ELEARNINGNEWS ARTICLE

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E-learning: training becomes increasingly social and mobile

Online training is confirmed as an increasingly inclusive tool used by companies to provide continuing education for their employees.

The ongoing **technological revolution** could not but affect teaching and e-learning.

Changing the context of classroom teaching from the classical notional and in-person to interactive and social, new teaching methodologies have seen the emergence and transformation of new forms of learning.

The progressive **use of e-learning in companies** to enable them to upgrade the skills of their employees is now an established practice.

The second trend that is absolutely on the rise in companies concerns the propensity to encourage social collaboration processes in training among employees, or learners in general.

But what really is **social collaboration**?

This form of learning, which falls outside the official channels of teaching, can originate in absolutely random ways.

From a coffee with colleagues, sharing an interesting article, recommending a video or blog. The spheres widen. It is not only the place that is a point of reference but also the time of content fruition: it is undeniable that we can now access training content during the home-work commute and vice versa; while traveling or at times that are favorable to us.

This integration of moments is extraordinary, and it is no longer surprising that Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and YouTube are ubiquitous in our lives.

Building on this social premise, collaboration becomes natural. Sharing best practices, personal and original solutions, formative viewpoints: individual processes that are, however, strongly influenced by collaboration. The added value is the digitization of interventions.

Focusing the discourse on our country, Italy, we can certainly note that there is a long tradition of training, school and corporate, in the classroom. We are used to, and closely linked to, direct contact, and often **corporate training** is entirely self-managed: the first e-learning experiences have therefore highlighted the inadequacy and delay in the development of first-generation products and the natural Italian reluctance to adopt new training systems and, in general, to open up to experimentation. But, even the reluctance had to give way to the incontrovertible thought that e-learning is already one of the most interesting application areas in the field of training, for companies, private citizens, students and employees.

As proof of this, **online training** is confirmed as a tool within everyone's reach, and it is an increasingly inclusive and increasingly used medium for companies to provide continuing education for their employees.

With the progressive development of the Internet, virtual classrooms have set up a system that puts the one who enjoys training at the center. The learner is led to interact with his or her peers, thus forming a group that relates directly to their teacher or tutor.

The experience of a **virtual classroom** is remarkable and positive, but we can also point out critical issues that, even today, may disfavor this type of experience.

The first point concerns the level of knowledge of the technologies: an adult class does not always have the same level of expertise and this can actually create difficulties in managing the various tools.

One factor to be counted among the critical issues is remote interaction. For many users it comes across as cold and impersonal and therefore the risk of demotivation, loss of interest and abandonment of training is very high. In this regard, the lack of an in-presence lecturer could be decisive, which breaks down the classic learning facility that has always been known.

Studying countermeasures, such as to overcome any critical issues that emerged, we could certainly count the comparison and the quality of the interactions that the class expressed. For example, by analyzing learners' reasoning, which followed the first phase of learning, and which certainly highlight active and passive relational dynamics.

It is precisely the measurement of participation, distinguished into active and passive, that is one of the most popular steps in establishing the success of e-learning training.

The composition of the virtual class, which can be homogeneous, i.e., made up of individuals with the same characteristics, or heterogeneous, made up of individuals with different characteristics, has little influence on the success or failure of the experience.

Of paramount importance, on the other hand, for the experience to be successful, is that learners are able to recognize themselves in the learning class, understanding that tools such as collaboration and sharing are indispensable elements for the success of their educational journey.

We need to take a step back, delving into an important aspect.

Digital didactics can intervene in all phases of training, regardless of whether it takes place at a distance or in the classroom.

We can see that, at discretion, it can be introduced before in-presence training to encourage participants to deepen their knowledge through e-learning and, as a result, increase dynamism and interactivity.

But it can also be introduced in-person, for the evaluation of knowledge acquired during training.

This is certainly an opportunity to sharpen one's digital competence, if one does not feel properly up to speed with the so-called digital natives, and whose development and learning will allow one to take advantage of the opportunities that arise, more aware and prepared for the challenges of new technologies.

Advantages and disadvantages of e-learning

Talking about and analyzing the advantages and disadvantages of virtual education, we can certainly summarize in points what we have exposed.

We can absolutely count among the advantages, the possibility of adaptation to the specificities of learners. Thus opportunities for differentiation and personalization.

Among the most important aspects, we note the increased opportunities for inclusion of disadvantaged groups. Inclusion is, or at least a civilized and modern society should have it as one of its goals.

E-learning training is certainly **effective teaching**. The results of improved productivity, cost reduction and immediacy of the results obtained are undeniable.

Flexibility. Individuals can access the network 24/7, contributing to their own training anytime and from anywhere. The post Covid brought out a need that can no longer be hidden or bartered away. Time devoted to one's personal life cannot be compromised. Balancing one's professional life, including training and refresher courses, with one's personal life is now the first requirement.

One advantage certainly turns out to be the development of **active and independent learning**.

Again, the ability to interact through discussion forums and chats, fostering collaboration and sharing of acquired knowledge.

The possibility of being able to access the content at any time of the day and for an indefinite time absolutely establishes an advantage as the modules can be viewed and replayed countless times until comprehension is complete and effective.

The ability to enjoy content wherever one wants has led to the growth of **new learning spaces** that turn out to be less formal than the classical school and business context we were used to. This can certainly foster more relaxed learning without impositions.

Digital education and knowledge of related technologies used in e-learning are now part of all areas of daily life. In any kind of work, digital competence is a skill that cannot be ignored and is increasingly in demand.

But, of course, in analyzing the advantages, we must also highlight some of the critical issues that may still leave e-learning at a disadvantage compared to traditional education.

The critical issues raised by tutors and teachers with respect to the loss of contact between people, which is always very important in the dynamics of studying and learning.

Also under the magnifying glass is the risk of progressive isolation of individuals but also the increase in dependence on technological devices, resulting in an inability to otherwise use time for study and reflection on acquired concepts.

The progressive increase in devices has remarked on an important concern and one that should certainly be taken into account: the violation of **privacy**. A priority to be watched carefully and preserved from attack. This makes it absolutely necessary to generate awareness in the proper use of technology in daily life.

A theme touched on at the beginning of our discussion, one aspect to keep in mind is the possible isolation of learners during a training session. The motivation to achieve the goal must also be kept constant at all times, as the risk of class dropout would be very high.

The advantage of being able to enjoy content at any time of the day and for an indefinite amount of time brings proportionately the need to closely monitor the time spent in front of device screens, a theme already in vogue since the advent of social networks.

The gradual rise of digital education may not go hand in hand with the **digital competence** of tutors and teachers. So, who controls the competence of these individuals?
Work in an in-person classroom is almost always the guarantee of authenticity of **learning verifications**.

The economic factor is always an important component. Many schools and businesses may not have the financial means to purchase appropriate equipment and software, just as individuals may not be able to access Internet resources due to personal and financial circumstances.

In conclusion, the issue of digital skills is certainly important and not without contradictions. The post covid has certainly changed the consumption and enjoyment of knowledge, and in such a context, e-learning has many advantages. Education and training cannot and should not remain excluded from the continuous transformations that are taking place in all sectors of society.

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