

E-LEARNING – A NEW PARADIGM FOR EDUCATING AND TRAINING HUMAN RESOURCES

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Abstract

Training human resources in organizations is a mandatory and continuous process, aimed at improving the market position of organizations in a competitive environment characterized by high dynamism, which requires the continuous adaptation of knowledge and skills of human resources. Amid rapid change and technological progress of information and communication technology, and amid globalization trend in higher education and elimination of boundaries between students, new perspectives for educational practice have opened. Thus, educational practice has been completed with modern methods of teaching, learning and assessment specific to an information society.

Initially used only as a generic term that referred to the development of an electronic environment to provide more flexible learning, e-learning has become more than a simple experiment. At present, e-learning has become a viable alternative to traditional training methods, so it has been adopted by many educational institutions, especially due to the benefits of continuing education and the wide applicability within most diverse organizations. Specialized studies published in the last five years show a growing use of e-learning by organizations.

Keywords: human resources, training, e-learning.

Introduction

Training human resources in organizations is a mandatory and continuous process, aimed at improving the market position of organizations in a competitive environment characterized by high dynamism, which requires continuous adaptation of skills and competences of human resources.

In the context of globalization and unprecedented development of information technologies, and the need for lifelong training resulting in an increased demand for education, the traditional methods of training based on the classical teaching of knowledge through tutors are outclassed by the alternatives offered by distance education and learning based on modern technologies of communication, generically called e-learning technologies.

E-learning will bring about a new revolution in the education of human resources. Transmitting information and learning in an open system, professionally and consistently held through special psycho-pedagogical methods and techniques, becomes a buyable commodity.

It is obvious that traditional education will never lose its advantage of the direct dialogue between teacher and students, through which an ideal framework for modeling personality is created, maintaining a stronger spirit of competition, but also a mutual psychological support. But the Internet and the e-learning technologies offer new training opportunities of human resources, which are not required to be given exclusivity.

However, e-learning offers convenient and efficient access to the latest information and knowledge, new and effective methods of teaching, learning and knowledge assessment, lifelong training and formation. In this sense, e-learning is an alternative to lifelong learning in the information society of today or tomorrow.

E-Learning – Technology Of Training Human Resources

The exponential growth known by the information and communication technique in the last decade has led to a true revolution in the training of human resources. Amid the rapid changes and technological progress and amid the globalization tendency of higher education and the elimination of boundaries between students, new perspectives have opened to educational practice. Thus, the educational practice has been completed with modern methods of teaching, learning and assessment methods, which are specific to an information society.

Initially used only as a generic term that referred to the development of an electronic environment to provide more flexible education, e-learning has become more than a simple experiment. It has been proved, based on experimental studies and projects that the use of e-learning together with the information and communication technologies offers the possibility to improve the educational process significantly. At present, e-learning has become a viable alternative to traditional training methods, so it has been adopted by many educational institutions, especially due the benefits of continuing education or the possibility of its wide applicability within most diverse organizations. Specialized studies published in the last five years show a growing use of e-learning within organizations.

The information society is characterized by the explosive growth of digital information through information and communication technology products. Building an information society cannot be done without research and investment projects, both in ICT (Information and Communication Technology) and in education. The ultimate goal being competence, no technology, theory or approach will eliminate or neglect the *teacher-learner* relationship. All will be comfortable and effective tools to both the teacher and the student. Sometimes these tools are unique if compared to the traditional tools of education.

In this context, *e-learning* is an extremely effective way to implement educational programs both for higher education and for other forms of education, as it adapts to the needs of students and pupils as well as to the needs of adults who want to train in latest areas and technologies under lack of time conditions, varying degrees of training and different ability of assimilation.

The particular impact of *e-learning* is largely due to the multimedia technologies for its achievement, the benefits of using these technologies in e-learning education being mainly to reduce time, to adopt customized programs, to adjust rapidly to the changes and new knowledge in various fields, to have extended possibilities of interdisciplinary education and, not least, to significantly reduce the educational costs.

The advances in information technology together with the changes in society cause the creation of new paradigms for education and training. These massive changes have a significant impact on the educational and training systems. Participants in this educational and training paradigm require rich learning environments supported by well-designed resources.

E-learning is not a new phenomenon, but continues to be a topic of great interest in education.

E-learning will force employees to become responsible for their own leaning and development. Soon their access to learning programs will not depend anymore on the approval of the organization's management, which currently approves of limited participation in training courses. The availability of e-learning programs practically allows employees to

benefit from e-learning programs to the extent that they want and need help to prepare for their future job.

E-learning has become one of the main educational forms of training human resources. However, the society is quite inert in overcoming the traditional classroom learning style that requires the physical presence of the teacher. Human beings are social beings, and this has not changed much since the establishment of the oldest university in Bologna, Italy. Arguably, the educational events from the traditional classroom (face to face) will continue to play an important role in education, even if communication technologies tend to become more and more efficient, especially in areas such as: *Team building, Personal coaching, Networking, Culture building.*

E-learning allows a completely different approach to the concept of lifelong learning. Through e-learning, learning can be achieved through a model involving both face to face learning and communication technology-based learning; this mixed method of delivery is called blended learning.

The experience of organizations that have implemented educational e-learning programs has revealed that the major problem is not the use or non-use of e-learning, but how e-learning can provide student-centered education, cost effective training, employment opportunities as a result of training human resources, and ease of access to educational content, etc.

E-Learning – Current Way to Develop Education

The spectacular growth of communication technologies has created the latest version of distance learning, which is ***electronic learning (e-learning)***.

Distance learning assumes that learning must take place from the student's point of view, regardless of time, place and pace. Distance learning "*allows people to learn at the time, place and pace that satisfy their conditions and requirements. The emphasis is on openness to opportunities by removing barriers resulting from geographic isolation, personal or work commitments or conventional course structures, which often prevented people's access to the training they need*" (Manpower Services Commission, 1984, p. 7). According to United States Distance Learning Association (USDLA), *distance learning* is any type of educational activity in which the instructor and the students are separated in time and space (Carliner, 2004).

The American Society for Teaching and Development (ASTD) defines ***e-learning*** as a wide range of applications and processes that include Web-based learning, computer assisted learning, virtual and digital classrooms. The definition varies depending on the way it is organized and used, but essentially it involves electronic means of communication, educational and professional training.

E-learning ranges from simple forms of training to complex types of undergraduate or postgraduate degrees such as master's degrees or PhD. The courses delivered through communication technologies have the advantage of serving groups of learners who may be in any locations. Also, it offers educational materials that can be distributed synchronously or asynchronously, thereby ensuring the possibility of an international collaboration, regardless of time, zone or geographic location.

E-learning is a paradigm shift, not only for learners, but also for teachers, trainers, administrators, technical and organizational staff. The students, the instructors and the staff are familiar with the structure of a traditional educational system where the teacher and the students meet face to face in the classroom. On the other hand, e-learning is an innovative way to provide an education in which the students, the teachers and the auxiliary staff do not interact directly. The learning in such an environment is different from the traditional classroom instruction. The traditional classroom training takes place in a closed system (within a classroom, school, or a textbook, etc.), while the e-learning takes place in an open system (the learning limits extend to an open and flexible space, which requires a special attention and feedback on the results of the learning processes). They must be given the best support systems, so that they do not feel isolated and do not contribute to an increased school dropout (Khan, 2005).

Most universities in the world and thousands of training and consultancy organizations provide e-learning-based courses. Also, many large organizations have integrated the e-learning in their training structure of human resources. The groups of students can access the educational resources through a portal and a *learning management system* or a *course management system*.

E-learning has led to the need of creating new educational products and new strategies for maintaining these products. In addition to its website, its educational portal and learning management system, the organization must provide the technological infrastructure that can support the e-learning initiative. The organizations interested in human resource training through e-learning must establish a vision of their training policy before making any financial investment in equipment or software. Once the vision is established, the organization should evaluate their own technological capabilities and determine whether it is possible to provide educational services based on e-learning or it is more cost effective to outsource all or part of the required educational services and technological infrastructure. After establishing the technological infrastructure, the organization must establish how the educational content for the e-learning programs will be developed. Quality-e-learning courses are thus developed, while others offer specialized digital elements to be integrated into its content, such as simulations, multimedia graphics, video, etc. (Encyclopedia of Management)

E-learning is often considered to be similar to online learning, but Marc Rosenberg (2007), an expert in the world of organizational learning, argues that online learning is a form of e-learning when the computer is connected to the Internet, intranet or extranet (private forms of Internet that limit the access of authorized users). Since the learning materials are available through the Internet, they can be connected to electronic resources such as electronic references, electronic mail and discussion forums (Carliner, 2004).

Conclusions

Online learning is becoming more accepted in the workplace. Institutions invest heavily in the development and implementation of online programs. Academic institutions, corporations and government agencies around the world are increasingly using the Internet and the digital technologies to provide education and training. At all levels of these institutions, the individuals are encouraged to participate in online learning activities.

Living in a society based on knowledge and information can be quite demanding, both for individuals and organizations, as well as society in general. We live in the age of computers and the letter “e” (electronic) has become a natural part of our vocabulary. The e-mail, e-dating, e-business, e-commerce and e-learning are the future and there is no way we cannot ignore that.

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