

INTED **2013**

**7th International Technology, Education and
Development Conference**

Valencia (Spain), 4th - 6th of March, 2013.

CONFERENCE
PROCEEDINGS

IV.8
(2)

Published by

International Association of Technology, Education and Development (IATED)
www.iated.org

INTED2013 Proceedings

7th International Technology, Education and Development Conference
March 4th-6th, 2013 — Valencia, Spain

Edited by

L. Gómez Chova, A. López Martínez, I. Candel Torres
International Association of Technology, Education and Development
IATED

ISBN: 978-84-616-2661-8

Depósito Legal: V-424-2013

Book cover designed by
J.L. Bernat

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TUTORS IN DISTANCE EDUCATION. FROM ACADEMIA TO THE PERSONAL SPHERE

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Abstract

Distance education in recent decades has grown exponentially, by reason of the great advantages of modifying the time-space paradigm.

We observe that various universities, while not totally virtual, offer courses, specialties or degrees in virtual mode.

From experience in these types of courses are wide differences in students regarding the appropriation of knowledge and although you would think in the first instance at the student's abilities on the generation of their self-learning, the truth is that increasingly there is a need of a tutor / teacher with higher skills.

Clearly, the student does not build knowledge alone, but through interaction with others both in the educational virtual or in site modality and at a particular cultural context.

Through a case study analysis of a virtual master in Mexico, it has been observed that the tutor not only has the function of orientation in a particular educational area, but requires extra skills largest the exclusively academic.

Thus, the main function of the tutor is to guide their students, help them build knowledge, but must go further. A true tutor must go to the personal, and this by virtue of that knowledge building is part of a human being made not only by knowledge but by emotions, personal problems, doubts, perceptions.

This paper will present some of the main considerations from the analysis of a case study we present the need for tutors not only in the academic field but also in the personal sphere. These results are part of a larger research being done at the National Polytechnic Institute (Mexico) in the field of distance education.

Keywords: Tutor, distance education, skills tutor, personal sphere.

1 INTRODUCTION

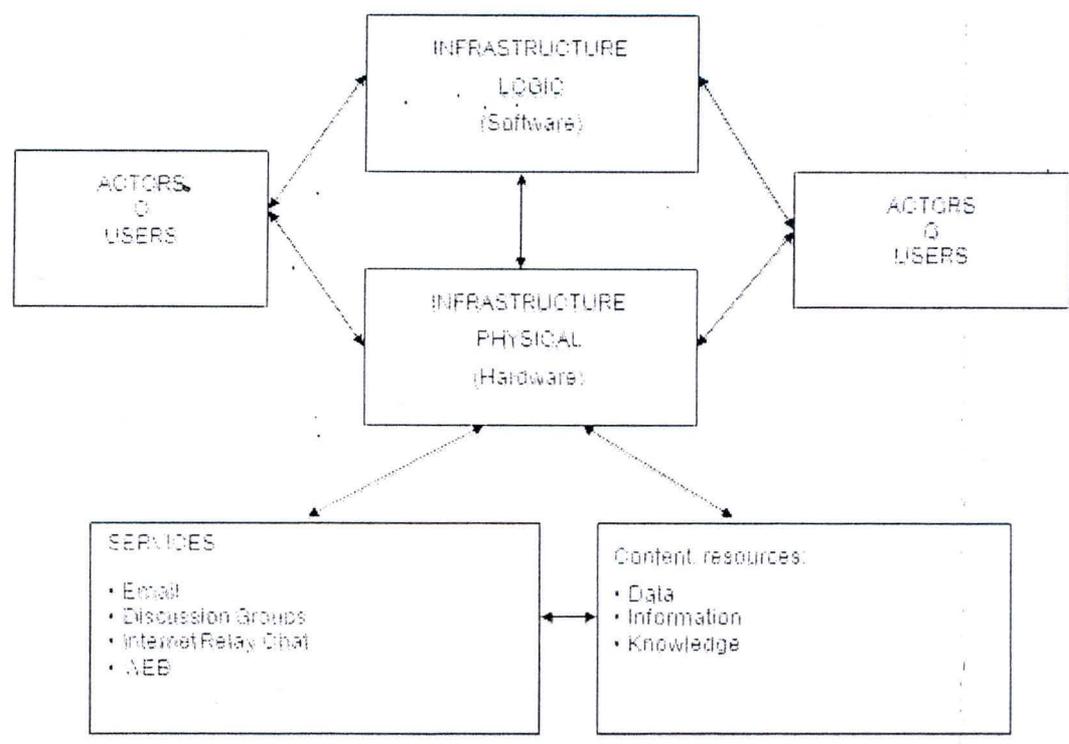
Distance education is particularly noticeable in the last two decades of the twentieth century. In the area of graduate distance education which is the work in this paper, we can say that there are different educational offerings, such as training or professional development or certain subjects, to complete programs of Masters or Phd degree (the latter alternative is very low, even worldwide).

The information and communication technologies used in distance education systems among institutions bidders are unequal in terms of technologies used and the degree of virtualization offering. This is expected because it is a phenomenon of integration and technological appropriation. Some technologies offer a high degree of interactivity between users, multimedia experiences, while others typically offer mainly information.

Among the technologies used, the web application is called platforms for virtual learning environments, also called LMS (Learning Management System). Among the best known technology platforms and used throughout the world, particularly at the top, is the moodle platform, designed in 2002 and to this date has millions of users.

Joseph Silvo [1] comments that obey virtual university structure elements of any communication system mediated by computer, these basic elements are shown in Figure 1:

Fig. 1
Basic components: communication systems mid computer



These elements are interrelated according to the educational foundations given by the general pedagogical model based institutions providing open and distance education.

2 PEDAGOGICAL MODEL IN DISTANCE EDUCATION

Ogalde and Islas, mentioned that a pedagogical model is conceived set of theoretical and methodological assumptions that underlie the fundamental elements of the teaching-learning process and guiding educational practice mediated by technology. Aspects such as the structure and organization of content, determining the type of knowledge that is to be achieved, the identification of the contexts of use of knowledge and its application in collaborative situations, selection of media and forms of content presentation and determining strategies for evaluating learning and performance, require explanatory and prescriptive framework that provides organic and provide practical guidelines for its implementation. [2]

This educational model brings a paradigm shift in traditional working in higher education; UNESCO indicates that these changes are characterized by:

- From a teacher-centered teaching to learning-oriented and student resources.
- From mass pedagogical work to individual work.
- From closed systems to open systems without formal parameters.
- From the classroom to the work and performance-based learning contexts.
- From isolation to grid environments.
- From teaching to the interactive way.
- From educational management resistant to change to a proactive management [3]

This educational paradigm is not entirely new, it is a pedagogical movement that was born long ago, but in the absence of the characteristics of NTCI, the model remained relegated.

4. Faculty

The first ring is the 4 main elements: Administrative Services, Student Resources, service / support, and faculty with their respective teachers. In the second ring indicates the services and activities offered by each component. In the third internal ring are observed connection types with four different areas. In the fourth ring shows the transmission systems and services that can offer the service elements.

At the centre of the model are students, so the model is called student-centred.

Each of these components is also on-site learning universities. From these experiences, began to develop virtual services and / or distance. Now you have some totally new and planned procedures specifically for remote systems.

In distance learning systems, both students and teachers, as well as the technical and administrative staff, they are separated geographically, both in other states and in different countries. Therefore, distance education, requires more technical support in different places and specific training of instructors, is not the same as teaching a class to a captive audience at a time and place, to give a lecture is transmitted via satellite or the Internet, without the public front, preventing immediate feedback to the sender.

It is for this reason that members of the faculty (teachers / tutors), they must be trained to prepare their classes with different teaching methods and get a variety of visual aids with various technologies, both for the submission of materials as also for the evaluation of the courses.

2.2 Tutor in distance education

Respect to the role of the tutor, we agree with the definition of Mario de Miguel [7] indicates that tutoring is the time spent by the teacher to exercise care, guidance and advice to students (...) personalized way that focuses in (...) to support the learning process. the tutor in distance education

Speaking specifically of the professor / tutor in distance education systems, now also called e-tutor, Denis, Watland, Pirotte and Verday [8] Consider the relationship e-tutor/estudiante, can be classified into central roles: 1) content facilitator, 2) facilitating metacognition, 3) facilitate the process, 4) advisor / counselor, 5) evaluator, 6) technical resource provider. The peripheral roles, would be 1) administrator, 2) design, 3) investigator.

This is very important because sometimes considered just to say the name tutor, already knew that functions should be performed, causing not develop or take into account certain competencies / skills tutors themselves. This results in problems with the student.

Jensy Campos, Olga Brenes & Adrian Solano, considered that the development of the competence profile for teachers in online education (tutor) should be based on the principles of constructivism, among other points because from this theoretical also considered that learning must be directly related to the context and reality of the student, you must also consider the relationships and social interactions as essential elements for learning [9].

3 METHODOLOGY

We used qualitative methodology applied in a case study. We observed a group of 1st semester of the Master of Science and Technology Teaching (MDCyT), provided by the Economics, administrative and social researchers Centre (CIECAS) of the National Polytechnic Institute (Mexico), August-December 2012 period, when it starts the delivery of this distance masters. The model operates in the form of skills. This is the first generation.

MDCyT appears to satisfy the training needs of teachers in the context of institutional change for the innovation of science and technology education, which is required to respond to the current demands and requirements of the global society , regional and local levels. This degree is a postgraduate career-oriented, so it emphasizes the theoretical and practical teacher training in order to impact on the development of teaching practice in different areas. This master incorporates teaching skills, research and innovation required for professional practice of teachers who teach the learning units of science and technology in the different educational levels (upper middle, higher and postgraduate).

To open this option distance education was formed a large team working where various specialists involved both the thematic content, but also curriculum planning, educational consultants, evaluation

specialists, management analysts, including the technical staff and design computer graphic for the start line of content, among other actors, a situation in which there will be no deepened in this paper because it is not the main objective.

The master works with the Moodle platform, which offers the content, activities and multimedia resources, students have their portfolio of evidence.

As the first generation, it was decided to have small groups to work the system better. Approved the admission process 15 people, 13 completed the process. At the end of the semester, a student requested break, someone else did not finish, both about personal situations.

Each student was designated 2 tutors per subject in this case we will call specialists and tutors metacognition (classification proposed by Denis, Watland, Pirotte and Verday). 4 subjects were enrolled students online. Additionally, each student was given a tutor (more towards the trend of facilitator of processes), who served as counselor to guide studies in all academic and administrative matters.

4 RESULTS :

We performed a field observation. Moodle platform itself gives reports on the activity carried out by each student and the times used, their qualifications, their feedbacks specialized tutors per subject. They had two sessions during the semester: one at the beginning of the semester, and other at the end. We observed that in a particular subject (Project Seminar) the students asked sometimes attendance counselling, arguing that they understood better.

We agree with Paolo Ardizzone and Pier Rivoltella [10], they talk about the importance of not only discipline mentor but also a tutor relational, that is usually not necessary on-site classroom training.

While it was noted that tutors / counselors talked with students about their academic progress, oriented on technical issues (first approaches to moodle system), administrative situations and school rules, was observed in all cases the comments on skills (or lack of skills) personal and personnel problems (to varying degrees), which appeared during the semester. Also observed among students (sometimes digital networks) are discussing their own problems (eg reading too much or many activities) but the tutor didn't know it. Sometimes there was little interaction counselor / student. Sometimes the tutor did not know general data of the student, (where he works, or what his specialty), the administrative thought if the tutor had doubts, he could consult the file.

5 CONCLUSIONS

The development of online education requires a different view to face education. In response, the administrative policies of distance education as well as the contents and processes are already working. The teacher's role is changing, but there is still more detail this transition. This requires specific training. It enables teachers to manage educational methods for the technical management of information and communication technologies, professional refresher course in their own subject area, but it seems that you do not need more training if they act as advisor/tutor.

We need to train tutors / counsellors with the skills necessary to accompany the student. It is central part of a distance education system.

The view that the teacher only transmits knowledge in their area of expertise, including classroom education, is changing. Therefore in distance education, a better change, because as we have mentioned the tutor not only fulfils a unique function, hence the need to identify the necessary profiles and then train and educate specialized advisors/tutor in distance education.

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