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The CSCL model applied to online learning

Computer Supported Collaborative Learning (CSCL) is a typology of collaborative computer-based learning that can be easily integrated with the models and processes typical of distance learning.

The development of information and digital technologies has favored the emergence of new strategies and learning models. One of these is the CSCL, an acronym for Computer Supported Collaborative Learning. This didactic strategy was born with the aim of favoring collaborative learning through the use of IT and telematic tools, in particular the Computer.

It is possible to use the CSCL both within physical classes, and according to the typical models of distance learning, through the creation of virtual classes.

The tools of online learning

To coordinate CSCL with online learning it is necessary, first of all, to think about the teaching materials to be used. The materials can be sent by e-mail or made accessible directly on the net.

Furthermore, it is necessary to have a learning community, formed on the one hand by teachers and tutors, ie by those involved in the provision and structuring of courses, and on the other by students, ie by the recipients of the training course.

Finally, the technologies used to connect the teacher with the students must be taken into consideration.

The role of the tutor

The tutor, who may not even coincide with the figure of the teacher, plays an important role as a facilitator and organizer of the learning process. It is up to the tutor to define the methods of carrying out the activities and to stimulate the participants, providing support and assistance.

The teaching material

The use of CSCL in the field of e-learning presupposes the presence not only of the resources used to promote student learning, but also includes additional materials, which may be exchanged in a chat between students or between students and the tutor. In this way, it is possible to reach the realization of new teaching material.

The importance of technology

Technology plays a fundamental role in fostering the integration process between CSCL and distance learning. In this sense, it is necessary to think about the use of different platforms also available on the net and whose operation is based precisely on the possibility of guaranteeing access to multiple users.

Furthermore, we must not forget the importance of the platforms made available to Web 2.0 which represents the ideal virtual environment for the dissemination of participatory culture and the sharing of materials that the entire group can visualize and even modify.

Finally, the need to use technology to track the activities of both the individual student and the entire work group created should not be overlooked.

Some examples

How can the CSCL model be applied to online training? There are so many support tools: from video tutorials to online workshops. As for the resources available on the net, we must not forget the open source technologies. An example is represented by Moodle, an IT environment that allows organizing and managing e-learning courses, customizing their features and contents.