

TUTORING IN DISTANCE EDUCATION: INDICATORS FOR PUBLIC POLICY¹

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ABSTRACT

The dialogue around the curriculum content is responsibility of teachers, tutors and students in distance learning courses. We aim to problematize definitions and assignments of the tutor over the past 5 years. As a methodological strategy, we analyzed the scientific publications in the category of international conferences sponsored by the Brazilian Association for Distance Education (ABED) in the period 2006 to 2010. As a result, from the sample of 51 texts, we present a systematic overview of the concepts and tasks of tutoring in distance education in Brazil. Conclusively, we signaled that the assignments of tutors in the distance must be established with greater operational consistency in public policy guidelines and notices while inducing quality curriculum, teaching and management of accredited institutions to offer courses in the distance.

Keywords: tutoring, monitoring, fluency, dialogical practice

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Introduction

Models of Distance Education has been evolving with respect to educational resources, teacher and student performance in relation to the need to select information and transform them into knowledge. The technological improvement as a result of social, cultural and scientific society generates new pedagogical and curriculum models because the concrete possibilities of interaction and interactivity. This fact "also encouraged the production and academic research in the area, and there was an investment in the conceptualization and characterization of Distance Education" [1].

Investment institutions necessary for the success of distance education is to create a cohesive system of tutoring. The tutor, a professional who shares responsibility with the teacher of practice dialogic, promotes interaction to achieve the objectives of education and, especially, guides the development of capacity for analysis and troubleshooting. The tutor directly interfere in the teaching-learning spaces occupied in teaching courses in the distance modality. This component of the educational system needs to be studied further in terms of the proposed theme for the 17th International Congress of the ABED: "The Great Conversation: Different Ways to Learn, varied content and different technologies - Interaction with Diversity".

In Brazil, the role of the tutor is not a profession as being assigned to each Higher Education Institution also determining their training and functions. The lack of a uniform terminology on the concept of tutoring and the various conceptions about teaching and teaching practices associated with it means proposing a profile within that mode. In this context concerns arise such as: what is a tutor in distance education? What is the tutor function in this mode? As the tutor develops mediation in virtual environments? What do tutors face (pole) and distance tutors (virtual, of disciplines)? The tutor must act for the course, by number of students or subjects? As the tutor participates in curriculum planning?

Given the important role of the tutor in distance learning environment, this study is justified as analysis of scientific discussions and generating an understanding of their real consequences in shaping public policy education. The Congress, promoted by ABED nurture international reports of experiences and theoretical proposition between professionals from different Higher Education Institutions that are engaged in promoting quality in distance education. Selected articles focusing on tutoring enable reflection on the current political landscape of distance education in Brazil, as well as on educational

practices and institutional management carried out both in the public and private sectors.

Tutoring

The conceptualization and definition of tutoring assignments is controversial, which is quite evident in the debates in Congress as the very ABED. Some authors argue that a tutor is not in the existing classification and labor relations is another action plus numerous that devalue the teaching profession. Other theorists argue that the notion of tutoring comes up explaining that such professionals do not have autonomy in planning lessons and teaching strategies [2]. Other authors point out [3] that "the word" tutor "has been used indiscriminately often used in a natural way, without reframing".

The reflection and discussion about the duties of the tutor are essential to a better understanding and appreciation of this work in distance education. "The formation of professional identity is a delicate matter. (...) Identity is not a given, is not a property is not a product. Identity is a place of struggle and conflict, is a construction space of ways of being and the profession"[4].

For us, the tutoring system is much more than a structural aspect and student support. Assumes technological fluency, guidance, educational support, monitoring and evaluation. Tutoring is essential for the mediation of the teaching-learning process occurs in a dialogical practice, interactivity, interaction, collaboration (coauthored and written) and autonomy.

The principle of interaction requires the recognition of the potential of each in addressing the challenges. It involves the organization and dialogue around the issues and shared reflection around the solutions enabling knowledge can be constructed and reconstructed in a proactive action of the students.

The tutor should be aware of the level of interactivity by monitoring which students are interacting and lead to a critical reflective breaking the linearity of the process of individual study. The guidelines focus on aspects of knowledge should help the student in gaining autonomy and building skills as investigative actions that embody learning and mental development.

By tracking students, questioning the Study Activities (SA) developed and improved diagnostics for organizing educational activities, the tutor is able to mobilize collaborative behavior. All this improves the instances of teaching, learning and developing autonomy required to investigate this type of education.

The tutor has the task of observing and recording student performance in SA using

educational technology tools available in their own virtual environments of teaching and learning such as Moodle. The observation and recording referred to as monitoring should be based on goals and core concepts of the course making it essential for students to formulate questions, articulate interpretations and reflections build prioritized consistent with concepts in educational resources [5]. This clarity of the importance of SA in the process of cognitive and social development is paramount to the success of the practice dialogical of tutors generating development.

Moodle provides tools and management activities, especially communication and collaborative production, allowing the electronic monitoring of both the SA, as interaction and interactivity of each student in the environment. "By combining conceptual analysis of students' responses with information such as dates, times, access to bibliography, resources, there is the possibility of establishing parameters for monitoring teaching to qualify for student learning" [5].

The student is prompted by the tutor to explore, criticize, interacting with the group, develop skills and work skills, be able to transform their reality, their world and society around them.

Development of methodological analysis

The analysis of scientific journals of the ABED was conducted through a literature review in order to highlight the concepts and functions of tutoring, delimited in the period between 2006 and 2010.

The phases of the review were: 1) selected 51 publications which brought the word in the title or tutor, separated by years; 2) among these publications conducted a second review to subtract items that, although included in the term title not focused on the theme. This was only possible after reading the full texts; 3) analyze the results by grouping them by category (concept, attributes, justification, authors, focus, theoretical approach/ methodology, institution, most cited authors, keywords and relevant observations); 4) perform reflection on what has been discussed about tutoring; 5) present the results of a qualitative also considering quantitative data to analyze the results.

Within a quantitative approach and considering the categories established by us, we find the number of publications each year that referred to the tutoring and institutional origin of the authors. With regard to the qualitative approach we analyzed data related to the different views presented in the publications, contexts, settings, tasks, keywords and differing perceptions about tutoring.

Analysis of Selected Articles

Due to the advancement of distance education in terms of expansion several approaches related to teaching-learning process have been discussed. The study sample consists of 51 papers that were selected from the keywords and titles. After reading the texts located showed that 10, although with the terms tutor and/or tutoring in the keywords or title, had no relevant information according to categories defined by us. Thus, 41 articles remained for analysis.

We present data organized in a table. In this text, we point out only the information relating to four categories (concept, attributions, institution, keywords) as a criterion to define clipping the focus of analysis and conclusion. In quantitative terms, the number of institutions is higher than the number of articles examined with a view that many texts were produced in inter-institutional coauthorship.

One aspect considered in the observed data was related to the growing number of annual publications that referred to the issue based on 41 articles: 3 publications in 2006 were increased to 13 in 2010, as specified in the first row of the table 1:

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Number of articles per year	3	4	8	13	13
Institutions	IEPG, UCS, FUNADESP, UCB, UNISUAM	UNIVALI, UGF, FEPAR/ UNOPAR, UFAL, FUNADESP	PUC/RJ, UCP UnB, USP, Senac/CE, UFSC, PUC/PR, UNITINS, Uniararas	UFU, UFC PUC/PR, UFAL, UEMA, UNIFEI, UCB, CIEE UEPB, UCG Uniararas, SEBRAE, IEA	UNOPAR, UMESP, UFJF, UTFPR/PR, UFPB, UFScar UERJ, FMU, IFSUL – Pelotas, UFMS, UFAL, UFMS, UFSC, IESB /SENAI-DF
Concepts	- Educator; - Teacher; - Tutoring as an academic orientation;	teacher-tutor; - Crucial to the success or the sinking of open learning - Set of activities, techniques, pedagogical and administrative addressed to students and school staff; - Aututor (neologism that combines the	Educational agent; - Teacher-adviser; - Tutors / teachers; - Supervisor of student learning;	mediation-directly responsible for teaching and learning; - Teacher-tutor; - A person who exercises custody, that supports, protects, defends, is the guardian; - Guide, protector and defender anyone in any	- Professionals working in the mediation of pedagogical actions; - Essential to the professional teaching-learning process in distance education; - Tutor is one who is in charge of safeguarding, protecting and defending someone; - Support system teaching in terms of monitoring; - Method;

		figures of the author and tutor)		respect; - Professional participatory works with the student and engages in the teaching process;	- Tutor is one who is in charge of protecting, protect and defend someone; - Teacher;
Assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interact through communication tools; Interact in-person meetings and / or virtual; - Encourage and guide the development of the curriculum; - Participate in lists and discussion forums; - Point out directions; - Monitor and evaluate learning; - skilled browse and search the network; -known search engines and research; - Send and receive email; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use various techniques of investigation; - Access the virtual room daily; -ownership of new techniques of preparation course material produced by the print and electronic media; - Help on the doubts; - Have research skills; - To identify students' difficulties and suggest new readings or activities; organize activities-group study; -who did not send verification activities; - Tween doubts and questions of students with teacher; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - participar dos encontros presenciais; - interagir com os alunos durante o período de atividades a distância; - identificar alunos com baixa interatividade; - intermediar, quando necessário, os problemas entre os estudantes e Instituição; - participar dos momentos de integração para formação continuada; - estabelecer relações empáticas e estimular a participação do grupo; - manter discussão; - incentivo à interação dos participantes com qualidade e não com quantidade; - contribuir na elaboração do planejamento do curso; - participar de atividades de formação; - informar o aluno sobre os diversos aspectos compõem o sistema de EaD; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Directing learning activities using technology; - Assist the teacher in the classroom; - Make a frequency list of the students; - To organize the classroom; - Master the content; - Analyze the learning of their group; - Formulate messages; - To promote activities and encourage reflection; - Organize the classes; - Plan and control the activities of the forum, chat; - Answer questions by email, phone; - Collect information on students; learn about the project, teaching the course and teaching-learning material of the disciplines; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Monitor study activities electronically. - Encourage the students to have knowledge of course design; - Have a clear conception of learning; - Master and content; - Facilitate the construction of knowledge by the student; - Empathic relationships with the student; - Search the philosophies as a basis for his act of educating; - Form a strong instance of customization; - Promoting interactivity and building emotional bonds; - Keep the spirit and virtual presence of students in the course; -monitoring of individual tasks; -Always remember learning objectives to be achieved and the calendar be fulfilled; -encourage students to analyze issues critically; - Create an environment of trust and solidarity; -mediate conflicts and resolve problems;
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interaction; -Tutoring (2); 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Distance Education (4); - Tutoring (5); 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Skills; -Tutor (2); -Distance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Planning-Distance Education; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Tutoring (7); - Study-Activities; - E-Monitoring;

Keywords	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Virtual Learning Environment; - Distance education; - Internet; - Teaching and learning; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Education; - Open Learning; - Tutor room; - Telepresencial Disciplines; - Mathematics; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learning (6); Tutor-central; - Quality tutorial; - Assessment of quality tutorial; - Interactivity; - Web-tutoring; - Virtual Learning Environment; - Mentoring; - Teacher Training; - Distance learning online; - The teaching / learning; Mediation-knowledge and tutorial work; - Continuing education; Profile-learning; - Attitudes of the tutor; - Interaction; - Interactivity; - Learning; - Tutoring online; - Evaluation; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Concept Maps; - Training of Tutors; Metacognition-; Assessment (2); - Educational material; -Tutoring (5); Web-Radio; -Distance (5); - Teacher training; Tutor-face; Distance Education-Online; Tools-Interaction; -Role of the tutor; Assessment of quality tutorial; -Professor; -Education; - Interaction; - Tutor-student interaction; - Virtual tutoring; -Learning; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Virtual environments, teaching and learning; -Distance (9); -Interactivity (2); -Discussion forums; Virtual Tutoring-; - Working conditions for teachers; Formative Assessment of Learning; -Assessment of Skills; -Mediation and students; Activity-effective and meaningful; Virtual-Practices; Teacher-Role; -Role of the tutor; -Graduate courses online; -Tchnology; -Tutor; -Multiple Intelligences; -Teaching and learning; -Autonomy; -Curriculum;
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Table 1: The tutoring concept in international scientific congresses ABED - 2006 to 2010

There was an exponential growth in the number of publications showing the participation of public universities, including the federal institutes. The publications of 2006 were 100% coming from private institutions. In 2007, was the publication of one article Higher Education Institution public accounting for 25%. In 2008 this percentage was kept, rising to 69% in 2009 and 77% in 2010.

We estimate that this increased the number of papers and the expansion of conceptual discussion about tutoring at the annual congresses of the ABED is due to the creation of the UAB in 2006. The structuring of a national system of higher distance education and systematic actions, programs, projects, activities at the federal, state and city went through a period of adjustment and work for further sharing of experiences. Still, the texts analyzed show that each institution develops both practical training and acting different. Although the texts indicate progress in terms of increasing the number of scientific productions on the subject and conceptual basis, we found that there are no parameters on the consolidated assignments.

The "Benchmarks for Quality Distance Higher Education" of the Ministry of Education to establish competencies for distance tutors has been a fundamental support for specifying at least three dimensions to training: a) domain-specific content, b) in media communication and c) in fundamentals of distance learning and tutoring model. According to these benchmarks, the distance tutors worked in the institution mediating the learning process while the face tutors assumes a tutoring service at the poles. Knowledge of the education program of the course, course material and content of specific content is crucial to assist students in developing their individual and group activities, fostering the habit of study, clarifying questions about specific content as well as the use available technologies. In terms of assignments, references clearly establish the involvement of tutors in mandatory personal moments, such as evaluations, practical classes and supervised internships in laboratories [6].

Resolution FNDE no. 26, June 5, 2009, together with the regulatory actions of UAB, refers to the responsibility of tutors with no distinction between the categories present tutor and distance tutor. This situation leads to confusion, since the legal documentation and reference is not supported by a conceptual uniformity. Result is that each institution adopt a working model of selection and training. As part of management is necessary to clearly define the limits and the different functions that are manifested in the actions of various professionals. In addition to tutors, similar situations are extended to other professionals who make spaces in educational institutions especially in multidisciplinary teams, for example, designers of mediation [7].

With regard to the category "Concepts" we problematized: the definition of "teacher-tutor" is covered in papers around period? The term "teacher-tutor" was used more frequently in scientific work of the first three years. It seems that in these works the focus is more localized in the contract and labor issues than in the concrete analysis of the implications that the tutor has the system set up primarily between educational content, teacher and students in classroom mode.

Study and make proposals about tutoring from the perspective of concrete educational system implies understanding and advance solutions in terms of technological fluency, electronic surveillance, dialogical practice, solving problems, collaboration, interaction, interactivity and curriculum. Therefore, we clarify that this advance in terms of assignments from tutors is directly associated with the need to clarify the basic principles of teaching performance in distance education both in the movement of production of teaching materials and the implementation of the courses.

Conclusion

The analysis of scientific production about tutoring in the last five years by building on the annals of international ABED[8] allows you to map different conceptions about the tutor's profile[9] because of institutional practices developed in various contexts. By systematizing the analysis from the categories "Concepts" and "Assignments" Could do triangulation with the results in the "Keywords". Like this, we found that while factors such as educational technologies are present in many texts, few authors have proposed conceptualization and definition of responsibilities of the tutors with the technological fluency[11] as a basic principle.

Studies aimed at tutoring are increasing as evidenced by the data presented, but not enough to identify the different views as the number of accredited institutions, approved courses and enrolled students is constantly growing.

For us, the central responsibility of the tutor in distance education is to promote dialogue, [12] around the curricula according to the planning of educational resources and study activities proposed by the subject teacher. Thus, the tutor needs to develop technological fluency to implement electronic monitoring around the interactivity and interaction, collaboration (coauthored and written) essential teaching-learning process in the distance. The responsibilities of tutors, with a focus on technological fluency in the distance, need to be established with greater operational consistency in public policy and public notices as they are guidelines inducing quality curriculum and pedagogical management of accredited institutions to offer courses in the form distance. The variety of concepts, functions and keywords that systematized bibliographical study that found that there are several models of tutoring depending on the context and the institution. Analyzing this aspect under the bias of public policies in education, we can say that although we have advanced significantly in terms of defining the distance mode, steps accreditation, course offerings and implementation of funding, lack of operational guidelines for subsidies and pedagogical practices management in Higher Education Institutions to consolidate coaching systems.

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