

TUTORING IN DISTANCE LEARNING: NEW EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE.

Maringá/PR, 05/2015

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Cientific Investigation

Higher Education

Systems and theories in Distance Learning

Report of Concluded Study

ABSTRACT

This current researching paper attempts to demonstrate a characteristic of the modality on Higher Education, the Distance learning nowadays. The role of the tutor on distance teaching not only reduces the physical and geographical distances, but also reduces the difficulties in accessing knowledge. The world known as a huge global village has demanded each passing day a better training and empowerment to the work. Therefore, it has been used the descriptive, bibliographic, and field research method. It enables the interaction between the technological approach, as well as the challenges of the educational practices on the tutoring in Distance Learning, as a methodological innovative resource on the learning and teaching process on the distance learning. It has been concluded expanding the possibilities of absorption of the process of training and spreading of information and knowledge, providing learning, virtual and interactive spaces, that place, undoubtedly, new challenges and alternatives to be thought about the formative processes and the training of the tutoring.

Key-words: Higher Education; Tutoring; Distance Learning; Pedagogical practices; information and communication Technology.

1. INTRODUCTION

The new technological innovations and the easy access to information, has been helping a lot regarding the education field. At this social scenario, we found a new way of providing education, which are the online courses and distance learning. The new medias and the information and communication technology (TIC) have become an allied on the spreading of a modern way of knowledge transfer, the distance learning. The increase on the offer of courses on the distance learning, mode that has brought a series of challenges and discussions related to pedagogical projects, and mainly on how the professor-tutor builds his/her subjectivity bearing in mind the use of the TIC on the docent's practice, since, however the technological resources and medias are considered an element of high importance to this modality, there is still need of change on the traditional educational paradigms to a new perspective of understanding of the teaching-learning process. As a consequence of the quick dissemination of the distance learning, the demand for professionals tutors has increased, however, the admission of this professional, are several times not related to the person, who has a clear concept of tutoring, what becomes the educative practice in many cases ineffective, because, the professional is not aware of the methodologies used under this teaching modality, and ends up by not using the TIC and medias inappropriately, he/she does not master the teaching techniques, which must be differentiated. Therefore, to the distance learning it is unquestionable the need of understanding that the educational path between student and tutor passes by the simple transmission of content, it is a moment of constant dialog, it is an interaction and mutual cooperation. Thus, our question about this issue is: Do the acting tutors at the educational scenario on the modality of distance learning fully understand the difference between managing classes on teaching on-site and tutorial acting? How do they understand the relation between the TIC and medias and the educational process? How do they match the technical support of communication with their practice? Perceiving how the tutor uses and understands the technology of information and communication at media environment building, so, his/her subjectivity, it becomes necessary, soon as general objective of this research is defined on the relation between the TIC

and the media environment and the construction of the subjectivity of the tutor on the distance learning. For this purpose, the specific objectives are: identify the professional identity of the tutor on distance learning, as well as his/her training; understand how the distance learning professionals conceptualize the tutoring the TIC and finally comprehend how these professionals define the tutoring act and the didactic resources that permeate the distance learning on the process of teaching and learning. Thus, it generates the hypothesis that the function of tutoring is made out of an indispensable role to the teaching and learning process on the modality of distance learning in order to achieve the meaningful learning.

2 THEORETICAL FRAME

On the distance learning mode the tutor performs several roles. The activities attributed to him may be changed from an institution of teaching to another, however, the essence is always the same, this professional must be competent to act on what is regarding as knowledge of content taught, regard to the pedagogical, administrative and social area.

While developing the tutoring act, the professional of this area must contemplate, besides the specific knowledge on the scientific aspects of observation, in order to be able to deal individually with each of the students, being aware of teaching techniques on the distance learning modality, so that, guiding the students to follow to the studies and develop an idea of autonomy on the quest for the knowledge.

Munhoz (2003) reports that the tutor by means of his duties foster the learning acquired by the student, being that high quality and reaching successfully, that his/her role is extremely important to this modality of teaching. The tutor must use favorable teaching techniques to an efficient learning, using available tools in a clear and practical form.

Gonzalez (2005, p.85) affirms that "[...] the tempting tutor impresses by his capacity of demonstrating the shortcuts, the effective management of the tools that are available to the exercise of the tutoring". The process of teaching learning is efficient, when the tutor and student are inserted on a friendly and dialogical environment, once this relation comes to happen the professor captures the learners reliability.

The technological innovations are some other aspects that mark the distance learning and the efficient performance of the tutor, which contributed significantly to the improvement and evolution of the EAD. Through the use of the technologies of information and communication (TIC) it is necessary the media coverage of the knowledge, resources as telephone, fax, television, computers, internet, the email, and the virtual platforms of teaching and learning make that the teaching and learning process become more attractive and dynamic.

The media coverage, therefore, favored the amplification of the communicational process. With so many other educational resources for a long time used (books, apostille, slides) are constituted of instruments of support on the process of teaching and learning, the TIC will be used to motivate, illustrate, reinforce the distance learning – and also the on-site – or turn it into more interactive lessons.”. (HACK, 2010, p. 16).

Within this perspective, we can get it as only the technological resources do not transform the oral process communicational into validated knowledge, what in fact, will support this process will be the use of the TIC with a dialogical pedagogical posture of the docent toward the student. Teruya (2006, p.14), while talking about the challenges to the action of the docent at all the teaching modalities, understands that “ by the time that the number of technologies of information and communication tools grow, it is increased the demand for docent activities at the school education”. While interacting to the students, the tutor promotes the research from several sources of information, thus as allow the analyze of the complex and unexpected situations, encouraging discussions through chats and forums, and point out to students that all the knowledge acquired will be attained by means of a collective action, in which everybody will participate of the process of by means of a mutual exchange of information and point of view.

In EAD, where the interpersonal relations are frequently mediated by digital technology tools, the groups formed can be called “ Virtual learning communities”. In order to allow the process of formation of these virtual learning communities happen, it is necessary to propitiate to the participants a motivating and technically appropriate environment to the dialog and exchange of information that foster its occurrence. (SILVA, 2006, p. 332).

Scrutinizing what is affirmed by Silva (2006), it seems to us that it is simple to understand how this relation between tutor/TIC/Students, however, this is an issue that is far of being attained on EAD. It happens by the fact that

we understand distance learning only as a teaching modality, without worrying about a change on the traditional paradigms, to a more dynamic and innovative perception. Regarding that Hack (2010, p. 19) states that:

[...] the docents will need to learn how to produce their own pedagogical materials using the TIC. Although, the educational communication to the construction of knowledge in a dialogical form on the EAD is not an easy task, since a meaningful number of docents, who do not have the necessary skills. The communicational process on the on-site teaching is so grounded on expository lessons that many docents may assess the use of the TIC with such a incredulity.

According to the Brazilian tradition, we can verify the rooted traditional conception of education still present in our system, the struggle for the continuing training of the professionals of the education has been carried on for decades, however, a few changes have happened on the practice. If on the on-site courses the practice of this pedagogical conception confirms by itself a failure, on the distance learning it totally unacceptable.

We tend to imagine that a good professional of the on-site education will be a good at EAD, however, this trend must be banned, once a good tutor does not restrict him/herself to a simple mastering the content, as we have seen so far, the act of tutoring needs to be extended to a broader context.

[...] “ The experience shows us that too many teachers, excellent on on-site teaching, are not good tutor on the distance learning, since both modalities present distinct features. So that, the teacher while acting on EAD needs to develop some specific competences and attributions or complementary to those necessary to the on-site teaching.” [...]. (LOCH, 2010, p. 15)

In order to be able to get to a level of excellence on the tutoring, we need to understand the constant relation between tutor/TIC/student, because without the joint of these, it is impossible to tutor. Utilizing the technologies of information and communication without a planning, without a pedagogical intentionality, is not featured as tutoring act. Even though, referencing to the teaching on the basic education, we can take the thought of Teruya (2006, p. 82), about the use of the technologies of information and communication by the professionals of education:

The technologies of information and communication have got the power seducing and enchanting, that is why it is impossible to ignore such sources on the educational process at school. However, it is necessary demystify the pedagogical speeches, which consider these technologies enough to the training and capacitation of teachers. (TERUYA, 2006, p. 82).

3 METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

To this study we opted by the field descriptive research of that, according to Lakatos and Marconi (2003), the descriptive research approaches four main aspects: description, register, analyses and interpretation of current phenomena, in which it aims the functioning on the current investigation. Thus, the collection of data offers subsidies to the investigation, Lakatos and Marconi (2003) contribute with this affirmation reporting that “ having by aim the systematic collect of data about the populations, programs, or samples of populations and programs. They use of several techniques like interviews, questionnaires, forms etc. and employ procedures of samples.” (LAKATOS e MARCONI, 2003, p.187).

To the use of this research-action, it means, of field, were used as instruments to the collection of data: open questions, that will have as base to the inventory of studies and information regarding to how the professional tutor of EAD see themselves, and what is the relation that they make of themselves as tutors in their use of the technology of information and communication (TIC) and the medialization of the knowledge.

Once it does not refer to the bibliographic research, we appeal to authors and books that treat the subject herein, providing so, updated and relevant data to the research, according to what states Lakatos and Marconi:

The bibliographic research is a general overview over the main work carried out, coated of importance, for being able of supply updated and relevant data concerning to the subject. The study of appropriate literature may help the planning of work, avoid publication and some mistakes, and represent an indispensable source of information, being able to guide the inquiries.(LAKATOS e MARCONI, 2003, p.158)

The research was developed at teaching entities, which offer courses on the modality of distance education at the private schools, in the county of Maringá – PR, being applied a survey to the tutors on duty. The survey was designed with twenty questions regarding the subject, which obtained a collection of data of the participants with 135 answered questions, in order to attain the subsidies necessary to meet the objectives established at this study, to the discussion of the results and mainly the final considerations.

4 RESULT PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

At this section, will be presented and analyzed the data obtained after the statistic treatment of the three variables approached in the research, in which it is approached, it follows into the format of topics, structured in 3 (three) axes of analyses contemplating the discussion between: technology training and didactic material.

4.1 Active tutors training in EAD and their professional Identity

The subject of the survey to this topic is related to the importance of training of tutors at courses of specialization in EAD, as well as the understanding in differentiate the role of the teacher and the tutor at his pedagogical practices on the EAD modality. When asked whether they had any specialization on the EAD teaching, about 90% of the total of participants informed not owning. Yet, when asked about the difference between the act as a teacher and as a tutor, the answers were diverse, in which 40% affirmed there is no difference on the practices described, 60% reported that the teacher designs the content, while the tutor makes the mediation of such content. At any moment the participants mentioned that the tutor has own features to act in EAD, it was also not reported that the tutor needs to acquire teaching techniques, which aim to foster the self-learning of the students, the creativity, the autonomy and the own learning style. Concerning to the tutor's training Hack (2010, p.19) reinforces: "the continuous training becomes necessary to the one who intends to assume a communication posture more dialogical, after all, manage communicative process to teaching and learning in EAD will demand skills of the docents". Therefore, this topic shows itself to achieve the first objective proposed on the research, identifying that the specific professional training of the modality is primordial to act on the tutors position, it is still necessary to emphasize that not only the initial training, but the continuing training comes to contribute with the innovations that permeate the EAD contributing to the meaningful learning, seemed

4.2 The TIC and their contribution to the teaching and learning process in EAD

We pointed herein at this topic information related to technology of information and communication (TIC), directed to the modality of EAD, carrying out a broad approach on the methodological resources. The first question to be answered by the investigator seemed to be obvious, but after this research we could realize that many active tutors on the institutions researched did not know how to answer. The question approaches the matter about what the tutors understood by TIC, which 30% did not answer the question, 20% answered not to know the meaning of TIC, and 50% replied successfully. Another subject related to technology of information and communication that we used in our survey was based on what instruments communicational the tutors used and how they used it. Concerning the learning guide, the role of the tutor, is made by means of promoting the individual task or supporting the group works, thus the teaching shows itself as meaningful and is still values the social development, Moran (1998, p. 185) states that “within this perspective the personal and community, we will find on the technology permanent and creative partner to expand our countless possibilities of information, of communication and of action”. It was registered with unanimity the use of slides and data show (on the on-site moments), emails, social media, groups of messages and the virtual learning environment, although, they have not presented technical term proper of the EAD language as: synchronous and asynchronous communication, unidirectional or multidirectional. At this topic it is presented in a way of understanding how the teachers involved on the research conceptualize TIC on the distance learning.

4.3 Educational Resources

The proposal of this topic was based on questioning the understanding of the tutor about educational material, as well as the methodological resources utilized to the modality of distance learning. The first questioning on this theme was about the difference between educational material elaborated to on-site teaching and to the EAD courses. It has been reported several answers, though, 60% of the interviewees described that the materials designed to EAD must carry a clear language. It has not been reported the construction of a dialogic material, formulator of problems, provocative of self-learning situations and structured in chapters or units of study. In some of them it was pointed as

notes of the clients or target audience to who the material has been designed. Another fact that catches the attention at this topic, is that at no time on the matter presented it was informed to the participants that the educational material must be presented on a printed format or on any other format, soon there has not been any register point to the use of audiovisual materials, multimedia or online. The new docent practices and the technologies of information and communication (TIC) are the challenges to be faced by teachers, consequently by tutors, according to Moran (2001, p. 1) “we are before many changes, at a phase in which we have to re-think the education as a whole”. He still states “(...) that demands double attention to overcome conventional models, that are used to be use as parameter to assess new situations”. By mean of these aspects raised herein and grounded at this research we can perceive that the majority of tutors at the teaching institutions that offer the modality of distance learning, it does not have inter-relation to the tutoring act and the use of the technologies of information and communication, as something disassociated, almost always when they are asked about the issue of medialization of knowledge to its educational communication, it is perceived a complete unawareness about it. Regarding the assessment at this modality of teaching it has not been mentioned that it must be different, once the tutor must assess the participation of students through chats, forum of discussion on the virtual learning environment, and the feedback of students is very important. Finally, this topic comes to comprehend how the investigated professionals acting at EAD recognize the methodologies and resources of the teaching process and the learning at this modality.

5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

It has been concluded, therefore, that the actions developed at the tutoring on the EAD courses are not only highlighted by the importance of theoretical discussion about the integration of technologies of information and communication on the process of qualification of the professionals on the education area, as well as it is made of a set of actions that promote the qualification of the group of teaching in EAD, aiming future projects of education permanent, by mean of distance learning, besides giving start to a

large range of innovations. However, it is possible to note some difficulties that need to be overcome, being fundamental to the discussions with high spheres and integrates all the educational system, bearing in mind assure the legitimacy and continuity of actions of the courses in EAD; think strategies of amplification of docent training to act on the modality EAD, involving new institutional actors; and resize technological resources. This is a way to the modernity and surpassing, and in order to allow it happens it is necessary to believe and work to build it together, the history of distance learning, turning it into possibilities credited academically and politically, in face of expansion of the possibilities of access of population to the scientific knowledge and to the citizenship practice.

Finally, researching deepens the subject that is very important, to the reflection, as well as to the inquiry existent nowadays, regarding to tutoring in EAD, likewise to the scientific community, that still seeks setting a pattern of tutorial acting.

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