

E-learning

In the last decade, a new theoretical research field, known as “e-learning”, has been envisaged. By e-learning we mean a didactics based on Internet, that modifies the methods of classical distance-learning; this method integrates in an original way the physical characteristics of distance didactics with the psychological characteristics of attendance.

A general bias still exists towards distance training, inasmuch as it is widespread the idea that it is not structurally as effective as the attendance didactics, which still remains the preeminently reference.

Even though a lot of people consider the on-line didactics a “B series” training, e-learning can diversify teaching methods and thus can make the whole learning process more effective.

For over a century the traditional didactics has received a lot of polemics: Critics point out that it places students in a passive condition, it doesn't stimulate their sense of responsibility and it doesn't take into account students' individual differences.

At this point we wonder why the attendance didactics has survived along the time.

Actually, many strong points could be listed, namely:

- “clearness of the exposition”: the presence of a tutor makes the lesson immediate, economic and adaptable to each and every students' requirement.

- “residual co-action”: the guide of a tutor represents a constraint to study, as attending lessons is easier for students than studying on their own.

- “utilitarian factor”: inasmuch as the lesson is an opportunity to gather informations which could not be found in the text-books.

- last but not least, “interactive and initiatory factor”: i.e. students make up groups and interact within them.

Whereas, although this might be true, the on-line learning involves strong senses of social share and new forms of “presence” too by its peculiar communicative characteristics:

- “saving of time and money”, as attending lessons at home does not require any time consuming and costly moving.

- “major autonomy”; that means each trainer has the possibility to find suitable personal conditions for his learning carrier.

- “ubiquity factor”, which allows students to keep open several contexts with many counterparts anywhere in the world at the same time;

- “speediness of interactions”; while in a real classroom students must speak one at a time, in the virtual one users can keep up several chats simultaneously.

- “FAQ System”, that is a sort of database containing the Frequent Asked Questions; this system allows students facing difficulties, firstly to check in the archive whether the tutor has already given satisfactory explanations to the same issue to other students; in this case the student does not need to contact tutor for his difficulties. The saving of energy and time is consistent.

Whereas, in traditional didactics, the teacher has to repeat himself as many times as the same question is put.

- Last but not least, “motivational factor”: related to the possibility of editing your own works and making them available to the whole world.

To conclude the exposed issue, the on-line training is not less effective than the traditional method; it simply is a new didactics with own essential characteristics: in fact it allows the users to be physically in one place but, and that is its stronger point, psychologically in many places; whereas the traditional learning training is strictly confined to the space-temporal context.

Notwithstanding this latter, the on-line training has not really take off yet; that is due to the fact that people has been formed by the traditional method, “by definition” considered the reference didactics model; they have still to realize e-learning’s high potentiality to change the teaching methods improving the entire learning process.

References:

- http://www.e-learningguru.com/articles/ezone/guru3_2.htm
- <http://www.usnews.com/usnews/edu/elearning/articles/02military.htm>
- <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/its/elab/research/elearning/articles/>