

## E-LEARNING AS A METHOD OF EMPLOYEES' DEVELOPMENT

*Aleksandra CZARNECKA*

*Czestochowa University of Technology, Poland*

*E-mail: aczar11@tlen.pl*

**Summary:** Nowadays, all organizations leading their business, are forced to compete with other entities. Significant for the enterprise is to achieve an advantage over other companies. To a large extent this is dependent on workers currently employed by the company. Therefore, concerns are devoting more and more attention to their employees. This is reflected not only in ensuring good atmosphere at work and fair wages. Moreover, it is also creating opportunities for self-realization and self-development. Employees who have the opportunity to improve their qualifications and skills are more productive and loyal. Furthermore, they do not think about changing job because their company cares about the appropriate development. Each employee is solely responsible for his professional development. The organization is not obligated to develop the staff competence. However, it shall give them the right tools and support at work, so that they can pursue to improve their competence. The author in this article wants to introduce e-learning, as a modern method of improving the profession. It is a method which offers many advantages and facilities that can be used in individual improvement and training of large groups of employees. E-learning helps in the process of teaching through computers and the Internet. It is the perfect complement to the traditional teaching process. Technological changes and growing availability of the Internet Services bring new possibilities. The combination of a text, an audio, a static image and a video makes possible sharing of all kinds of information and knowledge in an interesting and effective way. The author emphasizes how important it is for business people freedom of choice and flexibility, so that everyone can learn at their own pace, in the selected location and time.

**Keywords:** e-learning, advantages and disadvantages of e-learning, employees development, professional improvement

### 1. Introduction

Unstable economic situation in Poland as well as in the world, causes that managerial staff of modern enterprises searches for the sources of savings, also in the area of HR management. Such activities should not be based on reduction of labour costs, rather on maximization of efficiency and quality of human resources. Rational investments in employees and their development is an action helping the organization to maintain its competitive advantage. The nature of the article is theoretical and its main purpose is to discuss e-learning as a method of development and a way of professional perfecting for the employees.

### 2. The essence and meaning of the employees' development

Modern enterprises operate in the environment that evolves dynamically, because of the rapid technical and technological progress, or increasing demands of consumers. Therefore, they have to constantly care of the development of their employees. With their knowledge and new competence, they would be sources of innovations, innovative ideas or solutions that further could result in a form of competitive advantage. Development is also a chance to the

employees themselves, who achieving new skills, increase their worth and strength on the labour market. (Gadomska-Lila, Rudawska and Platonoff, 2009)

Development of the employee's competence basically may be divided into the two stages including:

- education before the starting professional work (schools, universities, practice, trainings, probations);
- education simultaneous with professional work (trainings and improving of qualifications, as well as professional career. (ed. Szałkowski, 2002)

Because of the special care, that in a recruitment process there are accepted only the highly skilled, qualified and well-educated candidates, it should be considered that their professional potential should be constantly developed. At the same time, the key aspect of this type of development has to be highlighted. Managerial staff should focus on taking care of the possibilities of updating and developing the employees' competence. Creating the proper conditions for development with a passive dimension, should be connected with active operations based on initiating and orientation in a way that it corresponds to the present and future needs of an enterprise.

In its broad understanding, development of human resources may be understood as „purposeful configurations of the action of enriching knowledge, development of skills, shaping the values, attitudes, motivations and skills, as well as taking care of physical and mental condition of the employees, or the actions causing an increase in work efficiency and increase in the market value of human resources” (Pocztowski, 2007, p. 274)

On the basis of the above mentioned definition it may be clearly stated that development of an employee is a process, both completing knowledge, as well as learning new skills and competence, necessary for having the tasks effectively performed on the presently occupied position, or the future one.

It may be clearly concluded that the aim of the development of the personnel is to create such a situation, in which knowledge, skills and qualifications of the employees, would enable the organization achieving its goals:

- firstly, increasing efficiency of the organization functioning,
- secondly, meeting the needs of employees in the aspect of creating his professional career taking into account individual aspirations and aims. (Gadomska-Lila, Rudawska and Platonoff, 2009, p. 211)

Process of development of human resources should be encouraged by proper conditions within organizations, such as: HR strategy correlated with general organizational strategy, organizational culture, system of remuneration, or motivations.

### **3. E-learning – distance learning**

The pace of technological changes occurring nowadays is incredible. Internet became the most popular source of information and the channel of communication. These changes caused that the new possibilities opens while sharing information and knowledge.

Although the process of implementing e-learning in Poland has been lasting for over several years, it is still a marginal element of the system of education. Regardless the fact that this form of education is being more often used, it is still something new and little known, causing mistrust and suspicion, as unpopular and unavailable. (Wilkin, 2009, p.25) As the specialists in this subject claim, this form of education could be a significant tool, accelerating the process of implementing the necessary changes in the Polish system of education. (Mischke, 2008)

Particularly in higher education increased tendency to create virtual learning environment (VLE), which in conjunction with the managed information system (MIS), create a managed

learning environment (MLE). On the international service market, we can observe a development of MOOC - massive open online courses, that allow us to attend remotely and for free in selected by us academic course, sometimes ended by final exam. It is not required university student status. Catalogue of English-language courses can be found e.g. on the website MOOC List. (*E-learning*, available 23.05.2015, <<http://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/E-learning>>)

E-learning is a distance-learning using modern devices and information technologies, special software and specially prepared teaching material. E-learning may be an individual teaching form, or function as a complementation for the traditional forms of learning. (*Ewolucja e-learningu*, available 23.04.2015, <<http://nf.pl/po-pracy/ewolucja-e-learningu,8744,295>>)

In order to understand the possibilities given by e-learning as an educational method, there should be discussed a definition formulated by Kubiak who claims that „distance learning is a method of conducting educational process in the conditions that teachers and students are away from each other (sometimes it is a significant distance) and do not meet in the same place, using for sharing information – apart from the traditional means of communication- also modern tele-communicational technologies, transferring voice, video, computer data, and printed materials. Modern technologies also enables direct contact in the real time, between the teacher and student, by means of audio- or video- conference, dependent on the distance between them” (Kubiak, 2000, p. 12)

As every learning method, e-learning has its advantages and disadvantages of being used in practice. Firstly, the advantages would be discussed, they mainly include:

- reduction of the costs of learning;
- great flexibility of the educational forms and lack of territorial limitations;
- centralization of the learning process;
- standardization of knowledge, and repetitive quality of education;
- contrary to appearances, facilitated contact with the lecturer;
- comfort of a training organization, as well as its contextuality, multithreading and individualization;
- interactivity and engaging form of teaching;
- possibility of better use of organization knowledge and better recognition and understanding of its human capital;
- possibility of being a complementary teaching method for the main one;
- possibility of a dialogue among the participants of the training in order to exchange information, views and knowledge;
- possibility of education for disabled people, who can learn, or study in the places of their accommodation, not looping the availability of the same sources of knowledge, as their healthy colleagues. (Hyla, 2009, p.27; Stecyk, 2008)

Apart from the above mentioned advantages, unfortunately e-learning also has numerous limitations and disadvantages that do not occur in case of traditional education.

According to the researchers of the subject, the most significant negative features of e-learning are:

- limitations of the groups of interpersonal communication;
- being dependent on technology (equipment and connection quality, quality and type of software) and on its knowledge (both on the side of the teacher, as well as learner);
- time consuming and expensive analyses, preparing of multimedia teaching materials, as well as their conservation;
- complexity of the organization of a learning process;
- limitations of social networks by being isolated from teacher and a group;
- limitations concerning the data shared and participation in the functional classes, e.g. laboratories, experiments, etc.;

- features of the Internet, destructive for the user (a lot of interesting information, not only connected with education);
- lack of the motivating atmosphere characteristic for traditional school, or group;
- the necessity to have the predispositions for self- education, training, and self-control. (Siemieniecki, 2007; Hyla, 2009)

Presented above statement including advantages and disadvantages of e-learning was created on the basis of more or less adequate observations and opinions of the users of the systems of e-learning, selected by the authors of various publications and experts in this subject.

In order to meet the condition of profitability and efficiency of implementation of this form of development in personnel in the organization, here is important the awareness of its strategic using in the areas in which it is reasonable and may bring greater profits. It should not be treated as standard teaching tool. System of using e-learning, adjusting it to the specificity of organization makes consideration of the long- term aims and predicting the scale of impact and repeatability. (Wilkin, 2009)

#### 4. Conclusions

In the consciousness of employers, as well as employees, existing of the need for constant and systematic development is obvious. At the same time, the need for training is understood. As mentioned in various sources (Wilkin, 2009) since several years educational activity of many adult Poles increases. Unfortunately, the process is selective, has relatively little scope and takes place mainly in a traditional way.

Conditions of development of the new forms of education unfortunately are not favourable, which is a result of a lack of knowledge and reliable information about these forms of education, as well as suspicion towards the new things. Even though e-learning is an didactic and technological innovation, so far not fully accepted, it seems that because of numerous disadvantages, it is worth being popularized and used in practice of teaching at various educational levels.

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