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Article

Autonomy construction of the individual learner in context of DL

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ABSTRACT

This article presents the results of studies which investigate how learners develop their autonomy in the context of distance education and what are the obstacles and opportunities for the construction of autonomy in this context. Questionnaires, interviews and direct observation with students from four existing distance education degree courses in the classroom polo UAB, in Ipiaú, Bahia were applied / carried out. We conclude that the process of construction of student autonomy is given from a proper mediation and when students seek to develop skills that enable them to manage their own learning. Adequate knowledge on how distance education works by students and tutors is a necessary chance for student autonomy to happen. Students' reliance on tutor's role constitutes an obstacle that must be overcome so that autonomous learning happens.

Keywords: Autonomy development. Distance education. Learner.

RESUMEN

Este artículo presenta los resultados de los estudios llevados a cabo con el fin de investigar la forma en la construcción de la autonomía del alumno en el contexto de la educación a distancia y cuáles son los obstáculos y oportunidades para la construcción de la autonomía en este contexto. Los cuestionarios se aplicaron / llevaron a cabo entrevistas

y observación directa con estudiantes de cuatro cursos existentes grado de educación a distancia en la UAB polo aula, Ciudad Ipiaú, Ba. Llegamos a la conclusión de que el proceso de construcción de la autonomía del estudiante se da de una mediación adecuada y cuando los estudiantes buscan desarrollar habilidades que permiten gestionar su propio aprendizaje. Conocimiento adecuado del funcionamiento de la educación a distancia por los alumnos y la tutoría es una oportunidad necesaria para la autonomía del estudiante suceder. La dependencia de los estudiantes a la función tutorial constituye un obstáculo que hay que superar para la realización de un aprendizaje autónomo.

Palabras clave: La construcción de la autonomía. Educación a distancia. El alumno.

RESUMO

Este artigo apresenta os resultados de estudos realizados com o objetivo de investigar como se dá a construção da autonomia do sujeito aprendiz no contexto da EaD e quais são os entraves e as possibilidades para a construção da autonomia nesse contexto. Foram aplicados/realizados questionários, entrevistas e observação direta com alunos dos quatro cursos de licenciatura EaD existentes no polo presencial UAB, da cidade de Ipiaú, BA. Concluímos que o processo de construção da autonomia discente se dá a partir de uma mediação adequada, bem como quando os

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discentes buscam desenvolver habilidades que os possibilitem gerir sua própria aprendizagem. O conhecimento adequado do funcionamento da EaD por parte dos alunos e tutoria é uma necessária possibilidade para que a autonomia discente aconteça. A dependência dos alunos à função tutorial constitui-se num entrave que precisa ser superado para a efetivação de uma aprendizagem autônoma.

Palavras-chave: Construção da autonomia. Educação a distância. Sujeito aprendiz.

INTRODUCTION

In Distance Education, space and time become transformed, acquiring a new form of learning process where the teacher - tutor-student-teaching materials and interactive media transposes the concept of space and time traditionally widespread in the classroom teaching. In distance education, it is the implementation of physical and social spaces barriers democratizing thus access to academic knowledge.

Distance Education (DE) is a type of education that includes the construction of learner autonomy in the process of teaching and learning. This modality is expanding in Brazil and inserts in its flexibility idea of context in the form of study. Students who join into Distance Education, are largely characterized by adults who, for various reasons, find it difficult to attend classroom courses.

The students of distance education are facing a contemporary educational reality, the era of cyberculture, according to Lévy (1993), which is quite different from classroom teaching, especially by enhancing the issue of autonomy of the students, i.e., do it without the constant presence of a teacher.

The emphasis on the issue of autonomy requires students often lacking skills in most of these individuals, but that can be acquired

with dedication, commitment and interest in studies. Elements such as motivation, self-confidence and participation of the learner are necessary conditions for success in studies in distance education. According to Belloni (1999) and Preti (2000), the student needs to really get involved with the course so that these elements can be achieved through the mediation of the teacher, mainly characterized by the tutorial presence action and the distance.

To Belloni (1999), in the autonomous learning process, the student is not an object or product, but an active individual who performs their own learning and abstract knowledge by applying it to new situations. The author argues that the concept of autonomous learning implies a dimension of self-direction and self-determination that is not easily carried by many students of distance education, since without the direct help of the teacher, the student needs to study alone and be responsible for his/her learning process.

The image of a passive and individualized learning to the point of becoming lonely challenges the creativity of the designers of courses and teachers in distance education, for while some students see these courses an opportunity to reconcile their daily routine to the study, others are disturbed by conflict that is created with the vision of the study as synonymous with isolation (BELLONI, 1999). Autonomy also implies the question of creativity, as the students themselves can put together study groups to avoid isolation in the study.

About autonomy in distance education, some researchers have been carried out, but still set up a challenge to know how students lead this individualized learning process. And yet, many areas where the distance education emerges, the deal with the autonomy is wrong or even does not happen. As stated Lima and Riccio:

1. CONCEPTIONS OF LEARNING AND ONLINE LEARNING

Psychological theories that support the learning process in the educational environment, in person or at a distance, they suffered heavy influences of philosophical theories developed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In this sense, rationalist epistemology, empirical and interactional directly influenced the studies of psychological theories of learning.

The influence of these philosophical bases always depended on the development of study and the time of production of knowledge. This is due to the fact that there are different ways of conceiving the educational phenomenon, since it is not conceivable a finished reality; rather, it depends on various aspects. On this, we refer to the following ideas, which refer to the educational process:

It is a human, historical and multidimensional phenomenon. In it are present both the human dimension as the technical, cognitive, emotional, political and socio-cultural. This is not mere juxtaposition of these dimensions, but rather the acceptance of its many implications and relationships. (MIZUKAMI, 1986, p.1)

In the teaching-learning concepts, we realize that there is always a prime aspect over another, according to a certain theory. The theories of knowledge underlying the psychological chains of learning, despite their diversity, have as key points in their discussions the subject of function and object, as well as their relationship.

Empiricists, for example, focus on the object, understanding that the learner suffers decisive influence from the environment; therefore knowledge is the copy of the outside world. Thus, the individual is a “blank slate”, without cognitive maturation.

In these times of online courses and promotion of distance education, it is very common to find educational approaches that speak of autonomy. However, the term autonomy is often devoid of depth, since it seems to reflect just a self-taught activities that ultimately empties the very role of the teaching that goes on to summarize the preparation of content (LIMA; RICCIO, 2008, p.49).

This study made use of methodological procedures such as direct observation, interview, questionnaire application and literature. All methodological process occurred between the years 2009 and 2010, involving the students of the four existing undergraduate courses in classroom support pole of the Open University of Brazil - UAB, City Ipiaú-BA.

This article is organized into seven sections, starting with the introduction, where we the contextualization is made, proof of the study and work methodology. Following comes the section on some conceptions of learning and online learning. Therefore, we have the section that discussed the autonomy in distance education and reflections on andragogy and heutagogia in the form of distance learning. Then “the construction of the autonomy of the learner in the context of distance education” section, focus our article brings discussion of the concept of autonomy, autonomy in educational learning in general and in distance education. In the “methodology”, we make a presentation on the world of research, Polo UAB Ipiaú, BA and on the applied methodological procedures, where the steps, techniques and research tools are described, as well as tabulation, analysis and discussion of results.

Finally, we present the final remarks from all the planning, execution and analysis of the study object.

(...) this pedagogy, legitimized by the empiricist epistemology, ideology which sets the playback frame itself; Reproduction of authoritarianism, coercion, of heteronomy, of subservience, of silence, of critical death, creativity, curiosity. (BECKER, 2001, p.18)

The ones who follow innatism, concentrate their focus to the individuals, postulate, unlike the empiricists that knowledge is predetermined by the individual and that the external environment does not influence them and, yes, the sensory inputs of the learner. This is what, according to Piaget theories, called “exercise of a right already pre-fabricated”. While empiricism emphasize on what is predetermined and exogenous, for innatism, there is a centralization in what is endogenous.

In the view of interactionism, we see a relationship between subject / object, where knowledge is understood as a complex construction that involves the interaction between student and educator. Sets up a dynamic relationship between the biological, physical and social. These different theories underlie different conceptions of teaching and learning in teaching practice, and are influenced by historical, social and cultural contexts prevailing in society.

Learning in the digital world comes as a suitable form of education to the new socio-educational demands that characterize the globalized world and contemporary society founded on dynamic information. Such kind of learning, which has its genesis a few years ago, builds its consolidation in the contemporary world which is influenced by traditional theories. Fact that often involves misconceptions about the usage and understanding of online education.

It is what Zaina talks over (2002, p.37) when he says:

(...) however, breaking the paradigms of traditional education and implement safe paths for the new educational reality has been subject of study for many researchers in educational and technological area.

In essence, the online Education is configured in the context of interactionist epistemology, but it is often understood as a reflection of the traditional reductionist theories. This is due to the fact that it means, for some, the return of technicalities education from years ago, although in some cases, due to certain practices, it configures a truth. This confusion is partly explained by the lack of equity in access to information and resources to the study and understanding of social transformation. Therefore, society feels these changes, but has difficulty adjusting, for being used with other references. A fact that complicates the reconstruction of new paradigms.

In this sense, the psychological theories of learning developed in the historical and social context on the last century are not enough to support this type of education that underlies a dynamic learning, collaborative and cooperative, in which mediation takes place in a dialogical relationship between man and technology.

Then arises, in this scenario, the need for an epistemology that explains the peculiarities of learning in virtual spaces. For this, the authors Pierre Lévy (1993) and Félix Guattari (1999) present us with the theory of cognitive ecology in order to take proper understanding of the potential and effective learning opportunities for intellectual technologies. Since ecology refers to the relationships, interactions and dialogues between living things, and cognitive, the relationship to a new knowledge, this theory proposes the study of a new dynamic between man, technology and learning environment in order to establish and understand other ways of learning and build knowledge.

The term Cognitive Ecology comes from Félix Guattari's discussion about the Mind Ecology starting out in 1995. "The cognitive ecology is an interactive space in which individual cognition are constructed and reconstructed cognitive skills" (GUATTARI, 1999 p. 38). A space where you configure the different ways of knowing, thinking and learning.

From this perspective, emerges the theories ecological psychology and cognitive ecology to support the learning process mediated by the New Technologies of Information and Communication-NTIC, which for being so dynamic and complex in some respects, it is necessary a specific theory for your further understanding. Complementing this discussion, the authors Palloff and Pratt (. 2002, p 72) state that:

(...) the use of technology opens new horizons for students to build new skills, learn about themselves, about their learning styles and how to work together in geographically distributed teams. All of these skills are transferable to the labor market and the participation in virtual learning communities.

In this aspect, the online learning should emphasize interaction, cooperation, collaboration and the construction of knowledge, ie, the student becomes autonomous individual managing and the building of his knowledge and the group to which it belongs.

Distance education has been undergoing over a process of constant transformation throughout its history. Nowadays, the need for qualification of human resources and the development of virtual technologies, particularly the Internet, have contributed to leverage this process of teaching and learning. However, the way in pursuit of excellence is complex and full of paradigms that put suspicion on the effectiveness of distance education. However, initiatives implemented in several countries, including the United States

and some cases institutions in Brazil, confirm the success of distance education online as a way to democratize knowledge.

2. AUTONOMY AND REFLECTIONS ON THE EAD ANDRAGOGY AND HEUTAGOGY

According to Chotguis (2002), distance education focused on the adult learner needs to consider the andragogical paradigm to be successful. Therefore, in this context, it is essential to consider the specifics of adult learning. The term andragogy is not widespread in the existing literature, but very important, especially with regard to distance education. Andragogy is a kind of art and science of adult learning.

For over five decades, researchers have tried to formulate a theory that considers what we already know to the unique characteristics of adult learners in order to discuss that this individual, as well as the child learns in specific conditions.

From various readings on the subject, we found that in 1950 only some educators began to organize ideas around the notion that adults learn best in informal settings, comfortable, flexible and 'non-threatening'. In this sense, we saw the importance of considering a more specific study regarding the development of adult learning in order to analyze and investigate why certain adults show greater ability to experience online training areas and not others, to the point reaching the demotivation and drawbacking the course.

As Aquino (2007, p. 10),

For many years teaching and learning were closely connected, or learning to take place there had to be teaching and vice versa. This characterized the call pedagogy, which means, for many people confused with the teaching. More recently, it was noticed that people with

increased maturity and consequent accumulation of experiences and development of a critical attitude, need to participate more actively in the learning process, which ended up creating motivation for the study of the problem of adult learning and the emergence of new approaches to learning such as andragogy and heutagogy.

Aquino (2007, p. 12) explains that heutagogy is a recent term and:

It was created to represent a learning approach in which the student is alone in the process, that is, there is the figure of the teacher or facilitator.

According to Hase and Kenyon⁵, who coined the term in 2000, heutagogy would be the ideal approach to the learning needs of the people of the twenty-first century, as would be fully aligned with the new education technologies, such as Internet, multimedia applications and virtual environments stimulating an individualized skills development.

Between 1913-1997, an educator of adults, called Malcolm Knowles explained the term 'andragogy' in more systematic way at a seminar at Boston University in the United States. In the 60s of the last century, andragogy was presented as the art and science of helping adults learn and ostensibly was the antithesis of the teaching model which literally means the art and science of teaching children.

The andragogical conception seeks to break this unilateralism, based on various assumptions postulated by Knowles (1997), which are different from the traditional teaching model. These assumptions are:

⁵ Source:: adapted from JARVIS, P. The sociology of adult and continuing education. Beckenham: Croom Helm, 1985..

The Need to Know - Adults need to know why they need to learn something before being willing to learn. When adults commit themselves to learn something on their own, they invest considerable energy investigating the benefits they will gain by learning and the negative consequences of not learn it.

Learner Self concept - Adults tend to self-concept of being responsible for their decisions, for their own lives. Once they take this concept of themselves, they develop a deep psychological need to be seen and treated by others as being able to self conduct, to choose their own path. They resent and resist situations in which they feel that others are imposing their wishes to them.

The Role of Experience of Learner - Adults engage in an educational activity with lot of experience, but different in quality from those younger ones. Because they lived longer, they accumulated more experience than the younger. But also they accumulated different experiences. This difference in quantity and quality of the experience has several consequences in adult education.

Ready to Learn - Generally, adults are ready to learn those things they need to know and empower yourself to do, in order to effectively solve the real-life situations.

Guidance for Learning - In contrast to the orientation centered in the content of the learning of children and young people (at least in school), adults are focused on life, the problems, the tasks in their learning orientation.

Motivation - While adults meet some external motivators (better employment, promotion, higher salary, etc.), the most powerful motivator are internal pressures (the desire for increased job satisfaction, self-esteem, quality of life, etc.).

These assumptions are essential points to consider in the adult autonomy building process. And for its effectiveness, mediation and affection are very important factors, if not major ones.

3. AUTONOMY CONSTRUCTION OF INDIVIDUAL LEARNER IN THE CONTEXT OF DL

In contemporary times, which is required from individuals learn the responsibility for their growth and success, the term autonomy has been widely used and often in banal way, to the point of thinking that every social action that is not well designed is a fault exclusively of individual attitudes.

The term autonomy was introduced in educational discussions by Kant and Freud and is related to meanings as self-education, problem solving, individualism and freedom, all linked to the personality of idea or even human self, always centered on the individual.

The concept of autonomy in distance education refers to a collaborative approach and cooperation, as discussed Edgar Morin (2002) when he states that autonomy can only be conceived from the relationship with the environment.

Castoriadis (2000) that conceives autonomy in social and collective perspective, in such a way that the autonomy of the individual can not take place without the collective autonomy.

Etymologically, autonomy comes from the Greek *autós* (self) *enomos* (law, rule). For the Greeks, the term meant the ability of each city in self-government, to develop its precepts, its laws, and citizens decide what to do (PRETI, 2000).

In pedagogical regarding, autonomy set up to recognize the other's ability to participate, offer and decide together with the individual's potential to "take himself" his own training. Preti (2000) states that autonomy is related to oneself, to its ability to check for yourself, without an explicit dependency on others. In this regard, recognizing the "independence" in the teaching and learning means understanding that the other is independent, able to build yourself and the trainer teacher and / or tutor is the mediator during the learning process.

The "autonomy of an individual is a principle that is as fundamental to the educational practice" Freire (2000, p.25). In distance education, it is perhaps the most important category for learning.

However, the issue of autonomy in the teaching and learning of distance education students seems to be not so simple, because this type requires changes in the routine of students. Independence in the study is a major factor; only have good use those who can be managers of their own time and practice proper study habits, which involves discipline, interest, motivation, and compliance with deadlines, among other issues.

To Belloni (1999), you can see that self-learning is a personal task that requires discipline, that is, the student must be extremely responsible with their study time and it is assumed also that the learner should participate collectively in broaden learning and share knowledge and experiences. In the opinion of Preti (2000), self-learning is directly related to autonomy of distance education student in their learning process and should be pursued, exercised and integrated in the daily professional and personal activities so that it becomes something that comes from the own individual.

Thus, we understand that for the student to be considered autonomous, it must have the most skills that facilitate self-learning. Instead, the autonomy will be partial or null, which hinder the performance of the student in this type of education or cause their withdrawal by the fact that the student does not have enough profile and dedication to adapt to this different way of learning.

In the midst of this, it is necessary that the mediation occurs favorably to the student autonomy building process, so that the learning in distance education is based on the interaction, cooperation, collaboration, and knowledge construction, ie the student becomes individual manager and autonomous in the construction of their knowledge and the group to which it belongs.

The attitude, the teacher's behavior that arises as a facilitator, promoter of learning, which is presented with a willingness to be a bridge between the learner and their learning - not static bridge, but a "moving" bridge, which actively contributes to that the learners reach their goals. (Masseto, 2000, p. 145).

According to Vygotsky (1989), the construction of knowledge takes place through interaction mediated by various relationships. Thus, the online learning process, a place that should be example of collaborative space, the construction of knowledge happens through interaction / synchronous and asynchronous mediation of learners and facilitators. This can occur through web tools and the subjects of the teaching function in which are presented different positions around the themes and didactic actions covered by their users, thus generating collaborative learning in virtual environments of learning- VELs.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology used was based on the qualitative and quantitative approaches, because we believe that both would be relevant to the survey.

According to Preti (2010), doing a research does not mean accumulating and quantifying data, but it analyzes causes and effects in context in time and space, within a system view. The same author says, when referring to the simultaneous use of qualitative and quantitative approach, that "(...) these data are considered richer, global and real" (PRETI, 2010, p. 590).

To study and data collection, the following methods and instruments were applied: literature, a questionnaire, interview and direct observation. All research methodology aimed at achieving the objective of this research, which is how is building the autonomy of the learner in the context of distance education and what are the obstacles and opportunities for the construction of autonomy in this context.

4.1. About the UAB pole in Ipiaú-BA

In the city of Ipiaú, distance education was already the case with the inclusion of courses by private colleges. But when it comes to courses from public universities offers, it began in 2008 with the arrival of the UAB - Universidade Aberta do Brasil pole, as a result of public policies of the federal government for teacher training.

The Ipiaú UAB pole works on campus at the University of Bahia, in the city. Currently, they offer undergraduate degree in distance education by UNEB and the State University of Santa Cruz-UESC. In the case of UNEB,

the degrees in Mathematics and History, and UESC in Literature and Pedagogy.

The first selective-university process happened in 2008, when they began the courses of Mathematics and History and in the same year, classes of UESC. Classes of UNEB began in 2008, and the UESC ones only in 2009.

Some implications occur for the proper functioning of the courses; one of these is the issue that, in some courses, the replacement of tutors happens periodically, as in the case of distance tutors, which is by discipline. With regard to trade in present tutors in the course of history, it happened twice in the same year, and three times in the Education course. This brings interpersonal, emotional and pedagogical conflicts in the mediation process.

In the courses of the two universities there are online interaction and presence through tutors and, in some cases by former teachers. There are weekly meetings of the students with their present tutors and, in the case of UESC, there are also times when the distance tutors go to polo to-face mediation activities with the students.

The mentioned courses are from the first pole. The subjects investigated in the survey

period were in the first half term (Literature and Education) and third semester (History and Mathematics). During the study period, there was only one class of each course.

4.2. Analysis and discussion of results

Considering the objective of this research, we provide by e-mail, 10 questionnaires to the students of the four courses in operation at the pole. The results presented here were obtained from fifteen closed five open questions, obtained from 8 questionnaires.

In Table 1, we have to identify the students who answered the questionnaire, from initial letters of the names of the courses. In Table 2, we describe the results of the responses of objective questions identified in questionnaires answered by two students from each surveyed course.

The objective questions were configured as follows: on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = poor, 2 = regular, 3 = good, 4 = great and 5 = excellent, the student should mark the given concept to related questions different subjects, considering the experience / course reality of the experience that was part.

Table 1: Identification of the students who answered the questionnaire

COURSE	INDIVIDUAL 1	INDIVIDUAL 2
MATHEMATICS	M1	M2
HISTORY	H1	H2
LITERATURE	L1	L2
EDUCATION	P1	P2

Table 2: Tabulation the replies of objective questions of the questionnaire

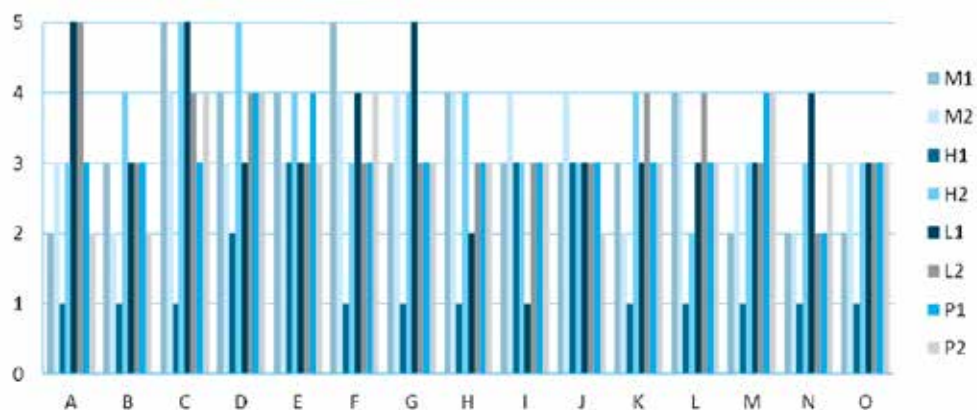
	OBJECTIVE QUESTIONS	M1	M2	H1	H2	L1	L2	P1	P2
A	Technological tools used to promote the collaborative learning	2	3	1	3	5	5	3	2
B	<i>Interaction level of online tutors</i>	3	2	1	4	3	3	3	2
C	<i>Their participation in online activities</i>	5	4	1	5	5	4	3	4
D	Level of support of classroom tutoring	4	3	2	5	3	4	4	4
E	Security level to complete a task without the mediation of the tutor	4	3	3	4	3	3	4	3
F	Motivation to the course	5	4	1	3	4	3	3	4
G	Encouragement to access the environment and participate effectively	3	4	1	4	5	3	3	3
H	<i>Interaction level in the work together online</i>	4	4	1	4	2	3	3	3
I	Resources used for evaluation	3	4	3	3	1	3	3	3
J	Interpersonal relationship between tutors and students.	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	2
K	How you are treated during doubt moments	3	2	1	4	3	4	3	3
L	You have return your achievements	4	4	1	2	3	4	3	3
M	They provide group study in the pole	2	3	1	3	3	3	4	4
N	It occurs much dropout	2	2	1	3	4	2	2	3
O	The level of student learning is considered by tutors	2	3	1	3	3	3	3	3

According to the results presented in Table 2, we realize that there is evidence that the concept 3 (good) was present in most of the students answers, as can be seen in Chart 1, more forward.

In questions (A, B, D, K, L, M and O) related to the mediation, the varied responses between the concept 3 and 4, having the most concept 3; in questions (C, E and H) which relate to student autonomy skills, the average was also among 3 and 4; the same occurs in questions concerning the motivation (F, G,

and N), affectivity (J) and evaluation tools (I). This shows dissatisfaction by students in relation to teaching and technological mediation, as well as dependence on the tutor function to perform its activities and studies. Furthermore, these students demonstrate difficulties in relation to the construction of autonomy process. The following chart illustrates the results of objective questions of the questionnaire.

Graphic 1



Regarding to open questions, Table 3 explores the answers.

1 - What do you understand by student autonomy in education online?

2 - Have you ever thought about giving up this course? Explain the main reason.

3 - Considering the virtual environment, the performance of present teachers and and tutors teachers and distance and their own

participation, highlight the aspects that you think have been insufficient in interactivity and pedagogical mediation. Justify the answer.

4 - Report positive experiences and / or negative pedagogical experienced in the course mediation.

5 - Mention the aspects that you consider important for proper mediation that contribute to the development of your autonomy.

Table 3: Tab the replies of the subjective questions of the questionnaire

ANSWERS		M1	M2	H1	H2	L1	L2	P1	P2
1	Learn to teach yourself.					X		X	
	Being a researcher and study alone.			X	X		X		
	Manage own learning	X	X						X
2	Difficulty in adjusting to the distance education regarding managing own learning	X			*				
	Difficulty with the technologies.								X
	The non-identification with the course.			X					
3	Answers in a timely manner of TD					X	X	X	X
	TD exchanges by discipline	X	X	X	X				
4	Positives:	Seminars				X	X	X	X
		Study groups at the pole	X	X	X	X			
	Negatives:	Wiki - too confused					X	X	X
		Delay in return of TDs	X	X	X	X			
5	Greater availability of TDs					X	X	X	X
	More video classes with teacher educators	X	X	X	X				

*The spaces filled with blue represent students who do not think to give up the course.

Given the above in Table 3, we can say that students understand the concept of student autonomy in the online context, but still have difficulties with the construction of this process category. These difficulties are related to lack of knowledge of online references of distance education as textual interfaces in VEL and certain dependence on tutoring. It is evident that the process of building

autonomy is directly related to teaching and technological mediation.

Table 4 shows the tabulation of the responses of the interviews that were conducted with eight students of the four courses. We emphasize that not interviewed the same students who responded to the questionnaire and the answers were written, not recorded.

Table 4: Tabulation of the interview responses from all courses

	QUESTIONS	SIM	NÃO	ÀS VEZES
1	Do you often post / deliver activities in the default term for teacher-trainer / tutor?	3	2	3
2	Do you carry out activities on your own?	4	2	2
3	Do you always need a tutor or colleagues to carry out the activities?	1	2	5
4	Do you try to perform the recommended reading tutor without the mediation?	1	4	3
5	Do you try to look for further reading, studies and extra research to teaching materials available on the course?	2	4	1

It is possible to interpret according to the responses in Table 4, students have autonomy skills, however, still rely heavily on guidance and mentoring are very limited to studying and reading the teaching material available on the course, neither seek further reading.

In direct observation, which took place during a week in each course, we realize that students had difficulty accessing the VLE and the present tutors of History and Pedagogy courses had difficulty in directing mediation, probably not knowing well yet which it would be the function of the present tutor.

Watching the VLE, we found that the distance tutors of mathematics courses and History did not give feedback to students on a daily basis; some took up to two days to give a return. We also noticed that there was a daily

monitoring of mentoring coordination tutors of Literature and Pedagogy courses; the distance tutors of these courses accessed the VLE daily and interacted well with students.

Some students had difficulty in posting activities for lack of proper handling of the VLE and many did not meet the posting deadlines, requesting a longer time; sometimes the coordination of courses postponed the posting time understanding that the students were still in the process of adaptation to distance education.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this article, we conducted a study on how is the construction of the autonomy of the learner in the context of distance education and what are the obstacles and opportunities

for the construction of autonomy in this context. The study was conducted between 2009 and 2010, polo UAB City Ipiaú, BA.

We fulfill our goal, to see that the autonomy of the learner in the context of distance education takes place from a suitable teaching and technological mediation, and when students seek to develop skills that enable to manage their own learning, such as responsibility, research, reflection, commitment to the institution and its formation, persistence and determination to carry out the proposed activities and studies. All these references represent the possibilities for the construction of the autonomy of the learner in the context of distance education.

The barriers that we have identified for the execution of the construction of the autonomy of the learner process in distance education are: inadequate measurement by the tutors when they do not know the function of mentoring in distance education; lack of knowledge by the students and tutors, the technological resources and VLE; reliance on students to tutorial function and also the difficulties of the actors involved in distance education to understand how this type of teaching and learning.

In the survey conducted we realized that some students have skills that identify them as autonomous students; nevertheless, none of the surveyed students is fully autonomous in their studies, as seems to be lacking to those making commitments and change attitudes so that they can follow and adhere to the routine of distance education student. These students understand the concept of autonomy in the context of distance education, but they have difficulties in building this process.

The need of the student when joined in an undergraduate course at a distance, to know and understand the characteristics of this type, as well as what is expected of this

student, must be a priority, especially with regard to autonomy skills. Thus, oriented at the start of the course and continuously, students may present a profile of greater autonomy in developing their studies; Furthermore, deconstruct the myths and prejudices about distance education.

The issue involving the student autonomy skills in the teaching-learning process is still a difficult ideal to carry, despite realizing significant advances in living with those surveyed students.

By said, we affirm that students in distance education are part of the construction of autonomy process when teaching or technological mediation occurs properly and interactional and reflective design. When this happens, even if the students show skills that show the autonomous, the process will be impaired by the absence of direction.

Therefore, it is extremely important to initial and ongoing training of the actors of the teaching function in relation to teacher in contemporary times and be teaching in the context of distance education.

The study conducted at UAB Ipiaú-pole / BA was initial, and we know that it is very important that further studies take place, covering a larger number of students, and also punctuate the differences now and study the contexts with future research, so that so we have a broader and more current dimension object studied.

Above all, the survey is of great importance to academic studies and their social relevance in search of better outcomes for the quality of Brazilian education, regarding the importance of strengthening of distance education for proper practice with minor misconceptions and more autonomous learners and researchers.

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