



ROLE OF THE TUTOR IN DISTANCE HIGHER EDUCATION: INTEGRATIVE REVIEW

ATUAÇÃO DO TUTOR NO ENSINO SUPERIOR A DISTÂNCIA: REVISÃO INTEGRATIVA ACTUACIÓN DEL TUTOR EN LA ENSEÑANZA SUPERIOR A DISTANCIA: REVISIÓN INTEGRADORA

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ABSTRACT

Objective: to analyze the scientific production about the role of the tutor in E-learning higher education in Brazil. **Method:** integrative review with a view to answering the question of the search << *Which is the produced knowledge about tutoring in distance higher education in Brazil?* >>. The data were collected in March 2013 in the bases MEDLINE, LILACS, BDEF and SciELO virtual library, of publications in their entirety in the last five years, in Portuguese, English and Spanish, and presented in tables. **Results:** eight publications in Portuguese, categorized by themes: Information and Communication Technologies as factors influencing the teaching and learning process and Role of the tutor in E-learning Education mode proposing changes in the training of professionals. The publications characterized the role of the tutor. **Conclusion:** Because of the growth of E-learning higher education in Brazil and the lack of studies about the role of tutors, it is admitted the necessity of further investigation towards this professional category. **Descriptors:** Education; E-learning Education; Tutoring.

RESUMO

Objetivo: analisar a produção científica acerca da atuação do tutor no ensino superior a distância no Brasil. **Método:** revisão integrativa com vistas a responder a questão de pesquisa << *Qual o conhecimento produzido sobre tutoria no ensino superior a distância no Brasil?* >>. Os dados foram coletados em março de 2013 nas bases LILACS, MEDLINE, BDEF e biblioteca virtual SciELO, de publicações na íntegra nos últimos cinco anos, em Português, Inglês e Espanhol, e apresentados em tabelas. **Resultados:** oito publicações em português, categorizadas pelas linhas temáticas: Tecnologias de Informação e Comunicação como fatores influenciadores do processo ensino e aprendizagem e Atuação do tutor na modalidade de Educação a Distância propondo mudanças na formação de profissionais. As publicações caracterizaram a atuação do tutor. **Conclusão:** em decorrência do crescimento do ensino superior a distância no Brasil e a escassez de estudos realizados sobre o papel dos tutores, admite-se a necessidade de maiores investigações voltadas para essa categoria profissional. **Descritores:** Educação; Educação a Distância; Tutoria.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: analizar la producción científica acerca de la actuación del tutor en la enseñanza superior a distancia en Brasil. **Método:** revisión integrativa con vista a responder la pregunta de investigación << *¿Cuál es el conocimiento producido sobre tutoría en la enseñanza superior a distancia en Brasil?* >>. Los datos fueron recolectados en marzo de 2013 en las bases LILACS, MEDLINE, BDEF y biblioteca virtual SciELO, de publicaciones en su íntegra en los últimos cinco años, en portugués, inglés y español, y presentados en tablas. **Resultados:** ocho publicaciones en portugués, categorizadas por las líneas temáticas: Tecnologías de Información y Comunicación como factores que influyen en el proceso enseñanza y aprendizaje y Actuación del tutor en la modalidad de Educación a Distancia proponiendo cambios en la formación de profesionales. Las publicaciones caracterizaron la actuación del tutor. **Conclusión:** como consecuencia del crecimiento de la enseñanza superior a distancia en Brasil y la escasez de estudios realizados sobre el papel de los tutores, se admite la necesidad de mayores investigaciones dirigidas para esa categoría profesional. **Descritores:** Educación; Educación a Distancia; Tutoría.

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INTRODUCTION

Globalization and rapid technological advances have brought about changes in social and economic relations in the world and in Brazil this reality is no different. Technological innovation related to the educational system has encouraged the development of Public Policies related to E-learning education programs and this initiative has contributed to the growth of this modality of education in our country.¹

According to data from the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC), the search for undergraduate not presencial has grown and enrollment in E-learning colleges in recent decade, jumped from just over five thousand to one million. The conceptual definition of E-learning education was remade, by the Brazilian authorities in 2005, with the following proposal:

E-learning education is the educational mode in which the didactic-pedagogical mediation in the processes of teaching and learning occurs with the use of media and information and communication technologies, with students and teachers developing educational activities in different places or times (Decree No. 5,622, December 19, 2005).^{2,3}

The program of the Federal Government contributes with 103 public institutions of higher education in this mode, the call Open University of Brazil (OUB), and an estimated 220 million students enrolled in the first half of 2013 with the goal in 2014 of 360 thousand. The growth of E-learning education brought up the discussion of the role exercised by tutors, which are key elements in this process, their activities in presencial or virtual environments connect students to the tools available in educational establishments and end up as responsible for the performance of students in the course and the good relationship with the institution.⁴

It is relevant to point out that there are several models of E-learning courses and therefore distinct tutoring systems. The tutors turn out without knowing for sure what are the roles that they should develop.⁴ In the bibliographic survey conducted showed that each institution adopts the model best suited to their own pedagogical proposal. However, one of the difficulties encountered by the lack of regulation of the skills of tutors is the low teacher activity, since "not just the teacher think he will reproduce the face-to-face methodology in E-learning."^{4:29}

Another issue is that the skills the tutor might differ from traditional educators, because of digital resources management suitable to the different activities. Despite

the tutor assignments are not very well defined, there are a number of tasks often associated, such as mediation, facilitation, orientation, in addition to the activities that consider him as a teacher online.⁵

It is understood that, in E-learning, professionals are involved in pedagogical functions, in the definition of content of the disciplines and in tutoring. We also think that the amount of tutors on current labor market is insufficient for contracting and we realized that there is a shortage of qualified professionals in E-learning for the higher courses, however, we observe that some educational institutions have trained their teachers to work in this teaching modality.^{4,6}

With regard to the contributions, this study can create opportunities for tutors to reflect on their own practice by different educational activities, work process, as well as assist in the development of educational policies in the tutors training courses, as well as promote future research in this theme.

The present study aims to analyze the scientific literature about the role of the tutor in E-learning higher education in Brazil.

METHOD

Integrative review, conducted in the period from March to April 2013, in databases Latin American literature and Caribbean Health Sciences (LILACS), database of nursing (BDENF), *National Library of Medicine (MEDLINE)* and the virtual library *Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO)*, considering the scientific knowledge available concerning the role of the tutor in the E-learning in Brazil.

The Integrative Review constitutes a broad revision method allowing to include studies with different methodological approaches, as well as empirical and theoretical literature for a better understanding of the phenomenon under examination.⁷

The study followed six successive steps of this method,⁸ that starts with the definition of the topic to be investigated in this study: "Performance of tutor in E-learning higher education and the development of guiding question:" What is the scientific knowledge produced about tutoring in E-learning higher education in Brazil? " For the construction of the question of the study, the authors used the **PIO**⁹ strategy where: **P** translates the research Problem that refers to the role of the tutor in E-learning higher education; **I** for the Intervention, namely, the pursuit of scientific literature on the role of the professional; and, lastly, the **O** for Outcome,

that is the categorization of the scientific literature found.

From the definition of the research question, the keywords were determined with their correlation in languages: Portuguese,

English and Spanish (Figure 1), being shown the Decs/Mesh terms used in research according to PIO model.

Estratégia	Terms Decs/Mesh		
	Portuguese	English	Spanish
P	Tutoria	<i>Tutoring</i>	<i>Tutoría</i>
I	educação a distância	<i>e-learning education</i>	<i>educación a distancia</i>
O	educação	<i>education</i>	<i>Educación</i>

Figura 1. Estratégia PIO de modo a estruturar a busca bibliográfica.

Fonte: Elaborada pelas autoras. Niterói, RJ, Brasil (2013).

As a result, we define the search strategy that is a technique or a set of standards to promote the encounter between the question asked and the information contained in a database.¹⁰

From this perspective, we use the scientific production in the databases, considering the same keywords by associations and by words to the Decs/Mesh terms: “educação/educación/education” and “educação a distância/educación a distancia/distance education” and “tutoria/tutoría/preceptorship”.

In the second stage of the method, the criteria for inclusion were established, namely: studies published in the last five years (2008-2012), in languages: Portuguese, English and Spanish, and exclusion criteria whose scientific publications are not in conformity with the point of the study.

The subsequent step consisted in screening of scientific papers, initially by a careful reading of titles, abstracts and keywords, checking its suitability to the proposal of the study. It was sought the publications in their entirety to best define the selection with subsequent reading of complete texts to be identified and organized according to the extracted information. This step aims to summarize and documenting, so simple and succinct, information obtained from scientific productions found during background.¹¹

As fourth stage, we proceed to the categorization of included studies in integrative review. After reading the articles, the authors sought senses and dissent in the selected material. Selected articles were categorized into two strands: Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) as factors influencing the teaching and learning process and role of the tutor in E-learning proposing changes in the training of professionals.

The fifth stage consisted of interpretation and discussion of results, which allowed identifying existing knowledge gaps and suggest future research.

In the final step, the review and synthesis of the knowledge produced about the role of the tutor in the E-learning in Brazil was presented, with description of the steps followed in order to offer subsidies for research can be reproduced, as well as direct new studies.

RESULTS

Considering the available scientific knowledge, we have developed a survey from which there is published, regarding the role of the tutor in the E-learning in Brazil. For this collection, we found a total of 75 productions, being 13 at Lilacs (17.3%), 4 in BDenf (5.3%), 5 in SciELO (6.7%) and 53 in Medline (70.7%), via PubMed.

After refining, based on criteria for inclusion and exclusion of publications of the past five years, resulted in 30 productions. To go through new careful screening, with in-depth reading of the contents of the texts, 21 articles were discarded for not submitting adherence to the theme and 1 for being present at two bases of publication, therefore, a total of 8 literary productions were part of the Integrative Review categorized according to thematic lines established previously.

The authors, after reading the studies published in the scientific literature on the subject of the research, elaborated according to the criteria: data source/year of publication (chronological order), article title, authors, journal/language and considerations/thematic the table shown in Figure 2, which reinforces the importance of this investigation.

Data Source/year of publication	Article title	Authors	Journal/ Language	Considerations/ Thematics
Lilacs (2012)	Impact of new information and communication technologies, through the blender learning, applied to the undergraduates in pediatric dentistry.	Alencar, Cássio José Fornazari. ¹²	These/ Portuguese	Comparative study applied by graduate students of the course of Pediatric Dentistry, pre-trained in mentoring in the two groups of students in the final year of graduation.
SciELO (2011)	The feedback and its importance in the process of E-learning tutoring.	Abreu-e-Lima, Denise Martins de; Alves, Mario Nunes. ¹³	Article/ Portuguese	The article reports the growth of E-learning in the Brazilian context; the admission of the pedagogical team tutor and the importance of their interaction with students.
Bdenf (2010)	Assessing the performance of students in nursing services administration discipline in the mode of E-learning education	Feijó, Edmar Jorge. ¹⁴	Dissertation/Portuguese	The objective is to analyze the performance of nursing students in nursing services administration (ASE), for presential evaluations and E-Learning mode.
Lilacs (2010)	The online learning experience in a professional qualification course in health.	Laguardia, Josué; Casanova, Ângela; Machado, Rejane. ¹⁵	Article/ Portuguese	This article describes and analyzes the attitudes of tutors and students, their perceptions and uses of ICT by healthcare professionals in lato sensu graduate courses online.
SciELO (2010)	Tutoring in E-learning education: proposal of course degree in E-learning pedagogy from the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul-UFRGS.	Gelatti, Lilian Schwab; Premaor, Vânia Ben; Araújo, Alexandre Ramos de. ¹⁶	Article/ Portuguese	The article presents the pedagogical proposal where the mentoring of E-learning undergraduate degree in pedagogy (EUDP) of the Faculty of education of UFRGS (Brazil).
SciELO (2009)	ProUni and UAB as E-learning strategies on expansion of higher education.	Segenreich, Stella Cecília Duarte. ¹⁷	Article/ Portuguese	The article brings an analysis of the University for all program (ProUni) and Open University of Brazil (OUB) as E-learning education strategies promoted by the Government in the expansion and democratization of higher education.
Lilacs (2009)	Evaluation of the E-learning specialization course in occupational health and human ecology: the importance of listening to the egress to the formative process improvement in workers' health.	Santos, Maria Blandina Marques dos. ¹⁸	Dissertation/Portuguese	The objective was to know the profile and assessment of students of the course of specialization in occupational health and human ecology far discusses among others the tools of E-learning education, tutoring and the production process of the work of Completion of courses.
Lilacs (2008)	Pedagogical training in E-learning education mode: challenge to activate changing processes in the formation of health professionals.	Maftum, Mariluci Alves; Campos, João Batista. ¹⁹	Article/ Portuguese	In this article is reported the experience of tutoring to a group of eight professionals from different areas of health and cities around the country, linked to higher education.

Figure 2. Summary of publications included in integrative review.

Source: Elaborated by the authors. Niterói, RJ, Brazil (2013).

By analyzing the material found in the integrative review, it was found that five are research articles (62.5%).^{13,15-7,19} two are dissertations^{14,18} (25%) and a thesis (12.5%).¹² The number of columnists totaled in publications was fourteen, oscillating between one and three authors by scientific production, being observed that no author took part in more than one publication.

In relation to the year of publication of the productions found, one (12.5%) published in 2012,¹² one (12.5%) published in 2011,¹³ three (37.5%) published in 2010¹⁴⁻⁶ two (25%) in 2009^{17,18} and one (12.5%) published in 2008.¹⁹

There was a predominance of research with qualitative approach in five (62.5%) of the

articles;^{13-5,17,19} one (12.5%) of the articles used the quantitative and qualitative approach,¹⁸ while two (25%) of the articles presented quantitative approach.^{12,16}

With regard to thematic considerations, issues related to new information and communication technologies (ICT) training in pedagogical tutoring were highlighted proposing changes in the vocational training courses and assessments; performance of various participants; strategies for E-learning in the expansion of higher education.

It was noted that in relation to the location of production, two (25%) were originating in the State of São Paulo¹²⁻³ and four (50%) of the state of Rio de Janeiro^{14-5,17-8}, one (12.5%) of

Rio Grande do Sul,¹⁶ and one (12.5%) of the State of Parana¹⁹, demonstrating a greater interest in this topic by researchers in the Southeast region (75%).

As regards thematic considerations, there were issues related to the new ICTs; pedagogical training in tutoring suggesting changes in vocational training; evaluations of courses and performance of various participants; E-learning strategies in the expansion of higher education, as well as the E-learning in order to democratize the access to Public University, providing the inclusion of people excluded from educational process.²⁰

DISCUSSION

Based on the overview of selected publications and considering the object and the purpose of this integrative review, to carry out the analysis of the studies selected were the following categories:

◆ Information and communication technologies as factors influencing the teaching and learning process

In this category, it was noted the influence of ICT in the teaching and learning process. It should be noted that more and more educational institutions facilitate access to knowledge, increasing the chances of learning, motivated by the new information and communication technologies, which were cited in all bracketed publications in this category, which reinforces the importance of ICT in subject studied.

A study says ICT as incentive of professionals of nursing education in the construction of various technological resources, seeking to incorporate them as a strategy for training of professionals in understanding, handling, using, among others, of course, Web software, creating Web sites, electronic journals information.¹⁴

This same study identifies that, although there is recognition of the importance of the use of ICTs as an educational strategy and the notorious growth in the use of technologies and methods of electronic communication, these facts not yet resonate in the production of Brazilian literature in relation, for example, the description of experience of E-learning in nursing, national investment demand this approach.¹⁴

The tutor's role in assessing the online access and achievement of activities was aimed at some research.^{12,15,19} In these studies, the tutors were pre-trained in tutoring and developed interactive lessons, videos and exercises in various modalities, also excelled in teaching activities the tutor

as a moderator in the courses of E-learning education.

According to the educational objectives of each course, certain types of resources are adopted, such as: Slideshow, videos, links files, diary, chat forum, glossary, lesson, homework, exercises, quiz, Iconographies.¹²

Some technological educational artifacts appeared from the need for an environment that does not reproduce the traditional teaching. The ROODA (Cooperative Learning Network) is an example of a platform that has been used in UFRGS in classroom courses and E-learning courses, with the purpose of facilitating interaction and communication between teachers, tutors and students.¹³

Another selected article in the review refers to the technological capability Moodle (Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment) as one of the best and most used virtual learning platform. This consists of a "Collaborative Learning Environment", having as main features the ease of use and adaptability, has no cost on acquisition or licenses, is suitable for any operating system, and able to be downloaded, used and/or modified extensively and by owning vast didactic concepts contributing in both E-learning learning and presential teaching. It is also in an educational administration system based on constructivist pedagogy.¹²

To discuss the state of Information and Communication Technologies available in E-learning, there is no doubt that are factors influencing the teaching and learning process, however, it realizes that educational institutions and teaching staff need further training, and the guardian technologies for handling with property and quickly available resources in virtual environments.^{13,18}

◆ Role of the tutor in E-learning proposing changes in the training of professionals

This category deals with the role of the tutor in E-learning proposing changes in the training of professionals, especially those health professionals. Educational institutions, in recent years, have been prepared to provide training courses in the distance modality, directed to its faculty and other professionals, adapting technologies.¹⁴

The perspective of qualification and training of health professionals with quality for performance in the Unified Health System (Sistema Único de Saúde,SUS) requires an increase in the permanent and continuous education, pointing to the emerging need to form human resources tailored to the demands of the SUS, considering that

increasingly teaching in Brazil tends to adopt the E-learning.^{13,15}

In 2009, a work published in Rio de Janeiro¹⁸ discusses the course of specialization in occupational health and human ecology, in E-learning mode, with the principle: to train professionals of public health network of the Unified Health System of the most distant regions of the country with the commitment to reorganize health services and prepare the professionals working in the SUS.

In this publication the importance of E-learning is recognized as a facilitator in the exchange of expertise or expert groups, which are traditionally focused on core trainers in the Southeast with the more distant points of health network of Brazil, thus the geographical separation between the various states, seen before as a problem, with the E-learning, ceases to exist.¹⁸

According to another study,¹³ included in Integrative Review, in an Institution, tutors attend a pedagogical training course initial training which aims to guide them on their performance in the virtual learning environment (VLE), the course includes topics such as: the tutoring model followed in the institution, formative feedback examples, case studies, tutoring of student assessment and virtual environments.

dizagem.

It is a fact that is to find that educators/tutors are mere distributors of content. Thus, these professionals are increasingly involved with the teaching process, being facilitators of learning and skills evaluators. We realized then that there is a consensus among the selected articles, as they identify the role of the tutor in distance education as a facilitator of the teaching/learning process.

Two articles^{13,19} between the productions analyzed, pointed out that the tutor is mediator of teaching and must be aware of how it is constructed and understanding to the contents inside by the students, so that he can instigate challenges, help overcome doubts and encourage learning. Then, it is searched a dialogical education and problematical breaking with traditional education.

The teacher plays the role of mediator and will contribute to the student to build his knowledge and develop his critical autonomy.¹⁴

In this study, the expression "educational mediation", as teacher-student relationships in the pursuit of learning as knowledge-building mechanism, through critical reflection of the experiences and the worker

process. On this aspect, the pedagogical practice mediator has required as a condition of dialogical interaction, such as the Freire's methodology teaches us.¹⁴

Regarding publications found in this Integrative Review, it stands out the account of tutoring course, with prerequisite course description tutor training connected to the superior formation¹². In this material, it is showed several performances of the tutor in the E-learning in the Brazilian context, among these, the appointment of professor-tutor to mediate all development of the course.

The tutor should answer the questions of the students and he also do mediation participation of these students in the use of the tools of mediation, as well as to encourage participation, the execution of tasks, as well as assess the whole process.¹⁵

It is explored in another article,¹³ the importance of feedback in the process of tutoring the distance to review some definitions found in the literature and present models adopted in the E-learning courses in Brazil.

In eight articles selected were identified, also, as tutors in E-Learning mode: graduate students in Pediatric Dentistry; teachers/students; teachers team members tutoring trainers; teachers/tutors of the course for health professionals; tutors with master's and/or doctorate qualified for tutoring; tutors from different regions of Brazil with training in different areas of knowledge; nurse just specialized pre-trained in tutoring.

Analyzed in this production related integrative review, they are presented as students of the courses in the publications: senior year undergraduate students of the course of Pediatric Dentistry; teachers of basic education of the state and municipal public schools of the State of Rio Grande do Sul; prospective tutors (students of the training course for teachers/tutors to the admission at OAB); nursing students of the discipline of nursing services administration I (ASE); health professionals from state and municipal departments of Rio de Janeiro; public health professional students in the specialization course in occupational health and human ecology; nurses, doctors, social worker, speech therapist, pharmaceutical specializing of superior training of health professionals.

Although the tutor and the teacher are specific assignments, both work for the training of students in the proposal for each course. In this context, it becomes a challenge to establish functional boundaries between

them, because what is observed in practice is that the tutor takes more assignments teachers than teaching himself indicated in order to carry out its mission and, sometimes, the teacher gets overloaded with activities of the disciplines, harming the quality of attention directed to each student.¹⁸

Regarding the role of the tutor in E-learning, the object of this research is one of the articles published in 2010¹⁶ corroborates with this study when specifying the responsibilities of the tutor of the degree course in education-degree from the Faculty of education of the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, offered in E-learning education mode, with breadth of pedagogical and social, organizational functions.

This publication specifies among other performances: to organize study circles; to collaborate on understanding of pedagogical material, through raising questions and discussion; to expand topics, little elaborate Didactic Units; to assist students in planning their work; to comment on work carried out by students; to lead discussions and explanations; to supervise and guide projects and practical work; to fix evaluations; to provide feedback to students seeking to remedy their difficulties, providing feedback to coordinators on progress of the courses and the students' situation, providing and update information demanded by the students; mediate relationships between students and travel coordination/institution; inform the institution; participate in meetings.

The same review published in 2010¹⁶ cited as support material on the role of the tutor in E-learning the tutor guide course degree in pedagogy from the Faculty of E-learning Education of Porto Alegre, considered one of the leading theoretical references guiding conceptual proposal and practice of tutors of the E-learning courses at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul.

Fits both the tutor of the Polo as the tutor of the following functions: organizational, social and pedagogical, some of which resemble in certain aspects and other are specific for each performance. In this context, was remembered by one of the authors that although there is differentiation in functions of guardian according to their duties: tutor of polo and tutor, the tutor headquarters generally, this needs to be prepared to perform a variety of functions presented in the courses, and having in mind what kind of role will take on of its activities.¹⁶

Considering to take on different roles, were cited: reviewer, conceptual, reflective guide

facilitator, mediator, storyteller and organizer feedback.^{13.16}

Finally, there are studies that separate professional activities of E-learning in content person (plans to work proposals and curricular content), technical (produces teaching materials in the context of the media) and the Deplorer (concretizes proposal for work planned by content person) usually the latter is composed of tutors.¹⁶

CONCLUSION

Considering the conclusive analysis of the scientific material found in this review, it is evident that although some studies report good content consistent, somehow impacting on production of knowledge about the role of the tutor in E-learning courses, is a clear lack of scientific literature on the subject.

We emphasize that the use of Information and Communication Technologies in E-learning education are more of the teaching and learning process, because they bring new possibilities in professional training.

It was a significant advance in the recognition of the "E-learning education" in Brazil, which in the past has been disqualified and taxed "Distant" Education. Currently, a new connotation, more sympathetic and appropriately distinguishes his pedagogical proposal: "E-learning education", by closing/integrating knowledge and shorten the path between teaching and learning.

It was observed that as the requirements, demands and needs of each course, tutoring assignments take distinct designs. It is concluded that the overall results of this study demonstrate that as a result of intense growth of E-learning education in Brazil and the paucity of studies on the role of tutors, admits the need for further investigation and investments with regard to the formation of this professional category. On gaps identified during the study, it is expected that this research can contribute to the development of educational policies aimed at training courses, tutors.

As suggestions for future research, we recommend to expand the publications survey and propose a comparison between the results on the role of the tutor in the E-learning in Brazil with the results obtained in other countries.

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