

eLearning in a bank setting: the case of BPS (Suisse)

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Abstract: When designed for professional settings, an eLearning intervention may take into particular account the technological habits of the trainees. Often, in fact, there is a gap between the use people make of ICTs at work and their use in the private life; the gap is particularly glaring when mobile devices are considered. The paper goes through the different phases of a project which aimed at introducing eLearning in the training path of the stagiaires of a Swiss bank. The first phase of the project showed that the expected dynamic of autonomous learning out of work, made possible by the delivery of contents on the PlayStation Portable, did not take place. A study on the technological habits of the trainees led to a re-design of the eLearning activities, in particular of those developed on the mobile device.

Introduction

When designing any educational intervention three are the parameters that should be necessarily taken into account for reaching quality results. Such parameters have been identified on the base of the experience, and are: a) the *people* involved in the learning activity, who should be provided with the right content, methodological and technological support and adequate communication tools; b) the *method* of work, that means all the *activities* designed to help people getting specific knowledge and competence, which have to be designed according to space and time boundaries; c) the *contents*, that are the objectives to achieve and the resources provided to reach them; contents are developed through the support of technologies that, in the case of eLearning, are digital technologies, and that can have a higher or lower level of interactivity for the student (Cantoni et al. 2007). The three parameters have to be harmoniously integrated into the design, to result in an educational intervention effectively fitting the requirements of the learning scenario.

When the educational intervention has to be designed in an eLearning scenario, the choice of the technology to use plays an important role in the “method” parameter: this choice should be made considering the contents or activities one intends to develop and the target one is addressing. Choosing the technology that should best fit the target does not only mean to define the *micro-context* where people study or work, that is, for instance, a bank, but also to catch more structural characteristics of the *macro-context* where the target lives, that is the socio-cultural background. The employees of a Swiss bank, for instance, may be accustomed to be supported in their daily work by complex technologies, perhaps the most innovative on the market, while employees of a bank in central Africa may even be scarcely used to interact with customers through a PC. Then, without going so far, relevant differences may be found in the *technological habit* people have at work or in their private life.

In order to design effective eLearning interventions, knowing the technological habits of the people involved can help to choose the right technology for the right task and the right kind of students. In this paper, an ongoing eLearning project is presented, which has the aim of introducing eLearning activities in the training strategy of a Swiss bank, the Banca Popolare di Sondrio (Suisse) – from now BPS (Suisse). The project is being carried on by eLab (www.elearninglab.org), the eLearning service of the Università della Svizzera italiana (USI) and of the Scuola Universitaria Professionale della Svizzera Italiana (SUPSI). The project has gone through different phases: in the pilot phase, eLearning activities were introduced into