ELEARNINGNEWS ARTICLE

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How to create an eLearning course that respects the principles of pedagogy

Careful didactic design makes it possible to order content and maximise its effectiveness. But how to apply the principles of pedagogy to the creation of a course?

In the context of **eLearning**, teachers and course designers face unique challenges. Online education requires the creation of engaging content, the organisation of stimulating interactions and the assessment of students' performance in virtual environments. In addition, students often participate in eLearning courses independently, without the physical presence of a teacher. This context requires the adoption of **specific pedagogical strategies** and the use of advanced technologies to ensure meaningful learning.

In the course of this article, we will examine the different pedagogical schools of thought and contemporary approaches that can be used to improve the effectiveness of eLearning courses.

Didactic design in eLearning courses

In order to create effective eLearning courses, several competences are needed, which we can collect in three macro-areas

1. an **understanding of the functions and potential of the technological medium**;
2. **in-depth knowledge of the topics** to be taught;
3. **competence in the themes and principles of didactics**.

Instructional design can be defined as that process involving the selection, planning and organisation of learning materials and activities within an eLearning course. This process is guided by a clear vision of the learning objectives and standards to be achieved. In summary, instructional design aims to transform educational objectives into tangible learning experiences for a target audience through carefully developed content.

Learning objectives consist of those skills and knowledge that students are expected to acquire during the course. They represent the compass that guides the entire instructional design and, as such, should be clear, specific, measurable, attainable and time-bound.

Another fundamental aspect of instructional design is the identification of the **target audience**. Understanding the characteristics, prior knowledge, needs and expectations of students is essential to tailor the course to their needs. The design should take into account the skill level, learning preferences and specific challenges of the audience.

Finally, it must be considered that the heart of any eLearning course is the content. The **content development** process requires the creation of learning material that is informative, engaging and in line with the learning objectives. This material can include text, videos, simulations, exercises, quizzes and more. Good instructional design is essential to define how the content will be structured and delivered to students.

Principles of pedagogy in eLearning

The principles of **pedagogy** play a crucial role in the design of effective courses. Pedagogy is in fact the scientific study of education and learning. More specifically, one speaks of pedagogy when referring to the education of children, while the term andragogy focuses on the education of adults. In eLearning, it is important to adapt pedagogical strategies to the target audience, taking into account the differences between adult and younger learners. On this topic, also read **'Errors in training strategies: pedagogy vs. andragogy**'.

Different schools of thought and pedagogical approaches

In the field of education and eLearning, there are several pedagogical schools of thought that have influenced course design.

Classical Pedagogical Schools of Thought

Traditional pedagogy: This approach emphasises the importance of the teacher as the holder of knowledge and the learners as passive recipients. In the context of eLearning, this could be translated into video lectures or online presentations.

Montessori Method: This approach emphasises the freedom and self-direction of students, allowing them to explore their own interests. Elements of self-directed learning can be incorporated into eLearning courses through open learning paths that allow the learner to choose what to explore and the order in which to do it, once the minimum requirements have been met.

Behaviorism: Based on the idea that behaviour can be conditioned through rewards and punishments. In the eLearning context, positive reinforcements, such as badges or scores, can be used to motivate learners.

Contemporary Approaches

Constructivism: This approach emphasises active learning and the student's construction of knowledge.

Problem-based learning: Students tackle real problems and learn by solving them. In the eLearning context, simulated scenarios or case studies can be used to promote problem-based learning.

Social and collaborative learning: Learning takes place through social interaction and collaboration. Discussion forums and group projects are examples of how this approach can be implemented in eLearning.