

Tutoring in Distance Education: New Proposals, Challenges and Reflections

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Abstract: Distance Education has expanded in the world, due to the democratization of knowledge mediated by technologies for accessing different levels of education. Online and classroom tutoring systems have been a source of research and discussion on redefining roles in distance education. It's understood that the role of the tutor must be intrinsically linked to the political-pedagogical project of the course, regardless of their nature: graduation, specialization, etc. The mentoring held in the fifth Specialization Course in Distance and Continuing Education (University of Brasilia, Brazil) had its assumptions and guidelines, grounded in the CTAR-Community Work and Learning Network, which advocates a proactive tutoring, with engaging and emancipatory character, valuing collaborative knowledge construction. It was essential to ensure the basic and continuing training of selected tutors to favor the formation of networks in the realization of the activities and actions that promote learning. With this perspective, mentoring can take an active, collaborative and intervening role as the knowledge mediation, employing strategies and facilitating technological resources. It was important to consider in the formation of selected tutors and the tutoring supervision of the course, the articulated monitoring of the team, encouraging a coordinated and concerted action of the various actors of the course, specifically, the general coordination, tutoring coordinator, the classroom tutor and pedagogical assistant, seeking to prevent evasion. Knowing the profile of the participants and their difficulties, it is possible to act in a preventive manner, anticipating assistance, encouraging the participation in discussions and diversifying strategies and technological resources to respond to the various identified needs and motivate their permanence on course. We emphasize that this tutoring proposal is a pioneer to the extent that the tutor is part of a team responsible for the course, where he is a specialized teacher and well aware of his role in developing a quality in Distance Education.

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1. Introduction

The expansion of Distance Education (*Educação a Distância*, EaD) in educational context has been discussed constantly, both on the global and national scenario, it is used as an important alternative in terms of the democratization of education and access to higher education. Its trajectory was structured as a process of human education and its perspective assumes different sides on the development and diffusion of technologies, subsidized by today's educational trends and paradigms.

In that way, it is observed that the training of teachers and other professionals (health, environment, law, etc.) are qualified with the development of curriculum proposal with planned activities considering the personal dimension, as parameter for assessing for its offer, which are interconnected to the structuring of the contents, as well as its dynamics which establishes the principle, fostering interactivity and use of technologies.

Technology is an essential tool for mediating the process of teaching and distance learning, which has the teacher as one of the most important factor to push this process forward. It is recognized, also, the importance of the organization of educational activities, that is why the appreciation of planning, in order to greatly enhance the quality of the teaching-learning process, and the proper use of the *Ambiente Virtual de Aprendizagem* (AVA) - Virtual Learning Environment tools to promote the steady integration of the contents, the selected materials, technological resources, the pedagogical mediation and student learning. Aspects emphasized by Silva, Andrade e Silva (2011) reveal the importance of teacher-student triad and objects of knowledge, and the tutor as an essential protagonist in this mediation.

For this reason, the coaching systems at distance and face-to-face have been a source of constant discussions, research and reflections on redefinitions of roles and functions in EaD - distance education. In fact, the role of tutor must be intrinsically linked to the political-pedagogical project of the course, regardless of their nature: graduation, specialization, masters or doctorate.

From this perspective, the tutoring of the fifth *Curso de Educação Continuada e a Distância*, presented here, has a history of regular offerings on the *Faculdade de Educação of the Universidade de Brasília* (FE/UnB) in post-graduation level *lato sensu* - Specialization, the fifth edition offered in partnership with the *Universidade Aberta do Brasil* -UAB/CAPES/MEC (Open University of Brasil, Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Ensino

Superior/Staff Development Coordination of Higher Education, Ministério da Educação/Ministry of Education), it is up to the UnB, as a Federal Institution, to make the certification of approved destined to the education of tutors of the UAB/UnB and the CEFET/PA (*Centro de Ensino Tecnológico Federal do Pará* – Pará’s Federal Technological Education Center) to work at EaD.

To understand the concept of mentoring adopted in the fifth *Curso de Educação Continuada e a Distância* it is important to resume the path of previous offerings of the course that contributed to the solidification of the concept of EaD assumed by the actors of that course, acknowledged by the *Comunidade de Trabalho e Aprendizagem em Rede* – CTAR, which will be commented further on. The requirement of a formal statement and commitment to support the participation of course participants over the course by the home institutions, was a requirement of the course, as well as presenting a distance education pre-project that focused on the institutional development in the area and conclusion work.

The first edition took place in 1994 with the *Consórcio Interuniversitário de Educação Continuada e a Distância* (BRASILEAD) - Inter-University Consortium for Distance and Continuing Education. Its constitution included partnerships with leading International and National Educational Institutions, among them the Université de Poitiers, Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED), Simon Fraser University, University Virtual Latinoamericana (UVLA), *Secretaria de Educação a Distância* (SEED/MEC) - Department of Distance Education and UAB which were maintained in the new offerings. Directed to the State Coordinators of the program of *Formação Continuada de Professores do Ensino Fundamental* called “*Um Salto para o Futuro*”-SEED/MEC (Department of Distance Education, Ministry of Education).

The second *Curso de Especialização em Educação Continuada e a Distância* - Specialization Course in Distance and Continuing Education offered from 1997 to 1999, it was destined to the education of professionals of the IES (*Instituições de Ensino Superior*) - Higher Education Institutions, consortium members of BRASILEAD, it had the support of SEED/MEC and embassies for involvement of teachers from the Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia -UNED, Spain, Universidade Aberta de Portugal, Portugal, and the University Simon Fraser University, Canada and UVLA.

The third course was offered from 1999 to 2000, with funding from SEED/ MEC and support 33 public universities, and private Brazilian Community on formal statement and support to course participants. With the support of the mentioned universities and especially of Simon Fraser University, from Canada which allowed the translation and the use of virtual learning environment Virtual University (V.U) It was directed to the professionals of the distance education of IES, consortium members of BRASILEAD, of the SEED/MEC, of the Departments of State and Municipal

Education, government entities, companies, social movements and non-governmental organizations (CTAR, 2009).

The fourth *Curso de Especialização em Educação Continuada e a Distância*, offered between 2008 and 2010, was supported and responded to teachers from the UAB/CAPES/MEC in the development of disciplines of the distance education courses and MEC organs (SEED and CAPES), which indicated and supported the participation of participants and their institutional projects at the conclusion of the course.

It is important to mention that in the first four editions of the course, the professor (author and supervisor of the discipline) catalyzed participation as tutor both at a distance and classroom, conducting the mediation directly next to the participants. Thus, the insertion of the tutor on the course was gradually being shaped and configured, from the accumulated experience, both pedagogical as technological and were consolidated in fifth *Curso de Educação Continuada e a Distância* with new prospects of distance education.

The purpose of this reflection is facing three moments: (a) the design of CTAR group on *Educação a Distância* (EaD) - Distance Education, extended to the education of the staff of tutors, ensuring the theoretical and practical articulation. Thus, briefly presents the trajectory of the course, the pedagogical action and the description of the activities: (b) the design tutor and underlying tutoring, describing how has happened the formation of this group for the fifth *Curso de Especialização em Educação Continuada e a Distância*, in 2010-2011, in accordance with the proposal of the *Universidade Aberta do Brasil* (UAB); (c) the expansion of the discussion in the virtual environment and activity coordination of the course, interfaced with the classroom tutoring, the work of the pedagogical assistant, integrating the didactic and pedagogical interfaces and content, involving tutors and teachers authors in order to foster the quality of teaching and learning process.

2. Description of Experimental Course: *The Fifth Curso e a Perspectiva da Comunidade de Trabalho e Aprendizagem em Rede* (CTAR)

Understand The fifth *Curso de Educação Continuada e a Distância*, began in 2010 with the purpose of certifying as EaD experts the teachers and tutors of the UAB, servants of CEFET/PA, entities of MEC to work in the disciplines offered in graduation courses of UAB at UnB. The course was organized in 420 hours, focused on continuing education, developed online in the *Ambiente Virtual de Aprendizagem Moodle*, distributed in ten (10) teaching modules added the presentation of *Trabalho de Conclusão de Curso* (TCC) - Work of Course Conclusion. The modules have taken a theoretical and practical character, covering the entire body of study directed to the formation of a specialist in Distance and Continuing Education, using diverse

strategies (forums, virtual workshops, classroom meetings, web conferencing, etc.) and other AVA tools. The objective was to provide for the participants a variety of enablers resources of educational practices, in hybrid teaching systems, using the Moodle platform as integrative media.

The pedagogical project of the fifth *Curso de Especialização em Educação Continuada e a Distância* made possible to rescue the theoretical principles that support the *Comunidade de Trabalho e Aprendizagem em Rede* (CTAR, 2010) that were reflected in the practice of mentoring, involving the following factors: coordination, mentoring coordinator, classroom tutor and pedagogical assistant, who were constituted as a working group to develop activities together and articulated with the tutors and author teachers, under the supervision of the general coordination of the course. The unified actions were aimed at identifying the different strategies that enabled the pedagogical development, their essential routines and interfaces to the learning process in AVA, a dynamic and articulated interaction as shown in Figure 1 below (CTAR, 2006).

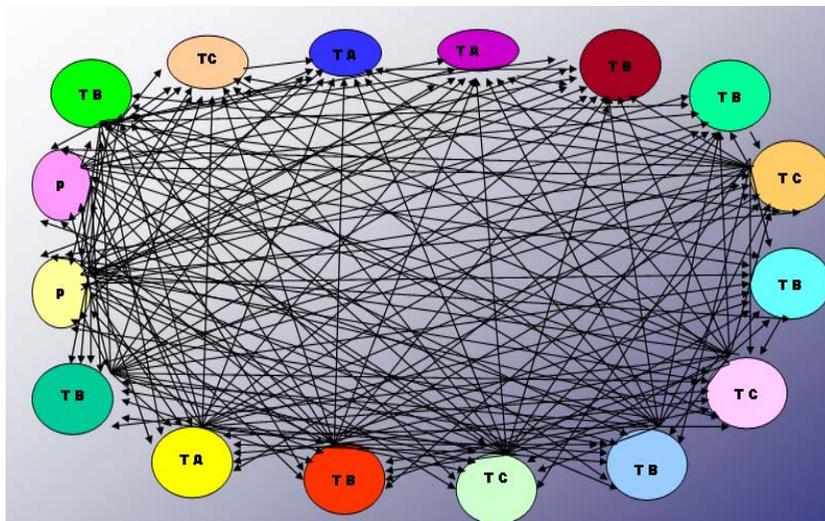


Figure 1. Interaction between People-P=Teacher; TA, TB, TC=Tutor of Groups A, B, C.

It is indisputable the contribution of technology and media, without which it would not be possible to perform a distance education, in other words, the educational process beyond the limits of the school's physical space. However, this relationship has not been established historically as dependent or subordinated to the means. At the origins of the modern EaD (if not considering the old forms of written correspondence between teachers and students), technological condition was always associated with two main objectives: an alternative education, by overcoming geographic, spatial and temporal limitations and the democratization of education, as a public asset,

allowing the inclusion of socially marginalized portions of the education system in its conventional form. These principles remain fully valid in the present scenario of the new technologies of information and communication. Similarly, the technical characteristics, the combination and convergence of languages and the means mean the ability to expand and deepen many of the essential aspects of teaching and learning process, but it can not be seen as paradigms imposed by the inherent nature of technologies (*Grupo CTAR*, 2006).

To place this proposal in view of this diverse experience, it is primarily characterized the performance of each subject of this experience (tutor, tutoring coordination, the pedagogical assistant and classroom tutor) and in order to spread the teaching practices, the concept of CTAR as highlighted by Souza, Fiorentini and Rodrigues (2010), developed for about fifteen years ago by a pioneering group of professors from the *Faculdade de Educação da Universidade de Brasília* (FE/UnB) - Faculty of Education at the University of Brasilia. This group claims that it is possible, with the support of the new *Tecnologias da Informação e da Comunicação* (TIC) - Information Technology and Communication to build an education that breaks with the stigmatized view of distance education, promoted by traditional models, which favored the transmission of information and individual learning at the expense of collective and cooperative construction of knowledge.

Since this is a consolidated experience it is recognized the importance to think about the educational activities, experiences throughout the development of the course modules to retake the guidelines and fundamental pedagogical principles of CTAR and especially the practice of tutors and staff which composed the coordination. An experience that, like other initiatives, has contributed to a conception of distance education and open university, which aims to consolidate the principles and practices of quality education, a commitment that should be considered inalienable to a public university.

3. Tutoring in *Fifth Course* and the Pedagogical Proposal into Action: Theoretical and Practical Foundations

The appropriation of new technological languages in the educational process comes to destabilize (or disrupt) the essentially classroom school model, requalifying it on the new possibilities of access to education Politics, aesthetics and culture are regrouping in the face of social change, triggered by new communication technologies, the social networks and informational systems. Therefore, it is essential, to review the impact regarding the many forms of learning and teaching, and in parallel, identify how educational institutions, at all levels, are dealing with the new scenario of a globalized society and quick technological changes.

A working community and network learning (Pontes & CTAR, 2010), in the conception of CTAR group of the *Faculdade de Educação* (FE/UnB) is based on essential assumptions, revealing a different proposal on the EaD: (1) the belief that a technological education can be based on dialogue, as opposed to mere vertical and asymmetrical transmission of content and knowledge; (2) the cooperative and collaborative action between the subjects should prevail over the individual competition; (3) learning should value the reflective work, rather than the simple accumulation of information; (4) network communication should turn to the coexistence, rather than lead to isolation and individualism; (5) and finally the affirmation of a distance education directed to a transforming action, rather than merely reproductive activity of knowledge without commitment to change the reality of students. Image 2, below, expresses the guiding principles and the dynamics undertaken at CTAR (2006).

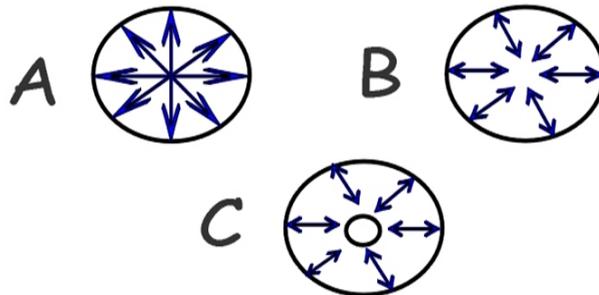


Figure 2. Community Work and Learning Network

Note. Explication Figure 2: Self-organization of group / (A) Role teacher/tutor=directive intervention / (B) Open education supported by the Pedagogy of Autonomy / (C) Exerted the Community Work and Learning Network - People'knowleged

The CTAR at the *Faculdade de Educação* (FE/UnB), would only be possible in a context marked by TIC, such as the current one. This circumstance, however, represented only the necessary background for teaching values and varied teaching experiences that led to the search of the possibilities of a technological education based on different practices of those who began to impose the market logic that looks at education, especially as an attractive and profitable commercial product. So CTAR adopted as a principle and guideline to claim that another distance education, it is possible.

It is essential to emphasize that the purpose of this study is not to indicate models, but to present experiences in order to promote reflections that can transform the mentoring process into effective action that leverages the EaD, opposing the prospect of mere transfer of information and static

knowledge for collaborative construction action of networked knowledge. Ensuring this principle, the fifth *Curso* was built and developed aiming at continued education of professionals working at EaD/UAB all over the country. Embracing managers, tutors (classroom and at distance), polo coordinators, teachers, supervisors, in short, everyone involved in the UAB network.

It is essential to recognize that at growing demand for distance learning courses, the training of professionals becomes a quality element, as emphasized by Pereira and Moraes (2010). Becoming a challenge, since most teachers, tutors and the students themselves come from a classroom experience, tending to repeat the model in the online method.

Faced with this prospect, the team of professionals of the fifth *Curso* (general coordination, mentoring coordination, the pedagogical assistant and classroom tutor, and the teachers authors) took the proposal to overcome the simple tutor education and embrace a paradigm of developing skills, abilities in theoretical and practical perspective as a foundation for learning, TIC-mediated, with the axis of the pedagogical action quality. In this light, the interactivity, interlocution and dialogicity were the basis for the construction of knowledge in an integrated and challenging way.

4. Selection, Initial and Continuing Training of Tutors: Principles and Strategies

Tutoring and their dynamics in the fifth *Curso* were sources of fruitful discussions, constructive evaluations by the team of professionals of the course, involving the initial training of tutors, the continuity in the development of the course and at the conclusion of each teaching module. It was discussions that were based on axial issues that posed: what's the conception of CTAR proposes for tutoring? how to ensure the effectiveness of the tutoring action to promote learning? what sets a mentoring proposal proactive and collaborative?

For the selection of tutors was defined by the team of teachers and coordinators of the course that the selected participants would accompany all of the course modules and that, to do so, they would have to do the training before the starting of the course and during the course as well. Therefore a survey was carried out of the characteristics and skills needed to perform the job considering that, according to the teachers authors who compose the CTAR, were essential to the activity of mentoring and developing their teaching modules.

These elements were formed, when organized, in an initial questionnaire that was made available at the UAB page, for those professionals who were interested in joining the tutor group. The questionnaire aimed to gather preliminary information on: (a) academic

training: graduation, graduate degree, specialization, master's and doctoral degrees; (b) professional experience: teaching, experience in distance education (EaD) and UAB, beyond the conception of distance education, and other relevant educational experiences; (c) employment and management of media materials and production of teaching-learning material: *Moodle* or other e-learning platform, experience with web conferencing, preparation of web pages, production of written or digital materials, and materials for EaD; and (d) availability and expectations, as 20 hours a week for meetings, planning, monitoring and supervising activities on the platform, besides the expectations in the action of tutoring. Also, it was required to present a resume with work experience, such as information that would allow a selection of experienced tutors.

This set of information was essential to the first screening of candidates for tutoring, with eliminatory requirement the demand that everyone should live in the *Distrito Federal*, in the proximity of the *Universidade de Brasília – UnB*, where you found the physical structure and personnel of the course. Although the tutors were distant (online), the dynamics of the course provided systematic classroom meetings of the tutor with the coordinating team, with the teachers authors of the modules associated with the preparation of materials, the pedagogical discussions with the staff of technological support and also the participation of the tutor in other course activities such web conferencing and physical meetings of teachers and support staff with the participants.

According to the modulation adopted by the course of 35 students per class, six tutors were selected, as were 200 places available for the course. However, predicting and anticipating adverse conditions such as problems to take over the tutoring, tutor dropout during the course among others, we chose to select six other tutors. This implied to hold a training involving 12 pre-selected tutors, this period was also an important time to collect data and analyze the action of each one, in the training process. New criteria were adopted for the final selection in which six tutors were selected that would act immediately in the course and 6 for the backup register with the commitment of all participate in the training, with effective involvement in their scheduled activities.

In the CTAR proposal, the formation of the distance tutor lasted 40 hours of theoretical and practical activities, planned in a way that corresponds to the concept adopted by the course, requiring a differentiated mentoring to ensure the educational objectives of the course. Leal (2005) lists aspects that permeate the tutor's action, as the concern and investment in technical knowledge, pedagogical, didactic and contextual to the formation of the student, marked in collaborative action, critical-reflexive, that allow students to develop and employ scientific knowledge and expertise in various educational settings. Finally, provide a didactic conversation that can

stimulate thought, freedom of thought, the flow of ideas and the confrontation of epistemological positions. Having as reference these conceptions in the formation, the following strategies of mentoring were implemented in the course:

1. Monitoring of the teaching-learning process, from the first module to the second last (IX module) with the same group of students, to allow better student-tutor integration, avoiding pedagogical relationship breaks and virtual interaction, then seeking the mainstreaming of contents and integration of the axes of the course;
2. Facilitation of the transition of a module to another and, if necessary, the complementation of the contents and expansion of knowledge about the tools selected for the module. Feeding back the importance of self-training and knowledge developed in practice, in addition to continuing discussion surrounding the action-reflection-action, heralded by Shön (2000) and Alarcão (2008).
3. Promotion of initial and continuing training of tutors establishing routine with specific time, before contact with the participants and during all nine modules, to discuss the specific contents, suggesting further reading to expand the resources for educational guidance and strategies to address it. In this process was emphasized: knowledge of the course structure, management and educational domain of tools and technology resources, as well as the content and the articulation between the modules.
4. Dynamic of continuing education tutors module by module, beyond the period, prior to the start of the course. To this end regular meetings with the teachers authors of each module to discuss the contents addressed were scheduled, clarifying doubts and raising suggestions of possible greater needs understanding of the topic being discussed in the module, including presentation (objectives, content, activities, evaluation, etc.), development and closing it.

From this perspective the mentoring process developed in the fifth *Curso* consisted in a collective activity, proactive and committed, in the proper sense of the course and its objectives. The tutor at distance/online is not intended as a subject of passing on information or the idea of simple tutelage. On the contrary, he is thought to develop his 'to do' directed and linked to the pedagogical space, dimensioned and integrating the contents, activities, the demands of students and teachers, he was finally integrated into the course as a great articulator, even more so, a genuine pedagogical mediator. So it was fundamental and strategic to the formation of this professional.

Such paradigms overcame the traditional view of mentoring, since the responsibility for the development of contents and activities, as well as the evaluation processes with 'voice' and power to express their perceptions and opinions against the development of the module education. At first, he would not produce the materials and neither he would select it, however, he would be a pedagogical actor who makes the dialogue with the students, who motivates, especially, who encourages interactivity and joint action. In this way, he would also contribute to the reorganization of activities, texts and even, along with his students, he could discuss the evaluation process and criteria. Clearly the model alluded was one of the proposals of the *V Curso* to increase the autonomy, independence and, above all, the ability to intervene and manage virtual learning spaces of UAB.

In the conception of the CTAR, the tutor is tasked to monitor, supervise, guide students aiming to the acquisition of knowledge, from the perspective adopted by Shön (2000) and Alarcão (2008) action-reflection-action. It would be incongruous to demand of tutors tasks in which they don't have fully knowledge or to promote activities distant from its significance as highlighted by Leontiev (1991). How could they develop certain content, skills and collaborative prospects if they were treated as simple reproductive of the proposals of teachers? How could they reflect on their pedagogical actions, the meaning and significance of the contents if they are unaware of the mission and objectives of the course? How they would engage in a project in which they felt stripped and pushed out of the process, being only a gear in this machine?

Cortelazzo (2008) emphasizes that it is incongruous as dissonant the construction of collective projects without the interaction processes being active, and that collaboration enables effective construction. The author also shows that distance education is established in three areas: the didactic framework that ensures the sharing of knowledge and experience, then linked: to the pedagogical action based on dialogic process that are directly associated with autonomous learning, creative, articulate and reflected in educational materials chosen; the evaluation process, involving all stakeholders, stimulating self-assessment, joint assessment and the evaluation of others.

Depending on the dynamics and peculiarities of teaching moments they enrich the comprehension and the systematic training. Therefore, it is essential to note that, in our experience, there was the main concern with the formation of the tutors, since its performance has become the action model adopted by the course. From an initial training that allowed the contextualization of its activity as well as integration with the proposal of the course and its actors continuously and buoyed by praxis. Thus, regarding the formation of tutors, it was based on three movements that complement each other: the self-formation, the hetero-formation and inter-formation, according to Garcia (1999 as cited in Isaia & Bolsan, 2014):

a) Self-formation: process in which professionals are responsible for their training, consciously, taking responsibility for the process and the purposes of his training (Bandeira, 2006). Complementing this concept, Isaia & Bolsan (2014) show that professionals seek sources and materials to expand their knowledge, considering its interests, needs and demands of the educational environment, activities and training projects that, in a direct way, influence their knowledge, skills and competences for the development of teaching. For example, a text shown on authorship to later perform guidance to the course participants of how to construct a paraphrase, or even a further reading on mentoring to know the different processes involved.

(b) Hetero-formation: established by the contribution of other professionals who are experts in areas related to that kind of knowledge. In short, includes the dynamics in that the professional of education is eligible and different into his activity as a subject who learns and teaches being an essential binomial for his professional development. Constituting a privileged space for reflection, comprehension and change as a result of the situations – *as a teacher* - experienced and being problematized in order to lead, motivate, and generate new elaborations. Despite the fact of the teacher not being directly involved in the training proposal, this should be closely linked to self affirmative actions (Santos & Figueira, n.d.). During the course of training of the tutors, there were those moments with the presence of the authors teachers, in the construction of the modules and through the web conferencing with guests and even overall lectures for all professionals of the course.

(c) Inter-formation: through interpersonal activities the professionals in education construct their teaching activities, given the changes and ahead of the interests, common needs and demands that foster the search for improvement, skills development and expertise affecting their professional development (Bandeira, 2006; Isaia & Bolzan, 2014). In this way, the joint moments of educational activities should be prioritized to ensure the group process. Especially, where there are exchanges, support and psycho-pedagogical guidelines, problems and solutions can emerge from this joint activity. In the meetings directed only to tutors or even with the group in partnership with teachers, the exchange of knowledge and experiences happened in the group.

In this sense, our experience points to the realization that the training of tutors to work in a course EaD must be a project planned and something to be incremented as an essential part, regardless of the intention of promoting the initial or continuing education. After all, their pedagogical action is linked to the concept of the own course design, which should establish the extent and

scope of their duties, which are not restricted to a mere reproduction of the content. As noted, the formation of the tutor involves several dynamics, surpassing that closely linked to the content. For this he must have autonomy in thinking to contribute and re-evaluate educational processes under his monitoring.

5. The Fifth Curso Team: Coordination and Unity in the Pedagogical Action

To support the pedagogical and administrative proceedings, several professionals have integrated the course team and were essential to the success of the activities of fifth *Curso de Especialização em Educação Continuada e a Distância* - Specialization Course in Distance and Continuing Education. The fifth *Curso* work team was formed by 17 teachers (authors and supervisors), six tutors at a distance, a classroom tutor, a pedagogical assistant, a tutoring coordinator, a general coordinator of the course and support of the platform of the course, *Moodle* (an administrator and multimedia specialist) and a Web designer to work on the accessibility of the virtual environment of the course.

As for actions related to tutoring and activities on the course platform it was established a weekly 20-hour monitoring of the entire educational process: calls, chats, reading, reviewing and correction of forums and meeting with teachers authors and tutoring coordination and general coordination of the course. Strategies have been worked out and discussed to guide follow-up actions to address the demands, doubts and questions of the course participants and, in particular, suggestions on reading activity and research concerning each module, under the responsibility of a distance tutor and classroom one, a pedagogical assistant, a coordinator of the course and mentoring. Everyone systematically accompanied the offering of the modules and the dynamics adopted for its development. Horizontalizing the action, the focus was on boosting the central module proposal and the plan developed by the authors teachers. This encompassed from the selection of texts, videos, images to the evaluative task. Having the presence of the classroom tutor, the web designer at first and then the coordinator and mentoring of the course. This first move was then scheduled for the general coordination and mentoring, to establish space and the inclusion of assistive technologies within the discipline. Also encourage and support the authors teachers in the construction of the space and ensure the pedagogical and didactic dimension, still counting with the collaboration of the platform administrator, to add, expand and verify the demands of the authors teachers. One example was the construction of the 'sandbox' on the IV module which provided students the contact with the *Moodle* platform, they had the power to edit and to build, in an experimental mode, their course. Also, in the module IX, the adoption of

an environmental cause of each locality, through Facebook, aiming at social and educational role.

Regarding the access, retention and adherence of the participants to the course and concurrently the scheduled activities, several conditions were considered, such as: the identification of the missing students and those infrequent in the virtual environment and the physical meetings, having then, as the first gesture, to put them in contact the distance tutors. If this were not a success, it was passed on the participant's name to the teaching assistant who retook contact by email and then by telephone.

Therefore, the intention was to recognize the situations that got in the way or prevented the monitoring of the course and also motivate the participants for the resumption of the scheduled activities. So it was constantly raised and addressed in the pedagogical meetings situations and problems, both in interpersonal, teaching and educational level, and other difficulties that arose throughout of the modules, such as those relating to access and platform operation. Above all, integrating and reviewing the pedagogical conditions; the concern was to provide constant feedback to the doubts, tasks and readings, as well as those that estimated punctuality, attendance, interactivity and in particular the autonomy and collective construction, always permeated by theoretical and practical articulation .

Routine activities were planned for the development of modules, they involve, in general, the schedule of meetings between the tutors coordinating, the group of tutors as well as the teachers authors. At the end of each module, it also sought to ensure and assimilate conditions linked to the systematization of activities, development of mentoring report, to be made available on the platform, with the experiences, suggestions and evaluation process. The reporting of notes, missing and grades, and module closing and the transition from one module to another, the learning revaluation activities. Sometimes there was the transition from one module to another at which point the module authors teachers being finalized and contacted the future teachers, aiming to contextualize the pedagogical conditions and trigger a process of vertical integration between them.

Whenever the teaching module was closed, it was elaborated a synthesis of each class involving pedagogical plans, educational, operational and those facing the offering of the next module. In this sense, the feedback to the authors teachers was essential for the redesign of activities and including the learning support, for students who did not obtain a satisfactory development in the module. Therefore, opportunities for discussion and reflection about the difficulties presented in the mentoring process, together with the teacher, with periodic evaluations of the groups about module proposals, including the self-assessment of teachers/tutors.

In the planning of the modules were planned at least three meetings (beginning, middle and module completion), lasting 40-45 days. Among the

scheduled activities, all material were available and delivered in advance of at least 15 days for distance tutors in order to allow reading and a preview of the proposals so that in the day of the first meeting of the module, one could argue critical points, the congruence, positive aspects to be considered, recognizing the different levels of experience and knowledge of the student group. Especially, prepared for the presentation and clarification of objectives, assessment methods, and resources and strategies employed to improve with students, in order to foster the axis of discussions and educational strategies adopted.

Another important strategy adopted in the course was the creation and enhancement of the space of the platform *Moodle* for tutors. The online space established the status of an enlarged and shared discussion with all the tutors, where the weekly or biweekly meetings were recorded, discussions and referrals originating from meetings with authors teachers. Also, desires, organization, questions and concerns are shared by the group or sent to tutoring coordination and then those directly engaged in the situation.

One of the team's concerns was to ensure the coordination of actions and the integration of the activities of online tutors with teachers authors and other participants of the course team, seeking to ensure the efficient and integrated communication, concerning educational activities and teaching-learning strategies, in emergency conditions, when it came to identifying problems that interfere with the proper development of the tutoring: pedagogical, administrative, technical and others. Thus, the actions reinforced the unit in the speech regarding the decisions and strategies for the dynamics of development of teaching modules.

So it was encouraged and fostered a critical and proactive approach on the part of tutors emphasizing collaborative nuances instead of the difficulties that emerged in the process, concerning the content of the modules, as well as in the progress of activities, thus having periodic evaluation of the mentoring process. Valuing and forwarding the new demands of tutoring at a distance to enhance the process, whether demanding the support of authors teachers, the platform administrator, the web designer, the tutoring coordination and of course coordination, for those intrinsic to the monitoring of students. While focusing on topics relevant to improving tutoring, parallel to the development of the modules.

6. Online Tutoring: Systematization, Organization and Evaluation Processes

The prospect of tutoring in the fifth *Curso* was based on a new proactive dialogue and autonomous action in the online learning process. The CTAR (Souza, Fiorentini & Rodrigues, 2010) calls for collaborative learning, so the tutor the distance should be imbued with this action, that is, it must

foster in the spaces of learning activities, proposals and issues to ensure dialogicity between tutor-student and among members of their own class. In this sense, learning should establish the autonomy of thinking, produce, of transforming, anchored in the theoretical and practical knowledge.

Nörnberg (2011) emphasizes that the tutor plays an important role in the pedagogical intervention, ensuring the teaching-learning process, mediated by technology, considering that the activities and the tools used, interfere and promote the cognitive, interactional processes among others. In parallel, the pedagogical actions promote the collective intelligence, with shared characteristics and it can mobilize affective aspects and aspects of the group consciousness. As stated by Oliveira (2011) recognizing the importance of material and symbolic artifacts that interfere with cognitive functioning, but which are directly linked to social practices and the meanings that emerge from these contexts. At the same time, it seeks to motivate students to organize their space of study, valuing punctuality, attendance and collaboration in selected tasks.

In the fifth *Curso*, the distance tutors were also responsible for assessing the learning that has been widely discussed with the authors teachers, responsible for developing and monitor their module. Thus, another function was to maintain constant dialogue with the teachers in order to enable the understanding of the dynamics of the module, content and of their own collaborative action among course participants. It is interesting to emphasize that tutors have taken the assessment of his students, however, bringing the difficulties and the problems in the periodic meetings with the teachers responsible for the module, as positive points and facilitators of learning.

Based on a proactive tutoring, the tutors, at the meetings of the modules, discussed the different forms of assessment and having knowledge about the learning process of class, pointing out the difficulties or the improved conditions proposed on tasks, sharing their experiences and perspective with teachers. Thus, in a collectively and contextualized way, it was discussed processes and selected evaluative forms, also deadlines for implementation and delivery, methods, approaches, among other activities related to the teaching-learning process.

In this sense, the course professionals retook the postulate that the evaluation reflects aspects of the teaching-learning process, one element that promotes the expansion, not having a merely classificatory character. How Leite and Fernandes (2014) point out that the evaluation should be an element that helps the teacher, a pedagogical support for learning, improving and promoting the development of skills and competencies. They point out that the evaluation can be an aspect of social equity, involving the co-responsibility as well as a promoter of self and the regulation of other

students, that is, in its sense of training, empowerment and pedagogical mediation.

Also the tutors broadened the contents offering supplementary materials indicating links and information about the EaD, for example, the issue of authorship and how it should be credited in the forums, in the production of written materials and to the further reflection on themes of their interests that could be harnessed to the final paper/ thesis. Similar to the position assumed by Onrubia, Colomina and Engel (2010) pedagogical intervention, in that case, adopted by tutors aimed at helping students find, organize and manage the knowledge, whether formal or informal, in order to maintain motivation and commitment with the course. Even helping to keep the focus on the objectives, activities and collaborative processes.

In agreement with the aforementioned authors, we understand that the primary conditions of the mentoring action emerged from various roles. As regards organization role the tasks related to the distribution of time, the resumption of the educational objectives of each module and of the course embracing the rules and conditions that ensure the participation and relevant evidence to the evaluation. At the same time, the social role, with a view to encouraging a social space that implement group interaction, dedicated to learning processes, the formation of a collaborative environment, and support the development and collective consciousness.

The intellectual role where the knowledge of the tutors (theoretical, practical, of past experiences) to pedagogical action, in the whole process, form optimizing the knowledge, acting in critical moments, reorganizing the activity, maintaining consistency and rescuing the goals of the discussions, and yet, summarizing the key points of the contents or tasks, also giving the necessary feedbacks.

The technical paper that refers to the domain and use of technological tools in the AVA to help students manage it and to solve emergency problems that arise. And the evaluative role, not only in a summative process condition, however, of adopting a condition of progress and development of the student, in the intellectual field, affective, social and as their cooperation with colleagues and division of labor. In this sense, the appreciation of the student's action in order to generate autonomy and leadership, as the dynamic behind the training process and self-management of knowledge.

So, it is rescued reflection of Quinquer (2003 as cited in Bassini & Behar, 2009) indicating that the way to approach the learning evaluation is inextricably linked with conceptions around the teaching-learning process. In particular, called by the researcher, communicative or psychosocial model where learning is a process derived from social interactions. Therefore, the assessment is characterized as an instrument that aims to improve the communication process and promotes learning, though, allows the appropriation of knowledge tools and suggested criteria for evaluation. In the

case, the assessment and learning activities are faces of the same coin, being integrated and congruent. Thus, students will gradually appropriating and taking over the responsibility and autonomy of the process, including through self-assessment and assessment of others.

As a result, emerged the constant worry about the teaching-learning, online, periodically fostering collaborative and collective construction of knowledge, without ignoring individual differences in the process, respecting the learning rhythms and different experiences as unique condition of development of the person. Therefore, the assessment constituted feedback condition for the process of knowledge and dialogicity. Being fundamental the qualification of tutors, to the extent that their pedagogical action was a differential in subsidized by reflection on the tools of learning, considering that knowledge transcends the modules, it becomes a self-training for course participants.

Rescuing the analysis of Belloni (2003 as cited in Marcuzzo & Gubianni, 2014) the author points out that the tutor guides students, settles questions and search strategies for the development of the content, as well as their effective participation in the assessment process, as well as educational support to enlarge the processes involved in learning. Of course, such learning situations are based on the proposed activities, material selection and evaluation strategies proposed by teachers. While the teacher creates activities for reflection.

In this sense, in the process of monitoring the student learning, the stimulus for participation, in the comments on the contributions made by each, in a forum discussion, for example, and the articulation of these different contributions and point of views, the integration of content, the feedback of the tasks and activities, in the assessment of learning, the tutor acquires density and visibility in distance education (EaD). Ensuring this perspective, he becomes partner of the student, in guiding, building a much more meaningful working relationship for the teaching-learning process.

6. Classroom Mentoring and the Role of Pedagogical Assistant: Preventive Processes and Interfaces

The teaching-learning process has multiple dynamics and due its complex nature, it was retaken the dropout problem in distance education (EaD). Aware of the problem efforts and investments were aimed to reduce the evasion in the distance education and that has been widely discussed in the academic world both for conceptual disagreement and for the large number of occurrences. Levy (2007 as cited in Santos & Oliveira, 2009) reinforces that even before the advent of the internet, distance learning courses had already a high dropout rate, around 25% to 60%, and this is the average in Brazil and also it remains in other countries. Santos and Neto (2009) rescued the concept

of evasion indicating that it is the withdrawal of the student at any time of course, without the student's return.

It is important to recognize the different factors that can influence the amount of the evasion, among them: the traditional conception of teaching face to face, referring only the condition of interaction, affective states, also group formation. Added to the handling and poor knowledge of computer, internet and AVA tools by students, how to use chat, email and access a text, combined with the absence of habits, skills and competencies related to written communication process which then prevents the essential interactivity to the process. In this case, like responding to a forum, performing a task as directed and to perform a search on the web, including the absence of a physical space that agglutinates students, as in the classroom model.

Complementing the picture, they identify other factors related to socio-demographic status of the student (age, gender, marital status, number of children and working conditions), motivation and interests between the different aspects that compete to the course curriculum (design and teaching strategies) and pedagogical action of the tutors (Santos & Neto, 2009).

Added to this set, the need for independence and autonomy on the study times, in a particular systematic, considering the demands of adulthood, for example, how to coordinate the time for work, family and studies, with personal interests. Having as reference that 70% of students enrolled in distance education (EaD) work full time and it is essential to systematize and organize time (Santos & Neto, 2009). Mistakenly, some students believe they can study anytime without a schedule, that they can manage the pace and hours of studies, with the illusion that when they are insomniacs it is the time to engage on their activities. Forgetting that in fact, there is a the scheduled time for the activities and the accumulation of content and that the absence on the platform causes no integration with the group and the lack of engagement in the collaborative process for building knowledge and exchanges, resulting in damage to the acquisition knowledge and as well as the motivation to continue the course.

Such conditions should be analyzed when assessing the success or failure of the course considering not only quantitative aspects, but drop-out rates. Reiterating the situation, Almeida (2008) states that it is necessary to recognize the factors that contributed to the evasion, focusing not just in the final number of students who completed or not the course. Therefore, the fifth *Curso de Especialização em Educação Continuada e a Distância*, endorsed that evasion would be considered the output of students that were effectively participating in at least one teaching module. Thus, it was not considered those who enrolled in the course, more specifically, in the first module, under the guidance of local coordination without having knowledge of the proposal, time and curriculum to be incremented. After all, they never participated in any activity or kept in touch with his group.

To confront the problem of evasion was proposed a systematic monitoring involving three actors in the network: the online tutor, the classroom tutor and the pedagogical assistant. Thus, the online tutor for the constant and close contact, has always been the first professional to make the dialogue with these students by their primary function, the pedagogical articulation, emotional, social development and in their approach with their students, could prevent or reduce the number of avoidance. That way all students who started the course received support from the online tutor through messages of encouragement, monitoring of the development of the student in the AVA and even a 'rescue of that who was already hanging by a thread'. As evasion prevention strategy actions were used that would promote the interaction, stimulation and motivation through motivational messages in the forums or via individual email.

Complementing the rescue of the students with problems, the pedagogical assistant and the classroom tutor associated with the mentoring coordinator and in special cases, the course coordinator, reinforced this action. After several contacts and conversations of the online tutor with the student and if not achieving success, the second step was to submit the names of students on the list of abandonment for the tutoring coordinator to replay and analyze strategies along with the classroom tutor and the pedagogical assistant so that they can establish new contacts through email, and in the absence of answers, via telephone to listen to the student, identify their problems and propose alternative so he can continue to perform well in the course.

The coordinated actions are supported in Almeida's research (2008) in which distance tutors, the classroom tutor, pedagogical assistant and the tutoring coordination, incessantly sought to minimize these problems, the adoption of unification of interventions, from extending deadlines in relation to the preparation of tasks, answer questions through chat or skype, or even know what was going on with students and how they could help to promote his return.

Identifying the problem as an educational phenomenon, he saw the role of the classroom tutor, along with the online tutor, as one of the actors that could interfere with this cycle. In reports of online tutors in an informal survey conducted by tutoring coordination, it was found that in 100% of the students of one class worked full time and complained of lack of time for dedication to ongoing activities, in this perspective, it was registered the withdrawal of a student, justified by the physical, emotional and social overload, to reconcile the volume of work and activities of the course. In another situation, the abandonment of a student who dropped out at the last module, in the *Trabalho de Conclusão de Curso* (TCC) - Work Course Conclusion because she had failed to coordinate the work tasks, the demands of the course and family conditions. Situations like these are recurrent in the distance courses/online that need to be studied to find alternatives that may

potentialize the online courses and encourage the training of many professionals who can not afford to make classroom courses of continuing education.

In our course, the role of classroom tutor was crucial, she accompanied each of the six classes, the posts of the students and also the demands of the online tutors as to the remoteness or infrequency of students in activities in the course platform. She accompanied the messages of the online tutors for students and reinforced to them the invitation to follow activities on the course and remembering the importance of the presence and monitoring for the success in it and was always alert to the return of student to the platform and activities.

The classroom tutor in meetings scheduled with online tutors, mentoring coordination and course coordination and module teachers performed on an ongoing basis, the survey of absences in the activities. She also was tracking using the *Moodle* platform, identifying the access of the participants and the engagement in activities. At the beginning, middle and at the end of the module it was performed a survey of dropouts, reporting its history, the contacts made to encourage the return to activities and the justifications given by the students. After all, it is investigated what are the reasons that led them to give up the education in order to obtain information and data on aspects that caused the abandonment.

In possession of the information above, it was prepared a preliminary report by module, by registering the amount of dropouts, as well as the most frequent reasons reported by course participants. Constituting a steady job and rapid response to the online tutors, teachers authors of the module and the tutoring/mentoring coordination and general coordination of the course. The information was then presented to the team, involving all professionals of the course so that collectively they could seek alternatives to support the student and therefore minimize the triggering conditions of evasion in the course.

Another actor who was differentiated during the development process was the pedagogical assistant that according to Escalante (2013) is an expert working as articulator between the pedagogical coordination, coordination of tutoring, the classroom tutor and online tutor, and extending his contribution to authors teachers, students and the ongoing support of staff in the context of information and guidance on the administrative part of the course. To catalyze the actions and integrate the actors of the course, the pedagogical assistant employed dissemination strategies for information and general guidelines, using TICs, whether posting general reports on the platform, communicating by e-mail, and even making contact by phone.

The pedagogical assistant was directly involved and was of continued support to the demands of the course coordinator and mentoring coordinator, having access to information from actors and also the *Moodle* platform. The activity also extended to the authors teachers in order to meet emergency

demands or to answer questions about the organization of the course. Also sought messages and students posts in the spaces involving general questions on the course, requests by the secretariat, contact with teachers, course coordination and also forwarding the solution for platform access issues through the specific interface available in the virtual environment of the course to contact the pedagogical assistant, which were standing the aforementioned information and the students could contact or answer questions regarding the dynamics of the course and organization of it.

On the tenth module, at the *Trabalho de Conclusão de Curso*, the pedagogical assistant worked as a great articulator, following the posts of the 10 groups formed, each having their respective mentor and forwarding it to their mentors for student support in preparing its TCC. She even accompanied the physical meetings of the course team that occurred with the group of teachers of the course, coordination of tutoring, the course coordinator and the presence of the classroom tutor, participating in discussions and recording it and subsequently disclosing to its participants.

7. Pedagogical Interface between Online Tutoring and the Authors Professors: The Construction of Knowledge and the AVA

In the proposal of the fifth *Curso de Educação Continuada e a Distância* was predicted the importance of dialogue among the actors, in particular, between authors teachers responsible for structuring the proposal and the pedagogical planning of the module and the online tutors who would develop the content, activities and evaluation processes with the participants of the course. There were 17 teachers authors and supervisors, among them there are 14 doctors (in the fields of Education, Psychology and Sociology) and 03 masters in Education, they formed pairs or there were three together to the development of activities in the AVA, by area of interest and action in education and the research for the development of teaching modules that composed the course. All of the teachers had proven experience in higher education and distance education.

The authors teachers participated in the initial training of online tutors giving an overview of their education modules, presented the overall objectives and the content to be addressed. In the construction period of the the AVA, the authors teachers were accompanied by the coordination of mentoring and coordination of course also counting on web designer support for organizing the teaching module and its activities, text, images and exercises in the course platform. In that moment it was constituted as a systematic on the course for the pedagogical design of the modules, going from the inclusion of the module plan, structure, sequence and distribution of content, to the activities of evaluation, not necessarily ready, but proposals in development. In that way, many authors teachers have chosen to continue to

discuss the evaluative dynamics with online tutors, as they were accompanying classes.

Thus, the evaluation process was not only a moment, but would be characterized as an element of the teaching-learning process. This way, the evaluation assumes an emancipatory aspect, adopting a forward-looking action, so it is possible to identify that the student can acquire new skills, abilities and knowledge. However, not perceiving as a final point, but giving continuity to the learning that happens after it. That is, after the modules, how the participants would expand the teaching-learning process, using their workspace and also on a personal level.

The meetings of the authors teachers with the online tutors occurred fortnightly or weekly, depending on the needs of teachers and the dynamic of the module. In it, beyond the programmed contents it was discussed the conduct of activities, positive points, difficulties and suggestions for overcoming the problems regarding the teaching-learning process, the level of interactivity between the class and the collaborative construction of knowledge. To the closing of each teaching module, there were one or two meetings to analyze the moment of closing of the activities, especially with propositions regarding those course participants who had not finished the activities or, in particular, those with difficulties in final evaluation. This way, together, author teacher and online tutor decided to program new additional assessment activities or extend the deadlines for the delivery of activities. Period in which the online tutors planned to accompany the participants who were struggling to guide, correct and do the feedback of evaluation results. Subsequently, sending the results to the authors teachers and classroom tutor and posting the results on the platform.

The authors teachers had access to the evaluation and the results, following the response on the platform, in short, they had full access to the AVA, and maintaining communication with the group of tutors in a special space created in the module. If necessary they made contact with the tutor, depending on the need for module evaluation review.

In summary, the authors teachers not only elaborated the thematic modules, but guided, discussed, received and gave feedback of the contents, of the learning activities with tutors. They were not in constant contact with the students on the platform, but they followed through the 'eyes' and 'words' of the tutors. In the module shutdown, the online tutors gave feedback to the teachers involved, from the organization of virtual space, content, materials and selected tools of the *Moodle* to the module evaluation. Simultaneously, they performed the self-assessment of their work and also the team work, pointing crucial points to be observed for the next modules and offers. The authors teachers, did the same regarding the evaluation of the module and the teaching-learning process, as well as the contributions and improvements to the module.

5. Conclusion: Reflections, Challenges and New Perspectives on the Mentoring Process

As previously emphasized, for tutoring developed in fifth *Curso de Especialização em Educação Continuada e a Distância* the option was that it was proactive, engaged, articulate and with character of continuous formation and remains connected to the political-pedagogical project of the course. In particular, because the tutoring becomes an essential quality element to the learning process and its relationship with the different actors of the learning network becomes critical. The unity in the action, not only reflected in the teaching-learning process, but in monitoring and frequent exchanges of knowledge, experience and education prospects.

It is worth mentioning that the construction of tutoring, sedimented in the design of the *Comunidade de Trabalho e Aprendizagem em Rede* - CTAR coined by course teachers, mostly researchers of EaD, approaches the four pillars for education of the future, propagated by Delors and collaborators (1977) in the interplay of learning to be, learning to do, learning to learn and learn to live. And that, in a peculiar way, are consistent with the understanding and the development of new TICs, to systematically ensure the aspect of interactivity, the async/sync in contrast to the linearity and the ability to simulate and design events of everyday and events in the imagination space (Carli & Polato, 2002; Nunes, 2013).

It is essential to recall that effective communication in virtual space, does not depend solely on technological means, first of all, it comes the development of skills and communicative competence that evidence affective processes, respecting the pace of students, with patience, sensitivity, attention, reading beyond the writing. Above all, in a new culture and peculiar learning space, fluid and steadily interaction between students and teachers-tutors create an atmosphere of trust that favors the formation of bonds that influences the process of acquiring knowledge. Also, in the permanence and in the investment of the students in this educational space, as defended by Reis (2000).

Thus, the political pedagogical project of the fifth *Curso*, not only made explicit the roles and functions of each actor: teacher-author, online tutor, classroom tutor, pedagogical assistant, as well as the articulators and the general coordination of the course and coordination of mentoring, in addition to the technical and administrative support, the platform administrator and the web designer. Meetings with all those involved were foreseen in order to facilitate joint action and at the same time interconnected to promote the success of the course. In this way, there were several times when the whole team was present, other times the meetings were held in small groups in accordance with the objectives outlined, as the constant contact between the

mentoring group and authors teachers in all the nine modules. Better yet, the tutors, the mentoring coordination and coordination of course with the web designer.

With this perspective, it is important that the mentoring process is set being the online tutor a professional and protagonist of the teaching-learning process, mediated by technology. It is possible and viable to understand its function, through its practical activity and, in particular, on building a critical position, integrating it into the construction process, transforming not only the knowledge, but relations between subjects, culture and the educational process. From their experiences, their action and a quality in the educational space, it is believed to be possible to undertake efforts to change politics, administrative, and in their own culture and practice of distance education (EaD) and classroom and virtual spaces that bring together these professionals. Finally, understand that the mentoring held at fifth *Curso de Especialização em Educação Continuada e a Distância* was very productive in the course, but above all, was productive in the training of professionals who participated, and today, in most cases, they are developers of training actions with the EaD, and have the understanding that is needed to ensure a quality distance education, and that is possible and necessary to accomplish (CTAR Group, 2006).

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