

DIMENSIONS OF INSTITUTIONAL EVALUATION: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DISTANCE EDUCATION AND LEARNING WITH FOCUS OF INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN

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RESUME

This research shows the importance of evaluation on instructional design systems to the development of courses on distance education, because they students, faculty, tutors, and staff with the intention of obtaining a good development and a process with better quality. Through the development of this study, it was possible to observe that exists, in this relationship, an important emphasis, that is the application of instructional design in what regards the planning and organization of the courseware for the development of teaching and learning with quality, meeting the rules and standards, according to the Quality Benchmarks for a course on Distance Education modality.

Key words: Distance Learning; Teaching-Learning; Instructional Design.
Introduction

The increasing development in Distance Learning is a reality in our country and it is primarily related to the need of expanding the opportunities of access to knowledge for full personal development, applying the democracy and the positioning in the job market of a great portion of the population, that for many reasons are not boasting those Education benefits provided on art.2º, LDB9394/96 (Basic Guidelines for National Education Law). Recently, in order to fulfill the demand the demand, the Decree nº5622/05, regulates and defines Distance Learning as follows

Distance Learning is characterized as the educational method in which the didactic-pedagogical mediation in the teaching and learning process occur by the use of information and communication technology and means, having students and teachers promoting educative activities in diverse places and times. (Art. 1º, Cap.I, Decr.5662, 2005).

In this way it is understood that the development of Distance Learning courses should maintain focus on the students and the teaching-learning processes that make use of information and communication technologies to guarantee a quality schooling, as the Quality Benchmarks from ECM (Education and Culture Ministry) also suggest

Thus, although the distance method possesses its own characteristics, language and format, requiring administration, design, logic, follow up, evaluation, compatible technical, technological, infrastructure and pedagogical resources, these characteristics are only relevant in the context of a political and educational discussion of the educational activity. (*RQEAD*, 2007 p. 7).

The fact that there exists a basic regulation for the approach, does not characterize, however, a single method of application or the simple transposition of the regular method to Distance Learning. The growing request for distance higher education courses as the evolution of this modality, require from the educational institutions and the public agencies, procedures to guarantee and assess the quality of the education professionals and all the players involved in this process, in order to achieve new knowledge with the contribution of technological systems and tools as its allies, the CIT (Communication and Information Technology) leveraging the partnership between human being and machine on a global interaction, transposing barriers and distance supporting the development of strategies that can guarantee improvements on the schooling and professional education, providing better education in the country.

Along these lines, it becomes relevant to analyze the relationship between the dimensions of institutional evaluation, Distance Learning and the learning itself, show in this context the importance of the instructional design in its whole process that aims to achieve its pedagogical goal creating interesting, attractive and effective courseware focusing on the student's learning process. Marchelli (2007, *apud* BRASIL, 2005, p.78) states that

[...] the combined activities of internal and external evaluation are important discussions and consideration processes regarding major themes of educational, scientific and technological policy, as well as decision taking [...].

Hence, public agencies with its norms and laws alongside the education institutions unite and organize to develop new procedures and techniques that are able to effectively regulate activities which enrich the teaching-learning generating significative changes in the professional life of all players instated in this process. In the contemporary world the evolutive trends in communication and information technologies are undeniable, and have promoted renovation and inspired innovation on the educational models of Distance Learning courses, presenting creative and effective methods that privilege the student on building knowledge in a independent, thoughtful, critiqued, dialogic way being cultivated through interdisciplinary and contextualized political pedagogical projects.

In order to achieve a quality teaching-learning process in Distance Learning, the steps that should be developed by the DI are very important, because they consist in knowing which method, system and conditions a student can achieve during his schooling. In this way, the DI should analyze, plan, develop, carry out and evaluate every step in this process, since those actions will contribute in a effective way in the teaching-learning process of the apprentice, as well as meet the dimensions of institutional evaluation according to the MEC, that will involve various players, aiming the ditacticpedagogical organization, the faculty, the tutors, the administrative technicians and the students apart from the physical facilities e the goals of student performance evaluation and the course as a whole too.

So this research collaborates with important points for discussion on the Distance Learning education scenario, in which the student becomes responsible for his own learning and shares his knowledge, building new

wisdom with his partners (students and faculty), the DI being a relevant element in this process.

1 - Distance Learning contextualization on the educational scenario.

Distance learning is present in the historical context of humankind and relates to political, economic and sociocultural aspects, that allied to human development and its search for possession of new knowledge and use of new technologies, contribute to the transformation of society and education throughout time.

Humankind social development is linked to the technologies developed and employed during each era. Different eras of humankind history are historically known for the corresponding historical advances made. [...] The scientific knowledge of humanity broadens the knowledge about resources and creates increasingly sophisticated permanent "new technologies." Moore and Kearsley (2007, p.20)

According to Filatro (2010, p. 73), "historically the instructional design has walked side by side with the development of educational theories, forging teaching practices aligned with the scientific discoveries on human learning." The author also describes the application of instructional design on the conceiving and implementing pedagogical solutions in different levels: **micro** (study units, pedagogical activities); **meso** (program structure, courses or subjects) and **macro** (A institution's Pedagogical Political Project according to the national guidelines); the last being better addressed, because within it is found the role of instructional design as a strategical and flexible planning of a Distance Learning course.

In Romiszowski (2004)

Instructional design evaluation refers to "critical and systematic reflection about the information obtained during the didactical planning process, and utilizing this information to improve the quality of the learning materials/environment formulated." (Romiszowski, H. 2000, 2001).

The evaluation, on instructional design, contributes to the quality of the courseware and learning environment. Making that possible through: obtaining information, using information; giving the appropriate treatment to the reality; and quality assurance. Thus, in order to actually make those educational assumptions possible, the application of an instructional design system requires

an integrated view of the fundamentals of the various fields that integrate it: humanities, communication and information, and management, in order to meet the Pedagogical Political Project of quality in Distance Learning courses.

Learning dimensions in Distance Education

Distance Learning, is presenting itself in an increasing dynamic, since there are no barriers for this teaching-learning method, although it requires knowledge of the virtual world and use of technological language and tools that promote integration and knowledge building with activities that generate a reflection and self-government on the student's learning process.

According to Nogueira and Moraes (2011) the virtual learning environments, for example, allow the monitoring of production and attendance of each student. However, following the authors' ideas, the evaluation of learning in distance education can use two perspectives: students' individual production, which gives more value to the final result; and evaluation based on the interactions. Therefore, "product (content) and process (interactions) are understood as two sides of the same cognitive reality." (Bassani and Behar, 2009, p.101)

Thereby, evaluating the dimensions of learning in the distance education modality shows that the content should be attractive, dynamic, with clear and objective language, favoring the students' learning. Applying instructional design as one of the main educational and technological resources, we can achieve an effective collaboration and interaction process, providing a good evaluation in the pedagogical process as a whole, because this instrument will present which decisions can be made on the students' teaching-learning process in order to achieve better results.

Learning Assessment in Distance Education

Diagnostic or initial evaluation	Allows for checking what the student already knows about the content being taught on a subject. A previous diagnose is made on the student, helping us to get to know the baggage brought by him. It can be made with the help of a platform on forum or a quiz or even with the help of a on-site tutor in an activity developed by the teacher.
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Continuous or formative evaluation	Goes along the learning process. It is done during the process and aims at checking the advances in learning. Can be done through a distance evaluation (online) or on-site, through a test or text production, for example. The important part is that, at this moment, the teacher informs the student the result of the evaluation.
Final, summative or cumulative evaluation	Happens at the end of the process and is used to show the result, make a summing balance of one or various sequences of formation work. Its great characteristic is that of classifying the evaluated having the perspective of conclusion in evidence. The results of this evaluation should serve to classify, situate, inform and certify.

Source: Adapted by the author from the book "The Evaluation of Distance Education" of Bragança (2014).

So that everything occurs in an integrated way, the technological means should meet all the players' the expectations effectively. Therefore, it should have a good platform with the virtual learning environment. The courseware should be attractive, providing the student with an effective comprehension through the language being used. Throughout this process the importance of the instructional design in educational projects is realized, since from the activities developed, with good planning, methodologies, techniques, learning materials, etc., a quality, well evaluated distance education will be assured, meeting every expectation.

In this way, the role of the evaluator on the teaching-learning process becomes relevant, because there should be a concern about the planning of the whole process: diagnosing its target public, analyzing student participation and development of new knowledge, always promoting interaction. This happens because it will act as a guide to verify the need of planning new actions, on which the application of instructional design will contribute to the student's teaching-learning process as well as to his self-government. Ergo, it becomes fundamental to present how necessary the Institutional Evaluation is in the Distance Education modality, having as a goal the diffusion of the quality of the institutions in our country.

Bragança (2014) states that, the conduction of Institutional Evaluation should facilitate the process of discussion and analysis between the participants, disclosing the evaluation culture, supplying methodological elements and adding value to the various activities in the course and the

institution as a whole. In order to identify, in the evaluation, the fundamental aspects for the quality of a higher education course, the institution should design a continuous evaluation process of their didactic-pedagogical organization, faculty, tutors, staff, and student bodies, besides their physical facilities and goal of student performance evaluation as well as the development of the course in its totality.

The educational institutions should apply the instructional design in every step of their project and recognize the Institutional Evaluation as an ally that will help in every constructive aspect in the improvement of quality of the services provided to society, the pedagogical process, the physical infrastructure and courseware, preventing. Its image to wear out, adding constant incentives on improving its procedures and management system, it is all a part of the strategies to maintain quality on knowledge building.

Application of the Instructional Design on courseware formulation

The Pedagogical Design or Instructional Design is an educational research area that studies ways to help improve people's learning. The area involves the methodology for the syllabus planning, capacitation programs and courseware on different medias and learning contexts. The intention of this research area is the realization of a systematic planning, based on scientific principles of communication, learning and teaching that improve the formulated courseware. The Instructional Design is leaded by a professional known as the Instructional Designer (Filatro; Piconez, 2004, *apud* SILVA, [et al]2014).

In the Distance Learning context, the Instructional Designer is dedicated to planning, preparing, projecting, producing and publishing texts, images, graphs, sound and movement, simulations, activities and tasks anchored on virtual support. This professional, usually is an expert on Distance Learning, and is responsible do the pedagogical design of the courseware, being part of a multidisciplinary team (MALLMAN; CATAPAN, 2007 *apud* SILVA [et al], 2014).

The elaboration of the courseware should care for a great number of variables, because the instructional designer deals with complex probabilistic system, in which not everything is predictable. The instructional designers need to pay attention to the reality of the context, analyze it and evaluate it. There is a demand for competence in learning and teaching principles emphasis, and for

creativity on the use of the new technologies potential and this is a social responsibility to quality learning and teaching, in which evaluation is essential. (Romiszowski, 2004)

Evaluation on Instructional Design

According to Silva (2014) to validate the Instructional Design, the evaluation phase begins and the process should occur in two levels: the system and the learning. To carry it out, it is needed to define the criteria, in other words, should set what and how it is going to be evaluated: tests; quizzes; polls; research and observations compose a portfolio of tools that should be properly made so the evaluation goals are achieved. Inquiries that characterize the evaluation are: how the design will be evaluated? Who will do this evaluation? What were the problems detected during implementation? Which mistakes can be corrected? In which way the instructional design could be perfected? Which actions could be taken to enable the continuity of the project or new editions?

During all the evaluation process, we can realize the importance of the instructional design on the educational project, which will assure the quality of the students' learning with the adequate courseware for building and development of new knowledge. Romiszowski (2004) states that, the evaluation on the instructional design has many favorable points in short and long term, such as: short term evaluation: helps identify the problems/deficits, creating the opportunity for relevant reviews, on the elaboration process itself; and long term: the assessment helps on the data supply to verify the quality of the educational experience as a whole, even facilitating decisions of institutional order. Another contribution is the solidification of the body of knowledge in planning as well as in the educational evaluation, fields that yet resent the shortage of knowledge that guide towards good pedagogical practice with the use of interactive technologies. Research and evaluation on the impact of new technologies on learning and teaching are essential and should be encouraged as opportunities of educational improvement.

With many relevant points of the institutional and learning's evaluation dimensions, the focus is the student, who is directly involved in the whole process, because it is from this player that the application of pedagogical

methods and techniques, systems and infrastructures, will develop and build collaboratively new knowledge on a formative perspective of the student.

Final considerations

Throughout time Distance Learning has become a teaching modality that breaks classroom barriers into the virtual world. In this modality some relevant aspects are presented to identify the new pedagogical methodologies adopted, as well as the information and communication systems that earn increasing space in the educational context.

The relationship between the dimensions of the institutional evaluation, the distance learning and learning, supports the new profiles of students and teachers in this teaching and learning dynamic, where the dimensions of learning require a content that has a clear and objective language, being interesting to the student, favoring his apprenticeship. Therefore, the application of Instructional Design is fundamental on this pedagogical process, because it is one of the major resources to achieve success on the construction and interaction of new knowledge. In this context, the evaluations classified as diagnostics, continuous and accumulative, show their relevance regarding the need to have a good platform to help the student on the circular movement of communication and interaction in his activities.

Thinking about the dimension of the institutional evaluation and looking forward to understand how much it can directly affect educational projects, about quality of courseware, and the student's teaching-learning process, requires from the Higher Education Institutions a constant search for improvement on all their systems and methodologies.

We can then understand that, in order to obtain success, the educational institution, must spare no effort regarding planning, organization, infrastructure investments, coordination and application of instructional design. Those are relevant and crucial aspects for the success in the attributions of all the players involved, guaranteeing a good grade when evaluated, meeting the quality standards in its pedagogical methods and processes that will privilege their major focus, the student.

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