the theoretical approaches made for their formation.

We believe that it is important and indispensable to inform that our printed material as a work, defined by Bahktin (2006), as a vital link in a chain, dialogues with many other statements to which it also responds. Thus, every text is dialogic by nature, and this capacity performed explicitly is also to Fernandez *in* Litto and Formiga (2009, pg. 400), another fact to be clearly considered in its elaboration, since it ends up turning into an option in order to the student see himself as an interlocutor for the teacher, taking into account that he is not alone, receiving at the moment of his learning every single necessary information from that one. For this purpose, it has to contain direct language, clear, expressive, avoiding the objectivity and the distance with which monographs, dissertations, thesis, or scientific articles are produced. Besides, Franco *in* Correa (2007, pg. 31) informs that the careful elaboration of that material is extremely important for the student's autonomous development who engages in a distance course, once it represents the theoretical support for his learning process, to assist him so that he learns how to use all the information presented in the text, stimulating him, encouraging him for his own development, empowering him for his self-evaluation, helping him to develop the irreplaceable competencies and abilities required as part of the job he applies for.

We were presented with an extensive and intensive challenge regarding the reformulation of the teaching material in order to bring all those features to our teachers, whose formation did not prepare them to deal with media resources, due to their generation.

According to Alonso *in* Almeida (2001, pg. 144-149), it is essential that the teacher try to carefully select the information he intends to get across taking

into account the one who gets instructed, his concrete difficulties, keeping in mind that his role consists of attributing significance to the learning process what will mean working intensely. This may contribute to make structural and functional changes, transforming the educational institution from an organ that preserves and transmits knowledge to turn it into a cultural and formative agency. Contrary to the traditional Pedagogy which bases on the teacher's knowledge on the subject he teaches, this one must stimulate the student's autonomy taking as the starting point the knowledge already acquired and verified, forming up new knowledge from provocations or challenges, bringing up new forms of interaction, constant and intelligent, and also making information available, encouraging reflection and communication.

4. OUR EMPOWERING PROCESS AND AUTHORSHIP TODAY

The empowering process for authorship at our institution, as we said before, has been produced gradually. At the first point examined, we engaged ourselves in the revision of the material about the aligning conceptions of distance education and the learning-teaching process we have adopted. The pedagogical meetings promoted in order to revise all those conceptions were undoubtedly fundamental for the authors to incorporate in their writings the pedagogical proposal of the institution.

Selection, density, depth, and theoretical coherence of the contents demanded a series of other meetings. The content selection process was done aimed at the requirements foreseen on the Course Pedagogical Project. Several meetings were held, firstly by the coordinators of the course, in association with their SDC – Structuring Docent Core, later with the author-teachers, since the contents could not be reduced to a list of fragmented knowledge, but accompanied by what was already taken for granted and what the students had already learned (FERNANDEZ *in* Litto and Formiga, 2009, pg. 399). Thus, the authors following the comments and observations made previously gathered together to finalize that construction. Later, we worked on the dialogic language and the different possible interaction forms, once the teachers had to learn how to apply a direct, clear, dialogic, and interactive language without affecting the intentionality in the whole learning process.

Our first observation was that, for many of them, dialogism was taken as “childish language” and “superficiality”. Hence, we presented our conception of text, making it clear to them that the dialogue is constitutive of any writing production. Making implicit strategies more explicit would not mean nor superficiality neither childishness. After the first empowerment process, we managed to achieve excellent results, as can be seen in the rewritten excerpt below from the *Technic and Textual Production* handout, used in the bachelor courses:

ANTES	DEPOIS
De acordo com KRISTEVA (1974, p.64) "todo texto se constrói como um mosaico de citações."	Caros alunos, Em relação a esse assunto, várias definições já foram propostas. Vamos ver as mais importantes: De acordo com KRISTEVA (1974, p.64) "todo texto se constrói como um mosaico de citações."

Table 1: Language Comparative

We would point out that for our empowerment processes we organized a program that could contemplate: the aligning of the conceptions of education and the institutional teaching-learning process, selection of contents, their density, depth, and theoretical coherence, the dialogic language, the use of peripheral elements to improve their interactive even more. As a consistent content all the materials already had the dialogism they needed. So we advanced toward the third moment in our empowerment process: the insertion of the peripheral elements. To acquire the necessary information a series of meetings were set up so that the group of teachers could realize that the material must help the student read the unity and select important points, classify such points, elaborate and re-elaborate conceptions (FRANCO, opus cit, pg. 32). This way, we showed them that the insertion of dialogue boxes like: *Attention, Dictionary, Learn More...* Contributes to it directly, turning them into the main responsible beings for attributing meaning to what they read, relating and inter-relating contents. The results were significant, as will be seen in the examples below:



Image 2: Peripheral Elements

The last moment in our empowerment process was dedicated to the insertion of relevant activities at the end of every chapter with an answering proposal at the end of the material in order to provide the student with the possibility of evaluating his own progress in learning as an apprentice, bringing it to mind that we are the ones responsible to provide them with an autonomous learning.

The results were also quite important, as it will be possible to notice by the excerpt transcribed below:

RESUMO DO CAPITULO

Neste capítulo, retomamos a noção de texto e daí partimos para a compreensão do intertexto. Vimos a intertextualidade sob a perspectiva de muitos estudiosos, mas de forma geral, constatamos que é, digamos, a incorporação de um texto no outro. Além disso, vimos que ela pode se apresentar de diferentes maneiras, como pela paródia, pela paráfrase, pela estilização, pela apropriação.

Vamos ver agora se você compreendeu bem essa questão ?

PROPOSTA DE ATIVIDADES

Produza uma PARÓDIA para do fragmento da poesia de João Cabral de Melo Neto, apresentado a seguir:

"Podeis aprender que o homem
É sempre a melhor medida;
Mais, que a medida do homem
Não é a morte, mas a vida"

Image 3: Activity Proposal

5. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The empowerment processes, organized at our institution reached their goals, the reformulation of the materials for EaD, with the improvement of the dialogic and image language used. The work describes the empowerment process for authors at the institution. The teachers came to realize that the written communication and the visual programming of the printed material for distance education should be coherent, making it possible for the student to establish a bond with it, attributing meaning to the text, pointing out to them that it has to contain theoretical depth, but clear and well-structured at the same time; It should provide the student with an explanation about the technical terms through the insertion of peripheral elements; pursuing precision and intentionality in the text formatting, underlining the need for adoption of a personal communication style.

The Editorial Committee of UNISA, collegiate organ that define the standards of quality, revises and approves the material for EaD, has verified that efforts to empower the author-teachers of the Institution have been rewarded for the improvement of dialogism and image indicators. It turned out to be rewarding and valuable experience, taking into account that the results have been recognized by the students themselves. The testimony below, taken

from the board of the Ancient History – Bachelor History Course, prove what has been said up to this point:

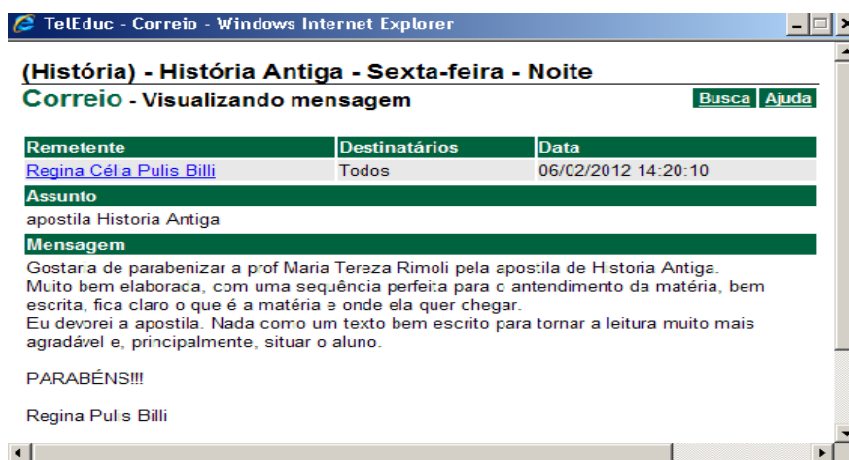


Image 4: Recognition and Appreciation from the Students

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