

Online Tutoring and Communication



Centre International de Hautes Études
Agronomiques Méditerranéennes

CIHEAM
BARI



SKiM project 24 november



Learning Objectives

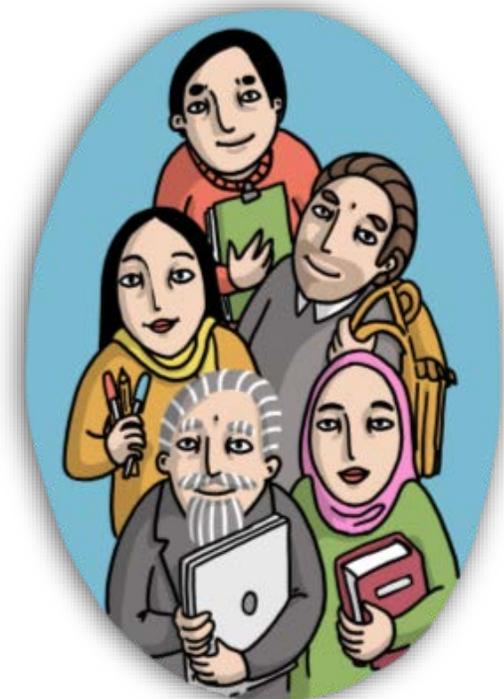
Share knowledge in order to, on completion of this module, participants will be able to:

- Understand the main functions, roles and tasks carried out by a tutor online and to indicate the best behaviour adopted under different conditions and contexts;
- Define the main principles of the Communication and to describe the “problem solving” technique.

Online Tutoring

The tutor is a component of training staff for ensuring the student support in:

- helping on “how to learn”, “where to find the learning resources and opportunities”, “how to manage the new information”;
- ensuring equal opportunities for all, adapting the training path to the individual style and methods of learning;
- managing and facilitating the communication among the learning process actors (students, teachers, managing staff, etc.);
- promoting and managing the social activities.



Online Tutoring

In Distance Learning (E-learning) a tutor has to deal with new pedagogical issues and the concrete life conditions of a student, mainly related to:

- Physical and psychological context;
- The greater personal effort required for learning;
- The capacity to plan his/her studies by matching the commitment for learning activities with family and job engagement;
- The interaction and relationships within the learning group.

MAIN TUTOR'S FUNCTIONS

In this module it is described the “learning process tutor” profile. It means that he/she is not necessarily competent of the topic of study.

Of course if he/she is competent is better but not requested!! His/her function is to support and to help the students in order to carry out in the best way the learning process.

The tutor role is very strategic because the courses providing the best support have the highest completion rates, good learning outcomes and the most satisfied students.

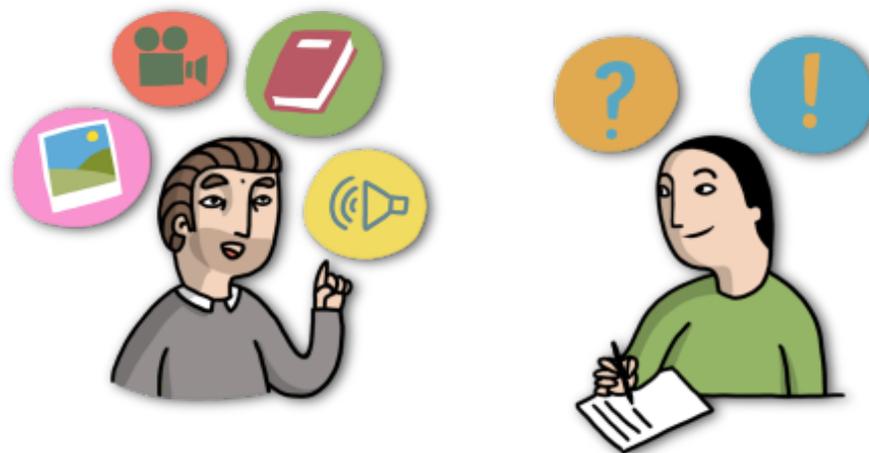
For the above mentioned reasons the E-learning courses supported by a tutor are called “Facilitated” in comparison to the “Self-learning” ones.

Cognitive support

The tutor helps the students to look for the necessary resources for the study activities;

He/she supports the initiative proposed by the students themselves, acting as a *mentor* or a *coach*;

Moreover, he/she facilitates the exchange of ideas, rouses curiosity for innovation and enrichments.



Socio-affective and relational support

The tutor manages the phases involving the welcoming of students in the learning group;

The tutor has to clear up every process aspect;

he/she has to try to express the emerging general needs;

he/she has to announce when it's time to move on;

The tutor should encourage relationships and support the student emotionally;

As moderator he/ she will favour cooperation and collaboration among the learners, with some forms of mediation when it is necessary.



Technological support

The tutor must first make the students feel comfortable and proficient with the technology and then must ensure that they are able to use the communication system and the learning software the course is using.

The ultimate technical goal for the tutor is to make the technology transparent and user friendly. When this is done, the student may concentrate on the learning activities at hand.



Motivational support

The tutor should stimulate students and keep at a high level their motivation to study according to the interest to reach the learning objectives of the course.

Administrative support

The tutor intervenes in the course's administrative aspects, facilitating the connection between students and administrators of the course providing the solution to any problems that may arise (registration, understanding of rules, etc.)



The difference between the distance and presence tutoring

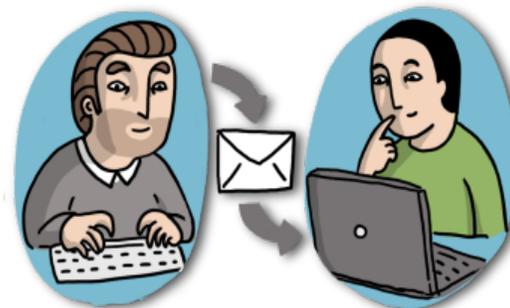
The most important differences are the communication means.

In a f2f classroom the proximity is a powerful means for communicating by words, gesture, voice tone, etc.

In distance learning the main current communication means are texts by email, asynchronous discussion forums and chat rooms and there is not the mediation on proximity.

The communication is strongly symbolic and is based on the capacity of the tutor to moderate it.

Some general rules in virtual communication: Netiquette



- In the written communication, it is sometimes difficult to manage the right word and expressions. So, someone's meaning on-line can be misinterpreted;
- Your reader is a real person in front of you reading your posts and emails. Treat them with respect;
- Never write, mail or post anything you wouldn't someone say to you;
- Foul language, insults and harassment are not tolerated;

Some general rules in virtual communication: Netiquette



- Even in the total disagreement, please use a kind language, not angry or unkind responses to someone's comments;
- Think about what you have written, one more time, before you submit it;
- It's good to think that what you're doing at the moment is the most important thing in the universe, but don't expect anyone else to agree with you;
- When appropriate use private email instead of posting to the group.

The Tutor is a component of a team

In the modern organisation of training process many new professionalisms have been created, besides the teacher: educational planner, instructional designer, technology expert, communication and media expert, course administrator, tutor, etc.

They normally act as a team in which any member carries out a specific role depending on the different functions of the training process.

Hence, these roles and functions will be strongly related to the model of training supplied with a wide range of types.

For ex. in the case of E-Learning model we have an E-Tutor.

The CIHEAM Bari E-tutor

Considering the «collaborative» model applied in the E-Learning courses, the CIHEAM Bari provides, when needed, to train E-tutors to be charged of managing a group of adult students foreseeing the following activities:

- encouraging socialization and cohesion among the members of the group and stimulating their interaction (Learning communities);
- technical support and/or mediation with the teacher;
- keeping students' interest and motivation at an high level;
- monitoring the progress of the course;
- writing a report about the course performance.

A typical tutor's report issues:

- Quality of the relationship in the group, motivation to learning, reference to private life as sign of warm relationship, reference to the future use of the new skills, enthusiasm, respect of the different opinions and netiquette use, worried for the problems of the colleagues, etc.;
- Main technological problems (difficulties on platform use, problems of connection, etc.);
- Group reaction to the tutor action (low, sufficient, good, very good);
- Relationship with the managing staff;
- Relationship with the experts and teachers;

A typical tutor's report issues:

- Comments on the quality of participation (strong and weak points, positive or negative trend of interaction, etc.).
- Level of interest to the course;
- Topics more focused by collaborative interaction and discussed (for identifying the key arguments);
- Topics difficult to be understood (clear or confused or needing more basics knowledge);
- Questions solved without teacher's answers;
- Requests of explanation needing the teacher's answers (bringing to teacher /expert attention).

Communication

The Communication is the process regarding the diffusion of **information** (or messages) in a particular context.

This process has a defined aim.

The **Information** is the process regarding the exchange of knowledge among 2 or more persons within a community.



Means of communication

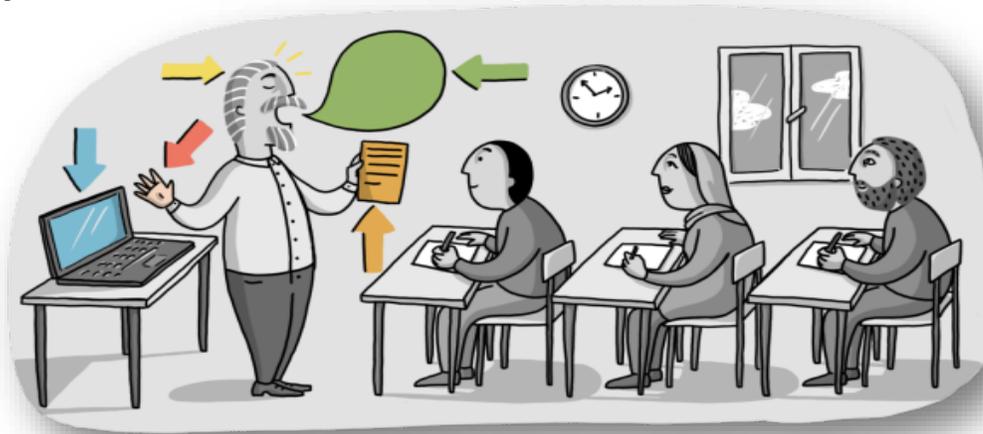
Verbal: by spoken words;

Written: by texts on paper or digital support;

Physical: by body's expressions (look of eyes, hand's movements, etc.);

Telepathic: extrasensory (mind transmission);

Digital: by computer (internet).



Every communication is composed of 2 elements:

THE CONTENT: “what” is communicated:

- To get something known/learnt (referential function);
- To urge someone to believe and/or to do something (conative function).

THE RELATION: “how” you communicate something.

Communication has always a goal:

- We want that a person or a group do something;
- We want that others become aware of something.

Communication has rules:

- Through the feedback I realize if I'm reaching the goal;
- The focus is on the receivers always;
- If the receivers don't understand it depends on me!

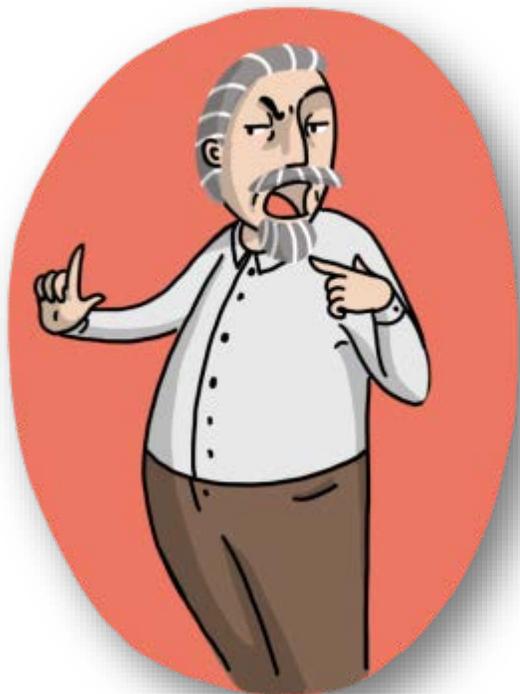
Education and Training are communication forms because their goal is to share with the students information in order to allow them to understand the meaning of the training message =

LEARNING

Communication Styles

- Aggressive
- Passive
- Assertive

Aggressive style



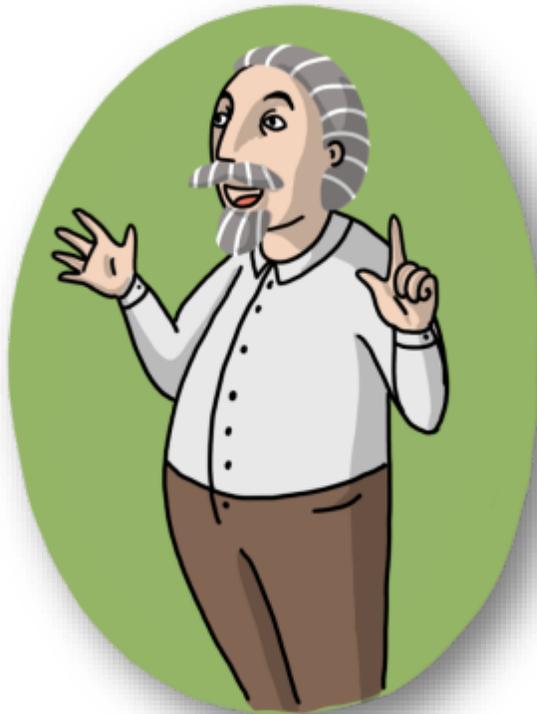
- Using arrogant manner;
- Imposing his own convictions without negotiating;
- Showing no interest of the interlocutor;
- Interrupting a conversation all the time;
- Not respecting the others' ideas;
- Encroaching on the others' space;
- Putting on a violent behaviour.

Passive style



- Hesitating to express one's own ideas;
- Being afraid to be listened and judged by others;
- Speaking with an hesitant voice;
- Being sure that others are better than you;
- Considering yourself responsible of everything goes badly;
- Feeling yourself dominated by a sense of inferiority.

Assertive style



- Listening with interest;
- Putting questions in order to verify your comprehension;
- Asserting your ideas without depreciating or overestimating the others;
- Feeling available to dialogue and comparison;
- Feeling fair, tolerant and understanding.

Communication allows the survival of a group/community through:

- **INTERACTION:** meeting and socialization;
- **COLLABORATION:** sharing of knowledge and work methods;
- **COOPERATION:** organize the work so that each one has a specific role;
- **TRANSFORMATION:** creative elaborations and change.

To make the communication functional and effective within a group, you need:

- To be able to listen;
- To be able to capture the attention;
- To be able to hold talks with interlocutors.

To be able to listen by

Receiving a message: focussing one's attention on the message by the interlocutor and distracting the attention from our ideas. Receiving and recording all things without immediate criticism and prejudice;

Elaboration of the message: trying to understand the point of view and the sense of the message, focusing his request or idea in order to assess it;

Answering to the message: answering according to the assessment, avoiding aggressive tone, doing questions to have explanations and synthetizing the message to be sure to have understood.

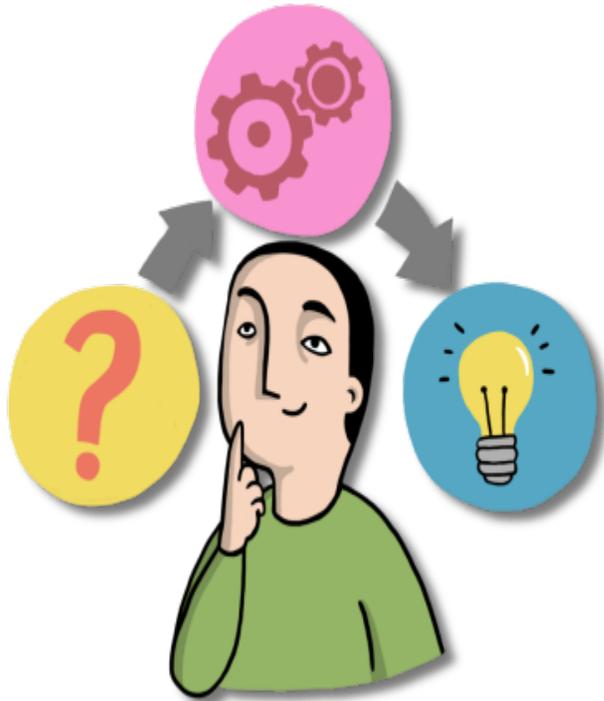
To be able to capture the attention

- Identifying the most significant themes;
- Adopting a brief presentation, with a plain language for the audience;
- Trying to use a clear voice and balanced tone;
- If your speech is too long, it's better to show an initial list of items and a final summary;
- Using visual support making easy for your audience to pay attention;
- Arousing interest and curiosity by the audience involvement and participation.

To be able to hold talks with interlocutors

- Creating an atmosphere of mutual respect, with an active listening, a fair comparison and an open availability towards the others;
- Accepting all contributions;
- Showing data, information but no opinions supporting only one's own point of view;
- Staying on a theme without “digressions”;
- Criticizing the ideas and not the person, asserting the reasons of a different point of view.

Problem solving technique (PST)



- It's a cognitive technique based on the ability to solve a problem within a work group.
- It's intended to improve the functional behaviour in a difficult situation.
- It is based on selecting the most effective solution of a wide number of alternatives.

Steps of PST

1) TO DEFINE THE PROBLEM OR THE PROBLEMATIC SITUATION.	Using concrete terms, in order to identify the goal that will be reached.
2) TO IDENTIFY AND TO ANALYZE THE CAUSE/S	Collecting data and information related to the problem (context).
3) TO PROPOSE MORE POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS according each member skills	The quantity improves the quality. It's more probably to find an effective solution when you can choose among many proposals.
4) TO ASSESS THE PROPOSED SOLUTIONS	Evaluating the proposals taking in consideration all possible environmental, social and economic consequences.

Steps of PST

5) TO FORMULATE DECISIONS (selecting the best few solutions)	Taking in consideration the assessment and the processes needed for each solution.
6) TO TEST THE SELECTED SOLUTIONS	If it possible testing for a short time or for a small sample the effectiveness of the chosen solutions.
7) TO ADOPT THE BEST ONE	Applying the only one solution showing the best effectiveness.
APPLICATION AREAS	Education, Training, Projects, Social/Personal environment, etc.



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Thank you for your attention!!

