Chapter XIV

Lifelong Learning and Online Education: A New Framework for the Competence of Tomorrow’s Educators

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Abstract

In this chapter, the effects of lifelong learning and online education in the role of an educator are examined. Lifelong learning and lifelong education, as well as online learning and online education are terms that are located in a new context where flexibility has become a central demand. In such a framework, we identify the new capabilities and challenges that organizations, learners, and educators face. Moreover, we attempt to describe the role that an educator should adopt in order to be effective and able to support learning in this new environment. This
A review concludes with a framework of competencies necessary for the educators who practice their profession within new learning environments that already exist or that are going to appear in organizations, as needs for learning and knowledge management are continuously increasing. For this purpose, a specific case study is presented regarding the way an online training system can be implemented in order to support learning within a banking organization.

Introduction

Lifelong learning has become a central debate in academia and the policy context. This is not coincidental. The term “lifelong learning” reflects the need for continuous knowledge acquisition and update which characterizes our society—our knowledge-driven society. The term also reflects the rising stream of flexible ways of learning which gradually replace the old and traditional forms of education (Jarvis, 2001). Because of globalization and competitiveness, we cannot neglect the need of every nation for continuous enhancement of its human resources’ competencies (DFEE, 1998; Griffin, 2004). In this context, the role of practitioners is changing, regardless of the educational environment in which individuals work and move away from the traditional roles of teachers that provide knowledge to a group of people. This role of practitioners does change in terms of the competencies each person must initiate for lifelong learning (Cornford, 2002) as well as the kind of relationships each person should create within the learning group (Rogers, 2002).

Another factor that affects this change in different ways is the rapid growth of information and communication technology (ICT). ICT has become an important aspect of every day life, and educators/trainers must help their students in the use of ICT (Huysman & Gerrits, 1998). ICT can also provide new capabilities and means of supporting individualized educational needs in numerous ways (Karazza, Phillips, & Apostolakis, 2005a; Kirkpatrick & McLaughlan, 2000; Stites, Hopery, & Ginsburg, 1998). Concerning the growth of ICT and the relation with education and learning, there are those who believe that ICT should be applied to every discipline expecting that its penetration will improve the performance of every educational process (Tucker & Cordani, 1998). On the other hand, there are those who believe that the induction of ICT in education will not change things radically, so it should be dealt with cautiously, leaving no room for excitement (Tsolakidis, 2004). According to Mayes (2002), the argument appears to be that the power and potential of new technologies will mean that new methods become available, yet the evidence from past experience is that new technologies may not inevitably lead to change in education.
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