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# The role of the teacher in distance learning: comparative teaching models

***For effective distance learning it is not enough to transport the same things that are done in the classroom by other means, but it is necessary to rethink the same goals with different teaching models and technologies.***

With the stop to classroom teaching activities established to contain the spread of covid-19, online learning is the answer of the moment and more and more training centres have become active in the field of **distance learning**.

As is the case with **smart working**, the crisis situation is also offering the possibility to innovate didactics, giving a strong boost to its digitalization.

But, contrary to what people tend to believe, the success of distance learning does not depend exclusively on the **choice of the best LMS platform** with which to deliver the lessons. Much of the educational effectiveness is in fact linked to the forma mentis of the teachers and the teaching approach chosen.

Distance learning cannot be improvised: if it is true that we all know how to use a tablet or a computer, it is also true that the educational use of these tools is quite different. You have to take into account specific **needs of attention** and use your time effectively. So it is not enough to transport the same things you do in the classroom on other means, but you have to rethink the same purposes with different **didactic models** and technologies.

The **methodological approach** adopted in distance learning should also be able to exploit all the specificities of the network, in particular interactivity and multimedia.

In fact, there is no single model to be applied to distance learning: everything depends on the educational objectives, so in the same course it will be possible (and preferable) to integrate different models.

Below are some typical **approaches and models of distance learning**.

## Delivery approach

The delivery approach is based on **autonomous learning**. This means that the individual benefits autonomously from the materials made available by the teacher, without interacting with other people.

This type of approach lends itself well when dealing with a large number of students. The interaction takes place mainly between learner and content, while the **role of the teacher** is that of a tutor with methodological teaching support.

In the didactics of the erogative type fall more or less all the didactic actions comparable to a frontal lesson, such as the **video-recorded lesson** (in this case we will talk about asynchronous training) or the **videoconference lesson** (synchronous training). The didactics is not difficult to organize, but a lot of attention must be paid to the proposed contents. In this regard, it is preferable to alternate different formats (integration of images such as photos, diagrams, or direct insertion of videos) to keep the student's attention always constant.

The teacher should also give added value to what is reported on the materials made available, stimulate the attention of the students (using analogies, paradoxes, images, videos, etc.), stimulate the recovery of previous knowledge and alternate the lessons with moments of self-evaluation, for example by administering **tests** or multiple-choice exercises (in order to facilitate the preparation of the student for the next lesson).

# Active approach

In the case of **active learning**, the acquisition of knowledge and skills takes place both through the electronic delivery of content to be used independently, and through participation in online activities functional to the consolidation, exercise and application of the knowledge acquired, under the constant supervision of a tutor teacher.

The active approach includes all the teaching activities in which a **form of interaction** between teachers and students and between students themselves is foreseen. In this case, synchronous and asynchronous communication environments will be used, such as forums and chats, and environments for sharing material functional to the development of individual or group projects, which will always be followed by feedback provided by the teacher.

In this case, the design is very much linked to what happens in itinere, in favour of a "craft" logic of learning by building together.

The active didactics includes activities such as the **web quest** (structured research activities during which students, individually or in groups, collect information on the web to create products that demonstrate their ability to process information independently), **problem solving** (activity used to activate the knowledge acquired in order to solve a problematic situation), **project work** (activity focused on the implementation of a project that allows you to activate, putting into practice, the knowledge acquired), etc.

# Collaborative approach

The **collaborative approach** occurs when a group of students actively participate in activities involving discussion or **group work**. In this case, the teacher's role will be to encourage, stimulate and motivate the team; he or she will also have to carefully define a script to be delivered to the students containing the objective of the work, the product to be produced and the resources to be used.

This method lends itself very well to **project-based learning**, even if the limits and constraints of its application must be taken into account: that is, the possibility of organising numerically contained learning groups because the greater the number of group members, the more complex the organisational complexity of the interactions, the less effective they will be.

There are many technical solutions to foster interchange: synchronous and asynchronous communication environments - i.e. forums, chats, mailing lists or videoconferences - each of which has its own strengths and weaknesses, as well as critical aspects. Interactivity is achieved through an organization and articulation of content that involves the free exploration by the learner of the content provided, the materials offered and finally through the possibility of verifying his or her personal path through a wide and articulated range of **feedback** operations.

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