

TUTORING AND GAMIFICATION: INNOVATIVE EXPERIENCES FOR STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN DISTANCE EDUCATION



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ABSTRACT

The integration between tutoring and gamification has proven to be an effective strategy to enhance student engagement in Distance Education (DE). By using playful elements such as scoring, rankings, challenges, and rewards, gamification contributes to making the learning experience more attractive and motivating. In this context, the figure of the tutor gains prominence by mediating pedagogical interactions, monitoring student performance and encouraging active participation in the proposed activities. The innovative experience lies in the articulation between the humanized role of the tutor and the use of interactive technological resources, which favor the construction of knowledge in a collaborative and meaningful way. Studies and practices reported in different institutions indicate that this approach can reduce dropout, strengthen the bond between students and the virtual environment, and promote more engaging learning. Thus, gamified tutoring emerges as a promising alternative to face the challenges of distance education, promoting not only the permanence of students, but also their autonomy and protagonism in the educational process.

Keywords: Tutoring. Customization. Teaching. Active Methodologies.

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INTRODUCTION

Distance Education (DE) has been consolidated as an educational modality in constant growth, especially in the face of technological transformations and the need to make teaching and learning processes more flexible. With the advancement of digital platforms, new methodological possibilities emerge to meet the demands of students who seek autonomy, accessibility, and dynamism in the construction of knowledge. However, one of the main challenges faced by institutions that offer courses in this modality is student engagement, often affected by factors such as isolation, the absence of direct contact with professors and colleagues, and the difficulty of maintaining motivation throughout the training path.

With the advances in digital technology and educational proposals that aim to make knowledge reach further and serve a broader portion of society, Distance Education (DE) gains more space among teaching modalities, being an alternative to the educational situation of the country (NUNES, 2017).

In this scenario, the importance of tutoring as an essential element in the pedagogical monitoring of students is highlighted, especially with regard to the mediation of learning, emotional support, and the personalization of educational interactions. At the same time, gamification emerges as an innovative strategy that seeks, through the use of game elements in non-playful contexts, to make the learning process more engaging, interactive, and pleasurable. The union of these two approaches: tutoring and gamification has revealed successful experiences in the sense of promoting student engagement, arousing continuous interest in the proposed activities and contributing to permanence and academic success.

The advancement of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) has changed the way people interact, communicate and relate. Currently, devices allow people who are in extremely distant places to communicate easily and live. It is necessary to emphasize, through what Dal Molin (2005) presents to us, that in order for teaching not to lag behind technological advances, studies are needed that collaborate with a greater understanding of the subject and that also provide strategies for digital technology to be used in the teaching and learning process.

Therefore, the relevance of this study is justified by its relevance in the face of the contemporary challenges of distance education, especially with regard to the search for more effective and student-centered pedagogical practices. The high dropout rate in

distance learning courses is a phenomenon that worries managers, teachers and tutors, requiring actions that go beyond the simple offer of content and assessments. Tutoring, when exercised with pedagogical intentionality and sensitivity to the needs of students, associated with gamified strategies, can contribute significantly to transforming the learning experience into a more meaningful, human, and motivating process. Thus, investigating this theme allows not only to understand the potential of gamification in distance education, but also to value the role of the tutor as an active agent in promoting a more interactive and affective education.

The general objective of this article is to analyze how the combination of tutoring and gamification can favor student engagement in Distance Education, based on innovative experiences already developed in different educational contexts. As specific objectives, it is intended: (i) to reflect on the role of the tutor in distance education and its importance in the process of pedagogical mediation; (ii) understand the principles of gamification and their application in the educational context; and (iii) present experiences that demonstrate the effectiveness of gamification combined with tutoring in increasing student engagement.

Numerous pedagogical policies are tested so that distance education becomes as efficient or even more efficient than face-to-face education. One of the main concerns in distance education is the dropout of students, considering, in most cases, that face-to-face contact between teachers/students and all actors in the process does not occur or is scarce, in addition, one of the reasons for dropout is due to the fact that this modality of education attracts non-traditional university students, that is, who would possibly not attend higher education in the face-to-face modality (ROVAY and DOWNEY, 2010).

Distance Education (DE) has been consolidated as a fundamental modality to expand access to education at different levels and contexts, especially in the face of technological advances and transformations in the ways of teaching and learning. In this scenario, the figure of the tutor emerges as a key piece for pedagogical mediation, assuming functions that go beyond technical support, including continuous monitoring, student motivation and the promotion of meaningful learning.

At the same time, gamification has stood out as an innovative and effective strategy to stimulate student engagement, integrating elements of games into the educational process in a creative and intentional way. The articulation between tutoring and gamification, therefore, represents a powerful pedagogical proposal, capable of

transforming the virtual learning environment into a more interactive, dynamic and student-centered space.

The relevance of the present study lies precisely in the need to investigate and understand how innovative experiences that combine tutoring practices and gamified resources can contribute to reducing dropout rates, increasing the active participation of students and favoring the construction of knowledge in a more autonomous and pleasurable way.

In view of the challenges faced by distance education, especially related to the motivation and personalized monitoring of students, it is urgent to rethink the methodologies adopted, exploring the potential of digital technologies with pedagogical intentionality. Thus, this study proposes a reflection on successful practices of gamified tutoring, analyzing its impacts on learning and student engagement, based on real experiences and contemporary theoretical references in the area.

As a conclusion, it is highlighted that the integration between tutoring and gamification represents a coherent and necessary response to the challenges faced by distance education in the contemporary scenario. When planned in an articulated way, these practices favor not only the engagement of students, but also their autonomy, protagonism, and sense of belonging to the virtual learning community. Tutoring is no longer seen only as technical support and starts to act as a humanizing link in the educational experience, while gamification expands the possibilities of motivation and interaction. Therefore, investing in experiences that combine these two elements can be the way to a more effective, inclusive, and charming education in the distance education universe.

METHODOLOGY

The present research is characterized as a qualitative study of exploratory and descriptive nature, based on bibliographic review and documentary analysis. This approach was chosen because it allows an in-depth understanding of the educational phenomena related to the use of innovative strategies, such as gamification, in the context of tutoring in Distance Education (DE). According to Gil (2010), qualitative research seeks to interpret the meanings of social phenomena, valuing the subjectivity and complexity of the relationships involved, which is pertinent when investigating pedagogical practices that involve human engagement, motivation and mediation.

The bibliographic review was conducted based on renowned authors in the area of distance education, tutoring and gamification, aiming at the construction of a consistent theoretical framework. Works and articles published in the last fifteen years were selected, with emphasis on academic productions indexed in databases such as Scielo, Google Scholar and CAPES journals. The analysis of the materials prioritized the identification of experiences that show the effectiveness of gamified tutoring in student engagement, as well as the challenges faced in the implementation of these practices.

In addition to the literature review, the methodology involved the analysis of experiences reported in case studies and projects developed by higher education institutions that adopted gamification in their virtual learning environments, especially within the scope of the Open University of Brazil (UAB) and teacher training programs. The selection of these cases was guided by pedagogical relevance and methodological clarity in the presentation of the results obtained with the implementation of the strategies analyzed. From this, we sought to identify patterns, strategies and results that would contribute to a critical and reasoned reflection on the theme.

In this work, our main objective is to identify what Gamification is and how this concept has been changing the forms of study. Traditional education is considered ineffective and boring by many students. Thus, the use of focused games for education is considered promising, as it develops important skills for problem-solving, communication, and collaboration (Dicheva, 2015). We realize that the topic of gamification is very recent, so there is little content that deals with games in education.

The proposal of gamified teaching goes beyond the simple application of games in the classroom. It is an intentional pedagogical design, in which the logic of games is incorporated into the didactic planning to transform the learning experience into something more engaging and meaningful. This approach recognizes the importance of error as part of the process, encourages student autonomy, values continuous effort, and offers rewards that can be symbolic, affective, or cognitive. In this way, the student ceases to be a passive agent and assumes a leading role in his trajectory of knowledge construction.

In this way, the methodology adopted allows not only the systematization of theoretical knowledge, but also the articulation of this knowledge with real practices, favoring an integrated understanding of the importance of tutoring and gamification as mediation and engagement tools in the context of distance education.

TUTORING AND GAMIFICATION IN DISTANCE EDUCATION

Distance Education (DE) has been consolidated as a strategic educational modality for the democratization of access to knowledge, especially in contexts of geographical, economic and social limitations. In this virtual environment, the role of the tutor assumes centrality in pedagogical mediation, being responsible for monitoring, guiding, motivating and evaluating the students' formative path. With the advancement of Digital Information and Communication Technologies (DICT), new pedagogical approaches have been incorporated into tutorial practice, highlighting, among them, gamification as an innovative and powerful tool for engagement and meaningful learning.

Gamification emerges in this scenario as a proposal for transversal and transdisciplinary work that encompasses all actors and provides more flexible and interactive teaching methodologies. When thinking about these concepts, we base ourselves on the fact that "transdisciplinarity aims to understand the world, life, which also aims to study social representations" (JODELET, 2016, p.5).

Tutoring in distance education is not limited to technical support or clarification of doubts, but is configured as a fundamental link between the student and the training process, ensuring the continuity, interaction and quality of the educational experience. In this sense, gamification, by incorporating game elements such as missions, scores, challenges, rewards, and rankings into the educational environment, directly contributes to making the tutoring process more dynamic, interactive, and attractive. The tutor, by using gamified strategies, enhances the participation of students and favors the construction of affective and cognitive bonds with the contents and with the virtual learning environment.

The exploration of the playful aspect can become a facilitating technique in the elaboration of concepts, in the reinforcement of contents, in sociability among students, in creativity and in the spirit of competition and cooperation, making this process transparent, to the point that mastery over the objectives proposed in the work is ensured (FIALHO, 2017, p. 16).

In addition to stimulating intrinsic motivation, gamification in distance learning tutoring allows the student to take a more active role in the learning process, favoring student protagonism. By facing challenges and receiving immediate feedback, students are led to reflect on their performance and constantly seek to exceed goals, which contributes to the development of skills such as autonomy, self-regulation, and perseverance. The tutor, in turn, must act as a designer of gamified formative experiences, planning activities

consistent with the pedagogical objectives and adapted to the needs and profiles of the students.

It is important to highlight that the application of gamification in distance education tutoring must go beyond the simple insertion of games or playful elements. It requires pedagogical intentionality, structured planning and continuous monitoring. Gamification needs to be integrated into the curriculum and course methodologies in order to create a meaningful and collaborative learning environment. In this context, the tutor must be prepared to use the available technological tools, interpret student performance data and propose appropriate interventions, in an ethical way and sensitive to the diversity of the subjects.

Among the most effective gamified practices in the context of distance education tutoring, the systems of progression by levels, leadership boards, learning trails, and badges (digital medals) stand out. These strategies contribute to strengthening the sense of belonging to the virtual learning community, in addition to promoting healthy competitiveness and the recognition of individual and collective advances. When well applied, these tools not only increase participation rates, but also reduce dropout, one of the great challenges of distance education.

In this regard, gamification emerges as a proposal for transversal and transdisciplinary work that considers that teaching should follow a more hybrid and multimodal methodology, allowing all actors to become learners. According to Santos (2019).

Gamified teaching has been consolidated as one of the most promising approaches in the contemporary educational scenario, especially in contexts marked by the constant presence of digital technologies and the need for methodologies that favor student engagement and active learning. By using typical elements of games such as clear rules, defined objectives, rewards, progressive challenges, immediate feedback and difficulty levels, gamified teaching promotes a motivating, playful and participatory learning environment, breaking with traditional models focused on the mere transmission of content.

Among the main benefits of gamified teaching, the increase in student engagement, the improvement in content retention, the encouragement of problem solving, and the development of socio-emotional skills such as resilience, collaboration, and empathy stand out. By interacting with the proposed challenges, the student learns to deal with frustrations, to seek creative solutions and to value the process as much as the result. This

formative dimension is fundamental for the integral development of the subjects, especially in times when the school needs to dialogue with a generation accustomed to the language of games and social networks.

In summary, the articulation between tutoring and gamification in Distance Education represents a concrete possibility to resignify the educational process, making it more interactive, engaging and effective. By incorporating gamified practices, the tutor expands his possibilities of action, transforming the virtual environment into a space for active, collaborative and pleasurable learning. Thus, gamification, when used with pedagogical intentionality, is a powerful ally of tutoring in promoting meaningful learning and academic success in distance education.

INNOVATIVE EXPERIENCES IN TUTORING IN DISTANCE EDUCATION

With the growing adhesion to Distance Education (DE), the figure of the tutor has gained strategic importance in the mediation of learning and in sustaining the virtual educational experience. The role of the tutor in distance education, although traditionally focused on academic and administrative monitoring, has expanded, gaining new dimensions with the emergence of innovative methodologies and the use of Digital Information and Communication Technologies (DICT). In this scenario, innovative tutoring experiences not only enhance student-tutor interaction, but also contribute significantly to student engagement, improved quality of learning, and promotion of more dynamic and collaborative teaching.

According to Fardo (2013), many of the methods used in gamification are similar to those used by teachers, such as scores, feedback, encouragement, explanations, however, appropriating the culture of games and the digital age we live in, providing the student with a more attractive and apparently more efficient and pleasant format.

The tutor's experience in the context of Distance Education (DE) is an essential element for the promotion of meaningful learning and for the formation of protagonist students. Acting as a link between the content, pedagogical mediation and students, the tutor goes beyond the simple function of technical support; It positions itself as a facilitator of knowledge, an encourager of critical thinking and an agent of continuous motivation. Their performance requires sensitivity, active listening, pedagogical mastery and digital competence, as they are the ones who accompany the training trails, identify weaknesses,

propose strategies to overcome and recognize individual and collective advances along the way.

One of the main innovations in distance learning tutoring is the integration of *gamified tutoring* practices, which uses game elements such as challenges, rewards, rankings, and real-time feedback to motivate students and promote more participatory and autonomous learning. This approach not only favors student engagement, but also encourages peer cooperation and the development of essential skills, such as problem-solving and critical thinking. The tutor, in this model, is not limited to being a transmitter of content, but becomes a facilitator of learning, who monitors the progress of students and guides them in a personalized way, creating a more stimulating and collaborative environment.

The active and qualified presence of the tutor contributes directly to the development of students' autonomy, encouraging them to take responsibility for their own learning. Through planned pedagogical interventions, the tutor promotes situations that stimulate decision-making, problem solving, time organization and the search for creative solutions, indispensable skills for the formation of protagonists and critical subjects. The student, in this scenario, ceases to be a mere receiver of information and starts to act as a transforming agent of his trajectory, guided, but not limited, by the tutorial action.

In addition, the experience accumulated by the tutor allows him to recognize different learning styles and rhythms, adapting the follow-up strategies to the specific needs of each student. This creates a more inclusive, welcoming, and motivating environment, where students feel valued and encouraged to actively participate in educational processes. By promoting a dialogical and horizontal relationship, the tutor helps to build a culture of collaboration and respect, essential aspects for strengthening network learning.

In distance education, it is necessary for the tutor teacher to act as a mediator of knowledge, interacting with students, establishing dialogues that favor the teaching and learning process (KOEHLER, CARVALHO, 2012). Therefore, there needs to be constant and mutual interaction between teachers, tutors and students so that students can learn effectively.

The tutor's performance also stands out for its ability to integrate innovative methodologies, such as gamification, project-based learning, and the use of interactive resources, always focusing on the personalization of teaching. This innovative posture

strengthens student protagonism by providing more challenging, engaging learning experiences aligned with the demands of the 21st century. Thus, the tutor's experience becomes a bridge between theory and practice, between technology and pedagogy, ensuring that the student has real conditions to appropriate knowledge in an active, reflective and transformative way.

Therefore, recognizing the importance of the tutor's experience in the formation of protagonist students is fundamental for the advancement of distance education as a quality educational modality. Investing in the continuing education of these professionals, valuing their practices, and expanding their pedagogical autonomy are essential steps to consolidate tutoring that inspires, transforms, and empowers students throughout their learning journey.

Directing the tutor to activities that are not teaching's ends up "obscuring the pedagogical function of tutors" (ARRUDA, PEREIRA, 2020). It is perceived that despite the importance, the tutor, in addition to not having his profession regulated, still has challenges within the institutions, which often do not specify the role of the tutor, making him be seen not as a mediator and facilitator of learning, but only as a mere spectator responsible only for solving specific doubts about the course schedule and/or access to contents.

Another innovative experience that has gained prominence in distance education is the use of *tutoring through collaborative virtual environments*. Platforms such as forums, real-time chats, and videoconferences have been used to create spaces for discussion, debate, and exchange of experiences, allowing students to connect more directly with tutors and their peers. These spaces of interaction not only favor the collective construction of knowledge, but also allow the tutor to play an active role in the construction of learning, using technological resources to generate productive discussions, clarify doubts, and propose challenging activities. The tutor, in this context, must be more than a mediator; He needs to be a facilitator of interaction and communication, capable of managing the dynamics of the group and encouraging the participation of all.

In addition, an innovative practice that stands out in distance learning tutoring is the use of *artificial intelligence and chatbots* to assist tutors with repetitive tasks, such as answering frequently asked questions or providing guidance on the progress of activities. Although artificial intelligence is still at an early stage of development in distance education, it has already shown potential to optimize the workload of tutors, allowing them to focus on

more qualitative aspects of tutoring, such as individualized monitoring and personalization of teaching.

The possibilities of gamification in distance education point to game mechanisms that involve engagement in a certain learning process, with the intention of arousing positive emotions, exploring personal skills or linking virtual or physical rewards to the fulfillment of tasks. (BISSOLOTI ET AL, 2014, p. 9).

In other innovative experiences, adaptive tutoring has proven to be an effective tool to meet the individual needs of each student. Through data analysis and constant monitoring of student performance, it is possible to offer more targeted and personalized support, based on the strengths and difficulties of each student. This approach allows for an adaptation of the tutor's teaching pace and form of communication, ensuring that all students receive the necessary support for their academic success.

In a broader context, collaborative tutoring has also proven to be an innovative and effective experience in distance education. In this approach, tutors work together, sharing experiences, pedagogical strategies, and best practices to improve the teaching-learning process. This collaboration between tutors not only improves the quality of tutoring, but also allows educators to constantly update themselves regarding new technologies and teaching methodologies.

Fadel (2014) defines that the narrative experience in the individual is generated by the act of following a story such as playing. The narrative experience leads to a cognitive experience, that is, it ends up translating into an emotional and sensorial construct of the individual when he or she engages in a structured and articulated life.

However, for gamified teaching to be effective, it must be aligned with the learning objectives and respect the specificities of the target audience. Gamification cannot be seen as a merely aesthetic or motivational resource, but as a methodological strategy that requires planning, mastery of digital tools, and pedagogical sensitivity. The teacher, in this context, assumes the role of designer of learning experiences, organizing the content in order to create challenging trails, collaborative missions, and opportunities for continuous improvement.

Gamified teaching experiences can be implemented both in the face-to-face environment and in Distance Education (DE), with the use of digital platforms, educational applications, virtual learning environments, and customized digital games. The important thing is that gamification is integrated into the didactic-pedagogical process and that it

contributes to the cognitive and affective development of students. In addition, the use of progress indicators, such as scores, medals, rankings, and personalized feedback, helps to keep the student informed about their performance and motivated to continue learning.

Therefore, innovative experiences in tutoring in distance education go beyond the adaptation of traditional teaching methods to the virtual environment. They involve a reconfiguration of the role of the tutor, who becomes an active facilitator of learning, promoting interactivity, personalization, collaboration, and the intelligent use of technologies. By adopting these innovative practices, distance education not only becomes more efficient, but also more attractive and meaningful to students, contributing to academic success and strengthening the teaching-learning process.

GAMIFICATION AS A DISTANCE LEARNING ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

With the exponential growth of Distance Education (DE) in recent decades, especially intensified by the advancement of Digital Information and Communication Technologies (DICT), it has become increasingly necessary to rethink pedagogical strategies that favor student engagement in virtual learning environments. In this scenario, gamification emerges as an innovative approach capable of transforming the educational process, making it more dynamic, motivating, and student-centered. It is the application of typical elements of games such as challenges, rewards, rankings, missions, and immediate feedback in non-playful contexts, such as formal education, with the aim of promoting greater involvement, autonomy, and persistence on the part of learners. The teacher, in this case, will create specified activities for each group and later provide problems and/or situations to be solved by all groups together. The teacher will not only provide teaching and learning situations, he will encourage the student to go beyond, according to Lévy (1999), learning.

It can no longer be a diffusion of knowledge, which is now done more effectively by other means. Their competence must shift towards encouraging learning and thinking. The teacher becomes an animator of the collective intelligence of the groups in his charge. Its activity will be centered on the monitoring and management of learning: the incitement to the exchange of knowledge, relational and symbolic mediation, the personalized piloting of learning paths, etc. (LÉVY, 1999, p. 171).

In distance education, where physical absence and temporal flexibility can cause feelings of isolation, procrastination, and evasion, gamification offers significant alternatives

for building bonds and developing more meaningful learning. Through playful and interactive dynamics, students feel motivated to actively participate in the forums, carry out the proposed activities and collaborate with each other, promoting a culture of collaborative and engaged learning. In addition, gamification contributes to the personalization of the educational experience, by allowing students to advance at their own pace, choose challenges, and monitor their own evolution, giving them greater prominence in the training process.

Another relevant aspect of gamification in distance education is the possibility of developing socio-emotional skills and cognitive skills through problem solving, decision-making, and strategic thinking, all characteristic elements of games. By integrating these skills into the curricular content, teachers and tutors expand the pedagogical reach and favor contextualized, interdisciplinary learning that is connected with the challenges of the twenty-first century.

For gamification to be effective, however, it is essential that it is well planned and aligned with the pedagogical objectives of the course. It is not just about inserting games or competitive mechanisms in a superficial way, but about designing gamified learning experiences that make sense to students and that are integrated into the teaching methodology. The role of the tutor, in this context, is essential: it is up to him to monitor, guide and streamline the students' path, using gamification as a strategy for mediation and knowledge construction.

In short, gamification in distance education represents a powerful pedagogical tool that, when well implemented, enhances student engagement, favors active and meaningful learning, and contributes to academic permanence and success. Its use, articulated with innovative methodologies and the continuous support of tutoring, is configured as a concrete response to the challenges of contemporary online education.

GAMIFIED TUTORING AS A GENERATOR OF MEANINGFUL LEARNING

Distance Education (DE) has been consolidated as a viable and inclusive alternative in the Brazilian educational scenario, especially in contexts of difficult geographical access, such as rural regions and communities far from large centers. With the advancement of digital technologies and the diversification of student profiles, it is necessary to rethink the pedagogical practices that support this modality. In this context, the figure of the tutor emerges as an essential mediator in the teaching-learning process, responsible for

monitoring, guiding and motivating students throughout their academic trajectory. More than a technical agent, the tutor is, today, an articulator of the training experience, especially when he appropriates innovative strategies, such as gamification.

Gamification is understood as the use of game elements in non-playful contexts in order to promote engagement, motivation, and overcoming challenges. As pointed out by Deterding et al. (2011), it is the insertion of mechanics, dynamics and aesthetics of games in environments that traditionally do not involve games, such as education. In the context of distance learning, gamification applied to tutoring promotes more attractive, interactive, and responsive learning environments, contributing to student motivation and strengthening meaningful learning.

According to Ausubel (2003), meaningful learning occurs when the new content is anchored in the student's previous knowledge, enabling a reorganization of their cognitive structures. For this to occur, it is necessary that the student is emotionally and intellectually engaged in the process. It is at this point that gamification stands out as a methodological strategy, since it favors the active involvement of students through clear goals, immediate feedback, symbolic rewards, and progressive challenges. Gamified tutoring, therefore, offers favorable conditions for the mediation of learning, creating opportunities for the student to actively participate, experiment, make mistakes and learn with pleasure and meaning.

The performance of the gamified tutor requires a proactive, creative profile that is attentive to the singularities of the group of students. Through the use of gamified educational platforms, or even the creation of game-based activities, the tutor can propose learning paths, missions, participation rankings, badges (virtual medals) and rewards that encourage the student's permanence and progress. As Mora, Riera and Arnedo-Moreno (2015) state, gamification is only effective when it is aligned with pedagogical objectives and respects the students' context, avoiding artificial or punitive practices.

In addition, gamified tutoring contributes to the development of students' autonomy, promoting self-management of time and tasks. By transforming the learning process into a journey of achievement, gamification creates an environment in which the student feels belonging, motivated, and challenged. Such a feeling is fundamental for meaningful learning, because, as Moreira (2012) points out, learning with meaning implies an affective involvement and a predisposition to interact with new knowledge.

It is important to note that gamification, when used with pedagogical intentionality, also favors the development of socio-emotional skills, such as cooperation, empathy, resilience, and problem-solving skills. By promoting group activities, gamified collaborative forums and dynamics of collective knowledge construction, the tutor acts not only as a transmitter of content, but as a facilitator of meaningful experiences. In this way, the use of gamification in tutoring breaks with the traditional teaching paradigm and enhances the construction of knowledge in a contextualized, participatory and transformative way.

However, for this approach to be effective, it is essential that tutors receive continuing education on the theoretical bases of gamification, the principles of meaningful learning, and the pedagogical use of educational technologies. As Freire (1996) argues, teaching requires critical reflection, ethical commitment and creativity. In this way, the gamified tutor must be a subject aware of his practice, committed to the integral formation of the student and open to experimenting with new methodologies.

Gamified teaching represents an innovative response to the challenges of contemporary education, by providing more meaningful, contextualized and engaging learning experiences. By combining the principles of playfulness with pedagogical objectives, gamification transforms learning into a dynamic, challenging, and pleasurable journey, capable of awakening in students the continuous desire to learn and evolve. It is up to educators, therefore, to explore this potential with criticality and creativity, reinventing their practices in tune with the demands and possibilities of the twenty-first century.

However, it should be noted that the tutor is a teacher who acts in the role of tutoring, and should not be seen as a simple animator, monitor, or relay of instructional packages (SAFANELLI et al., 2019). Thus, despite playing a fundamental role in the students' perception of the course, tutors are teachers and need technical, content and pedagogical knowledge to succeed in their performance.

In summary, gamified tutoring represents an innovative methodological alternative for strengthening meaningful learning in Distance Education. By integrating playful elements into the training process, the tutor expands the possibilities of interaction, engagement and knowledge construction. The challenges of distance education such as dropout, student loneliness and lack of interest can be minimized when the tutor assumes an active, creative and mediating posture, transforming the learning experience into a pleasurable, relevant and remarkable process in the students' trajectory.

INNOVATING TUTORING WITH EDUCATIONAL GAMES

The constant evolution of digital technologies and active methodologies has driven significant changes in the Distance Education (DE) scenario, requiring tutors to act increasingly dynamically, creatively and student-centered. In this context, the use of educational games as an innovation strategy in tutoring has been gaining prominence, especially for its ability to transform the learning process into a more interactive, motivating and meaningful experience. Games, by integrating challenges, rewards, narratives, and decision-making, promote a playful and engaging environment, which favors both the cognitive and socio-emotional development of students.

Education is an area of knowledge that is in a continuous process of reconfiguration, updating, adaptation and improvement, based on scientific and academic discoveries that privilege the construction of knowledge around the teaching-learning processes (COLL; MARCHESI; PALACIOS, 2004).

By incorporating educational games into tutorial practice, the traditional teaching logic, based on the unidirectional transmission of content, is broken and an approach more centered on the learner's experience is adopted. The tutor, in this scenario, is no longer just a mediator of content and assumes the role of curator of formative experiences, planning and conducting activities that stimulate active participation, collaboration among peers and problem solving. This change in attitude expands the reach of tutoring, allowing not only greater student involvement, but also a more effective monitoring of their learning trajectories.

In this aspect, in order for educators to be able to arouse the interest of students in the class taught by the teacher, it becomes plausible to know the theories of the teaching-learning processes and the appropriate use of active learning methodologies, as well as the applicability of didactic strategies and the choices of pedagogical practices to be inserted in the school context (MORIN, 2011).

Educational games, when well designed and integrated with the pedagogical objectives of the course, enable the personalization of teaching, respecting the pace, interests and learning styles of the students. The tutor can use games to review content, promote debates, carry out formative assessments or introduce new topics in a creative way. In addition, the immediate feedback provided by the games helps the student to recognize their mistakes, identify their difficulties and perceive their advances, which strengthens the autonomy and self-regulation of learning.

Another relevant aspect of the insertion of educational games in tutoring is the strengthening of the bond between tutor and student. Playfulness creates a more welcoming and light space, favoring dialogue, trust and the feeling of belonging to the virtual learning environment. Tutoring, by reinventing itself through the use of games, expands its possibilities of action, promoting a more attractive and meaningful learning, capable of combating dropout and stimulating the continuous engagement of students.

In a complementary way to the learning theories in Educational Psychology, according to Itoz and Mineiro (2005), the teaching-learning process can be related to didactics, corresponding to the set of knowledge and techniques specialized in the educational sphere, especially with regard to the sharing of curricular content. For Costa, Pfeuti and Nova (2014), didactic strategies are essential to the pedagogical paths inserted in teaching practices, referring to teaching and learning theories, as well as to active learning methodologies in the classroom.

Among the most frequent difficulties are: the lack of familiarity with the virtual learning environment in which the entire teaching and learning process is developed; the difficulty of developing teamwork; the exposure of their level of competence as a teacher and professional, the paradigm shift, which is to be a teacher in the distance modality; work in partnership with other professionals; and also, to develop new communication skills for teaching practice, through other means and media in another process of socialization with students and partners of this poly-teaching (LIMA et al., 2014, p. 155).

Finally, it is important to emphasize that innovation in tutoring through educational games requires planning, pedagogical intentionality, and mastery of the available digital tools. The tutor must select or develop games that are aligned with the contents and skills of the course, in addition to constantly evaluating the effectiveness of these strategies in the training process. When used well, educational games become powerful allies of tutoring, contributing to the construction of an active, collaborative, and pleasurable learning environment.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The results obtained throughout this study show that the combination of tutoring and gamification is a promising pedagogical strategy to promote student engagement in Distance Education (DE). The experiences analyzed reveal that the tutor's performance, when guided by mediating and purposeful practices, goes beyond technical support and

assumes a central role in the humanization of the educational process. By incorporating gamification elements such as symbolic rewards, progressive challenges, rankings, and immediate feedback, tutors are able to encourage active student participation, reinforce autonomy, and create a more dynamic, interactive, and motivating virtual environment.

Among the main results found, the improvement in the frequency of access to virtual platforms, the extension of the time students spend in the activities, as well as the decrease in dropout rates in the courses analyzed stand out. It was also observed that students demonstrated greater involvement with the contents and greater willingness to interact with colleagues and tutors, favoring the development of collaborative skills and the construction of meaningful learning. In addition, it was found that gamified strategies, when well planned and aligned with pedagogical objectives, not only strengthen the students' bond with the course, but also favor the internalization of content in a more playful and contextualized way.

Finally, it is concluded that the integration between tutoring and gamification enhances the achievement of the purposes of distance education, by combining human support with technological innovation. This articulation reinforces the need for continuous training of tutors for the creative and intentional use of digital tools, as well as the institutional commitment to adopt methodologies that value the student as the protagonist of their learning. Thus, it is recommended that future research deepen the analysis of the impacts of gamification on different course profiles and audiences, in addition to promoting spaces for listening to the students themselves, in order to understand their perceptions and expectations in the face of these innovative practices.

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