

## The autonomy of the student of higher education at a distance: In the discipline of methodology of teaching in higher education



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### ABSTRACT

In this work we seek to discuss and present some issues related to the autonomy of higher education students in the distance learning modality. We begin our discussion seeking to identify and characterize some of the factors that may impair the autonomy of students in their education, and then investigate the aspects that can contribute to motivate, stimulate and strengthen the autonomy of students, both for learning and research, as well as in their continuing education.

**Keywords:** Higher Education, Student, Learning, Autonomy.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

For the teaching/learning process to be effective it is necessary to have the commitment and commitment of the teacher to teach and be a cooperator or mediator with him. On the other hand, it is also essential that the student is motivated and interested in knowledge, which ends up generating a certain autonomy, which is essential in teaching/learning and integral formation of the human being. This is one of the goals that education professionals want to achieve, in addition to passing on the knowledge of their area. So the theme The Autonomy of the Student of Higher Education in EAD in the Discipline of Methodology of Education in Higher Education is relevant to the present time, in order to detect the problem, observe factors that hinder and others that can contribute to the collaboration and formation of the individual. In addition, the current emphasis of the teaching/learning process is the competencies to be developed in the student and that becomes the protagonist of their training.

Currently the labor market requires experience and training of professionals. Many worry about earning a title and/or certificate so they can have their job. Others to earn a pay raise. However, there are also many who are not concerned with learning and knowledge and continuing education. They do not seek to deepen their knowledge and skills. Some lean on colleagues, plagiarize, waste a lot of time



on social media, reality TV, games, etc. Many still do not find those who encourage them to study and train, for various reasons.

Society has always had the need to have in its midst people with experiences in various social contexts, such as: integral formation, interested and involved with various issues, who have their opinions formed and there is no different when they are alone or depending on the situations, or according to the people with whom they live. The world and society need people who are aware, critical, and engaged in the common welfare.

The personal motivation in relation to the research is related to the interest in the theme, also the continuing education, the perception of the social, ethical and moral problems of the human being and the continuous search not to annul, forget and break achievements achieved, but increasingly seeking improvement and improvement.

This work will involve Bibliographic Research of renowned authors in the area of education that address the theme directly and indirectly, as well as other authors and articles that can assist in this task. This research wants to address only some aspects on the subject, even knowing that the theme is broad, current and of paramount importance for education and society.

Among the authors to be cited we can find, such as, for example, Freire (1996), who in his book *Pedagogy of Autonomy* seeks to show that "the human being is inconclusive, constantly needs curiosity, in a permanent movement of search and search". He does not conform to self-indulgence or to the thought that we can do nothing against social reality.

Another author researched is Moacir Gadotti (1997), who in his book *Escola Cidadã* talks among several subjects related to school and learning that it should also be involved with the autonomy of students, preparing them to be autonomous citizens, changing a little the emphasis of current education, which seems to still be contentist and functionalist.

In the same way will be pointed out the LDB itself, Laws of Guidelines and Bases of National Education, number 9,394, of December 20, 1996, in its Article 43, item IV, says that "knowledge is the heritage of humanity and that it must be disclosed". It is also interesting to analyze item V, because it shows us that it is necessary to "arouse the permanent desire for cultural and professional improvement in the individual, incorporating and integrating into the world and life", as one of the primary purposes of education.

## **2 THE IMPORTANCE OF THE FAMILY IN THE INTEGRAL FORMATION OF THE INDIVIDUAL**

According to Medeiros (2003), dealing with early childhood education and analyzing the family, which also has an influence on students of higher education, addresses an important issue. According to her, the family has undergone changes, because they have also happened in the



socioeconomic fields, especially with the rise of capitalism, the arrival of globalization and the advancement of digital technologies, thus also affecting the molds of the family, morals, ethics.

In society the family still remains indispensable and the center of education, reference, love and support, is the *mater cell*, where values are initiated and practiced through daily life. It is in the family where the first teachings begin, although not systematized and programmed as in formal education, but no less important, although when the individual enters the professional field informal education becomes insufficient, because for the emancipation of the citizen it is necessary to have a systematized learning.

In the education and training of individuals, the family and the school are very important, as stated in the LDB of National Education, Law number 9,394/96, in its Article 2, which says that together with the State education is also the responsibility of the Family. Both are engaged in this role. However, the functions of the State and the family are different, however, one does not cancel out the other, nor do they compete or diverge from each other, nor do they replace, but they should add, add and complement teachings necessary for the formation and life of each student of Higher Education. Although, according to WEIS (2005), the family is sick, increasingly distant, does not really assume its role and is losing its authority. This factor undoubtedly implies the autonomy of the students.

We also know how much the mass media have an influence on individuals and households. It is enough to observe how much people are updated with the news that passes on television, however in many other relevant aspects of life and society they are totally alienated.

### 3 THE BRAZILIAN SOCIOECONOMIC AND EDUCATIONAL SITUATION

Although there have been many changes in Brazilian society, unfortunately still a large part of society is in very low socioeconomic conditions, even though there are social programs in Brazil to eradicate poverty. Consequently, the level of education and learning is conditioned or linked to these factors. We know that all this influences people's awareness and critical spirit in the face of reality and social problems. In addition, we constantly see problems in politics and ethics, as well as with licit and illicit drugs and in people's morals. This sum of factors is an aggravating factor to the individual, because it can lead to self-indulgence, discouragement and to act in the same way, because around him apparently everyone acts in the same way.

Another factor that affects society is the devaluation of teachers, which automatically affects education, including at the higher level. These should be prepared, have a continuous and adequate training, have didactic materials and resources available so that they can perform their function and meet the needs of students. It would be necessary to have a more intense policy of incentive for education professionals to make a continuation of their training, which would have practical results in the classroom and resulting in a much better education.



Some teachers to be able to receive more at the end of the month and meet the family budget accumulate functions and jobs. In this way they are often tired, disinterested and unmotivated when it comes to working in the classrooms. We need to invest in education and education workers so that future generations can enjoy an improved society.

#### **4 EAD: A NEW MODALITY OF EDUCATION**

In the current world, according to BELLONI (2008), changes have occurred at a very fast pace, including in the field of information and communication. With globalization, it brought changes at all levels of society and interfered in the structures of education, still changing lifestyles, consumption, creating different ways of seeing the world and new ways of learning.

From the 90s, with the social and economic transformations, a gap was created between the educational systems and the social demands and the EAD was a way to reach the social demands and the particular search for formation. This form of teaching/learning has consolidated itself as a new way of teaching and learning. To do so, it was necessary to reformulate curricula and methods, without neglecting the scientific spirit and research skills, according to Belloni (2008, p. 5).

Currently there are many courses offered by EAD. Although there are tutors and the website of the teaching entity itself has a lot of support material, it is perceived that there should be a much greater interest, self-discipline and autonomy on the part of the student than perhaps in the face-to-face courses.

#### **5 THE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

Education is the means by which the human being is trained, instrumentalized, becomes able to be inserted in professional sectors, to participate in the development of Brazilian society, and to collaborate in its continuous formation. The informal education received on a day-to-day basis is not enough to qualify citizens to perform their profession well. For this, Higher Education Institutions are organized and seek to adapt their curricula and methods according to current laws and social demands. According to LDB:

To train graduates in the different areas of knowledge, able to enter professional sectors and to participate in the development of Brazilian society, and to collaborate in their continuous training. (LDB, Art. 43, II, 1996)

We have already seen that new discoveries of knowledge, technologies and so many other factors make people need constant learning, updating and improvement, so that they can be active, competent, aware, critical and determined citizens. In this way they can learn about the knowledge already achieved by science, which is the patrimony of humanity, and contribute to the environment



in which they live, whether in the family, society, NGOs, governmental, philanthropic or private entities, churches, etc.

To encourage the work of research and scientific investigation, aiming at the development of science and technology and the creation and diffusion of culture, and thus develop the understanding of man and the environment in which he lives. (LDB, Art. 43, III, 1996).

For education to achieve its objectives we need prepared teachers, structures focused on education, knowledge, methods, curricula and the indispensable presence of the student, who in turn needs to correspond with the teaching/learning process with his presence and interest. The student must be ready to receive knowledge, willing to participate in the process of education and know that knowledge is continued, it is a permanent search for knowledge.

To arouse the permanent desire for cultural and professional improvement and to enable the corresponding concretization, integrating the knowledge that is being acquired in an intellectual structure that systematizes the knowledge of each generation. (LDB, Art. 43, V, 1996).

The human being is an inconclusive being, he will always have something new to learn, since the world constantly undergoes transformation. Technologies evolve every day, and the human being, regardless of the area in which he works needs to update. Even in homes, where children attend school, college or university, or someone ends up having contact with new technologies or knowledge, or in their own coexistence, individuals face new situations, discoveries and challenges that they need to face, according to Freire (1996, p. 58):

It is in the incompleteness of being, which is known as such, that education is founded as a permanent process. Women and men became educable to the extent that they recognized themselves as unfinished. It was not education that made women and men educable, but the awareness of their incompleteness is what generated educability.

We can affirm that knowledge and education are one as an endless, unfinished path, a permanent process. Also change the technologies and people change their customs, way of acting and thinking. Therefore, each and every professional needs to deepen and update. In education, especially at the higher level, the same thing happens, perhaps more intensely than at other levels, because they are adults and many have already entered the labor market.

## **6 THE AUTONOMY OF THE STUDENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

Until the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries we had an Education that is classified by theorists as being "traditional", where the teacher was the one who held the knowledge and transmitted it to the student. From new lines of thought and theoretics, this has been changing and the student is seen as being the subject of his own learning. This new school period may have been wrong to let



education focus only on the interest of the student and the immediate needs of the student and the group to determine the axis or direction of education.

Meanwhile, the socio-historical conception, whose main theorist is L. S. Vygotsky, which suggests that man is an active, social and historical being, that the current society is a historical production of men, we are today the result of what has accumulated to the present day, and so through us tomorrow there will be another reality. Therefore, qualified professionals in teaching / learning can give space to opinions, desires and desires, however, do not lose sight of the objectives, goals, skills, knowledge and other qualifications that the courses and training seek.

There are many factors that contribute to teaching/learning, some have been cited by education experts, but it is also important to highlight especially the commitment of teachers and students to education and the good relationship between them, which Vygotsky calls affectivity, which can contribute to the teaching/learning process, according to Libâneo (1990, p. 24):

In dialogue, as a basic method, the relationship is horizontal; where educator and students position themselves as subjects of the act of knowledge. The criterion of good relationship is the total identification with the people, without which the pedagogical relationship loses consistency.

In Higher Education it is expected that students are more mature than in Elementary and High School, because many are already professionals who work in various professions of society, already have life experience and their personality and identity formed. Even so, the human being is a social being, not a purely rational one. Their integral formation also involves well-being, being well-liked, being loved and respected.

Everyone knows, according to Belloni (2008), the importance of the integral formation of the human being and gradually the social demands also require more and more professionals with multiple capacities, who know how to work in teams and have good interpersonal relationships, who incessantly seek for updating and improvement, who are able to learn new concepts and techniques, capable of facing different and even adverse situations, be responsible, flexible, cooperative and control over yourself.

Contemporary societies and those of the near future, in which the generations that now enter schools will act, require a new type of individual and worker in all economic sectors: the emphasis will be on the need for multiple competencies of the individual, on teamwork, on the ability to learn and to adapt to new situations. To survive in society and integrate into the labor market of the twenty-first century, the individual needs to develop a series of new skills: self-management (ability to organize his own work), problem solving, adaptability and flexibility in the face of new tasks, take responsibility and learn for himself and constantly work in a group in a cooperative and little hierarchical way. (BELLONI, 2008, p. 5)

According to HUEW, autonomy is attributed to those who are able to dominate or determine, through their reason, their behavior, act, think and take responsibility. It is unlike the one who



accomplishes all this from others, without having his own personality and behavior, without having the commitment, purpose and motivation to go in pursuit of his goals.

Autonomy derives from the Greek *autos* (by itself) and *nomos* (law), comprises the power to determine oneself the law itself. It is contrary to *heterotomy*, a law that proceeds from another, *hetero* (other) and *nomos* (law). To be autonomous is to be able to think, to act, to transform, to make use of one's own reason, to decide for oneself about one's acts and choices, to take responsibility for one's judgments and actions, to assume oneself as a social subject, with the freedom to choose one's path and to walk it with one's own legs.

(HUEW, Elisa Lioe Teh. The Importance of Autonomy in Foreign Language Learning for Free Course Students. Available at: <http://www.veramenezes.com/elisa.htm>. Accessed 2013-01-22)

The autonomous student or learner, in addition to being responsible, motivated and interested, is able to manage his time, life, purposes, learning, have clear goals, know what is important, is productive, knows how to evaluate, knows his tastes and qualities and does not need to wait for the initiative of others to direct his life.

Most authors agree with the definition of autonomous learner as that student who has the ability to control their own learning, and to take responsibility for all decisions regarding all aspects of their learning, such as determining the objectives to be achieved, defining the content, evaluating how they are doing, among others. The autonomous student knows what his preferences are, his ability and ability, and is aware of his limits. For Dickinson (1995), autonomous students become more motivated, and with this, autonomy contributes to a more efficient work. He further cites Knowles (1975), who says that there is compelling evidence that people who take the initiative to learn – the so-called proactive students – learn more things and better than people who sit in front of the teacher, passively waiting to be taught (reactive students). (HUEW, Elisa Lioe Teh. The Importance of Autonomy in Foreign Language Learning for Free Course Students. Available at: <http://www.veramenezes.com/elisa.htm>. accessed on: 22/01/2013)

Student autonomy is not only the control of the student over the planning, execution and evolution of his work. He needs to learn to reflect, analyze, be critical, capable, responsible and active, escaping from the commodity and influence of others. You also need to test, experiment, and substantiate your knowledge. Go in search of new proposals, discoveries and consider those already existing, in a reflective and critical spirit, both in the field of knowledge, science, theorists and social reality where he lives, according to Oliveira and Nunes (2011):

Current technological and multimedia advances corroborate the idea that the act of educating cannot be understood as a simple transmission of knowledge. The instrumental-technicist model does not account for education in its formative totality. It is insufficient to form the learner into a man and a citizen. The schools that follow this model do not manage to form individuals capable of reflecting, of issuing their own and autonomous judgments, they do not seek to develop in the student a way of thinking correctly. All thought and action are imposed and determined by others or by circumstances external to them, thus transforming them into passive subjects and incapable of reaction and transformation of themselves or the environment that surrounds them. To educate is more than transmitting knowledge, it is to guide and guide the subject so that he becomes capable of exercising his freedom and is able to determine himself, whether in the scope of theory or action. Exercising their capacity for reflection and the realization of their particular projects, understanding themselves as subjects and citizens of the world.



Due to the social demands regarding the training and need for professionals to be very high and the conventional Higher Education, with face-to-face classes, do not give account, the courses by distance education are reaching such a large field of action in Brazil, although in other countries there is more fear. However, many students are not prepared and able for this type of training, because they lack determination and autonomy. Perhaps many opt for this modality for the sake of time and cost, but when faced with the demands end up abandoning their training by distance learning. They are mistaken to think that in face-to-face courses they will not be challenged in so many activities and it will be indispensable for their good professional and integral training, a good dose of personal autonomy, according to Oliveira and Nunes (2011):

The point is that many of those who propose to study at a distance do not seem to be prepared to deal with this teaching model, they do not have the necessary autonomy to face the necessary challenges that a distance course requires. There are many students who drop out of courses at the beginning. The dropout rate has far exceeded that of face-to-face courses. The central and worrying factor is that the challenges that arise for the student of this modality should not be restricted to it, they should not be only a requirement for distance education courses, but for any teaching modality. The autonomous attitude should be required in any educational process, whether in family education, at school or in face-to-face or distance courses.

According to BELLONI apud TRINDADE, Higher Education Institutions by distance education do their best to adapt and adapt the teaching/learning process to students or users, through the fractionation of the services provided and producing smaller modules, which would make the process and the knowledge itself accessible.

In the same way that in the company the management models lead to changes in the work and management processes, in the educational field, and in distance education in particular, the model of the large specialized provider, producing standardized education for a mass market, would tend to transform. The adaptation of the services to the individual profile of the user can be achieved through the fractionation of education and training services into smaller modules, which would facilitate the choice and composition of a personalized "menu" (TRINDADE, 1998). This perspective, however, will require from the student user self-study and self-management skills that perhaps many of the young adults who seek distance education have not developed. (BELLONI, 2003, p. 19)

In order for the student of Methodology of Higher Education Education to conquer this specialty and the proposed competences, it is necessary to have their involvement, incessant search, discipline, adaptation and perseverance in the stages of this formation, according to Gadotti (1997, p. 12):

[...] "Autonomy is a preparation for the life of the citizen, all the better, the more it replaces in it the concrete exercise and experience of civic life to the theoretical and verbal lesson" [...].

For GADOTTI (1997), both education and autonomy, which is the result of education, should lead the individual to act in the environment in which he lives, putting into practice everything he has learned, so that knowledge does not remain only in theory or in the field of ideas. So that your



contribution can bring positive results to humanity, its history and culture. Having practical results from your contribution you can also find motivation not to give up, seek more knowledge and better understand the world in which you live, always seeking improvements.

## 7 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

With all the aspects addressed in this research we can observe that autonomy is not only necessary in distance education, but in any form of education or education system, as well as in other areas of knowledge or in professional or individual life, so that each and every individual can be effective in what they do. However, in a UOL research, according to IZUMI (2013), citing Guibert's response, in distance education the autonomy of the student is much more important and necessary.

[...] "Distance learning proposed by competent educational institutions may require much more work than in a face-to-face classroom. For you to assimilate knowledge, you have to program yourself, have discipline, make the commitment to study with autonomy, managing your schedules. For those who enter a qualified course, know that they will have to work hard to obtain the diploma" [...]

Even the autonomous student still needs to expose himself and put into practice his learning. Experiment and test your knowledge, and be able to reassess whether you are indeed headed in the right direction. Have a researcher's spirit, so that you notice what various authors say about the subjects and new or platform, the forums and the extra works. Also a course plan and the approval of the MEC (Ministry of Education), which guarantee the quality of teaching / learning. In addition, there are the student service centers and tutor teachers, who constantly help, support and guide the students.

In distance learning, there are sufficient conditions for the student to develop skills, abilities and knowledge. It is also an opportunity to have some training in cities or municipalities where there are no face-to-face Higher Education units. Higher Education Institutions have in EAD a noble opportunity to bring training, knowledge and research to many regions and people.

This research, therefore, does not want to defend and adhere to the thinking of the New School, a current that defends that the student is the holder of the central and primordial role of education, which considers the teacher only as a facilitator of the teaching/learning process, having a secondary role of education. The objective is to show how important it is to the students their participation, interest, effort, dedication, motivation and also be an active subject of their training.

When the authors talk about autonomy, they talk about the importance of the student being active and co-author of their training and that it is also important that the autonomous student can be tested, experienced and evaluated. Therefore, even in distance education the student undergoes assessments, monitoring and guidance from professionals more qualified than him, so that he can progress and not be stagnant in his doubts and limited to his point of view.



Thus, it is perceived that the teaching/learning process is a continuous and permanent process. That it is always important to review, reassess, confront, analyze and observe the new challenges that each epoch and experiences bring.

For GADOTTI (1997, p. 10), "there is no absolute autonomy, it will always be relative and conditioned to circumstances". Thus, we realize the relevance of the proposed theme, such as teachers and students of distance education, in the discipline of Methodology of Higher Education Education and others, so that we investigate more about the autonomy of the student, problems that hinder, possible solutions, factors that motivate and that can promote social and individual well-being.

The autonomy of the individual will always remain a goal of educators and goal of learners, as provided for in the laws. The goal of education is not only the transmission of knowledge, but also the ethical, citizen, professional and integral formation of the human being.

Students can build knowledge and skills to contribute to society, improve their lives, not only in the financial aspect, but also bring benefits to the community. Thus, we can form critical, responsible, helpful, ethical and autonomous citizens.

The Autonomy of the Higher Education Student in distance education becomes indispensable for the student to achieve his goals. In the same way it is necessary for the Educational Institution to also perform its task well, since it does not depend solely on materials, teachers, methods, poles, tutors, but also to form good citizens who are willing to face the challenges and stages that this discipline requires. In this sense, it is also necessary for life, to face challenges, contribute to society and realize dreams.

The affectivity, involvement and interest of teachers can and do help in the formation of students, in addition to collaborating in training can help in motivation and self-esteem, giving them more inspiration, involvement and guidance.

The job market and the modern world demand more and more skills, knowledge and skills. There are several factors that hinder, but there are also numerous reasons to encourage, assist, envision possibilities and set goals for individuals, thus being more autonomous and effective. Thus, this research aimed to raise some important points on the subject, so that we could identify some factors that impair autonomy and possible alternatives to achieve it, knowing that we have much to research and reflect on this theme.



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