

Sala de aula interativa (Interactive Classroom).

Laura Coutinho

Author: Marco Silva.
Editora Quartet, 2000.

The Internet, in addition to permitting knowledge sharing and access to a universe of information, facilitates the integration of teams for the purpose of cooperative work, independently of time and place - a factor that differentiates it from all other technological innovations of recent times and that is leveraging the use of Distance Education. In the last five years, many institutions - universities and businesses - initiated the production of course delivery and management systems, called LMS ("Learning Management Systems"), that they are using to offer their courses online. These systems have evolved technologically, but from the pedagogical point of view, the courses that are being delivered continue to be based on traditional teaching models, thus sub-utilizing the Internet.

The book "Sala de Aula Interativa" ("Interactive Classroom"), by Marcos Silva, discusses a new form of classroom, being therefore an excellent reference for those who intend to use Web-based Distance Education. The author presents education via the Internet as a great challenge for the teacher accustomed to the classical teaching models of the face-to-face classroom. He points out that these are two distinct domains, as regards the dominant communication paradigm in each: whereas the traditional classroom is associated with unidirectional "one-to-many" communication involving active delivery and passive reception, the online classroom is characterized by interactivity, to be understood as all-to-all collaboration and "learning by doing".

Silva points out the teacher's difficulty: "It is not easy to abandon the teaching paradigm based on the say-and-do of the "master", followed by the student's repetition of what s/he said, and move to the interactivity of the Internet; therefore, the nature of the new medium tends to be violated". The development of Web-based courses that interpret / implement such a differentiated pedagogy requires, in addition to new tools, a new innovatory posture, in the sense of permitting the participation and cooperation of all the learners in the construction of knowledge.

In addition to facilitating interactivity, the Web also allows the learners to access the content that most interests them, which also interferes with the structure of the traditional course. However, this opens up the possibility for the learner to abandon the position of a spectator (restricted to looking, listening, copying and responding) for that of a participant who creates, modifies, constructs and becomes the author of the learning experience. The teacher's role is to guide the information collection process so as to develop new competencies and skills.

According to Silva, "the teacher moves from the role of presenter, who separates the stage and the audience, to being the architect of search-trajectories (quests) and mobilizer of multiple and collective intelligences. In the online environment, the teacher, in place of knowledge memorization and repetition, should promote true learning on the part of the students, by presenting the domains of knowledge as spaces open for navigation".

The student "has already been learning with the TV's remote control and with the videogame joystick and now he is learning with the mouse" says Silva. This leads to "migration from passive reception to a new form of reception that avoids linear arguments that do not permit interference, addition, or modification".

Completing his argument, Silva recommends: "in order not to violate the learner as well as the Internet, the teacher needs to learn from the Web designer rather than from the TV presenter who is a narrator that attracts the spectator in a more or less seductive manner by his rhetoric - the network society's teacher constructs a web of territories open to navigation and to interference and manipulation, allowing the students to construct their own maps and conduct their own explorations. The teacher must, finally, realize that the TV screen is for watching and the computer screen is for interacting".

Finally, Silva presents Oiticica's "Parangolé" as a reference to aid the teacher to learn how to promote interactivity in both the online environment and the "infopoor" conventional classroom. The Parangolé is the symbol of active participation by the spectator invited to interact with events and to complete their meanings, just as when on the Web the learner, stimulated by the teacher, shares experiences with the other participants in a cooperative process of interaction and, above all, co-authoring (collaborative production).