Study on the impact of mixed online training (synchronous and asynchronous) on the skills development of teachers in the workplace

Louise Sauvé, Télé-université/SAVIE

Karol Pépin, SAVIE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

December 2009

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

One thing is becoming increasingly clear in the area of workplace training: the standard approaches applied are not adapted to individual needs and the knowledge society as a whole. Offering something more than a standard one-size-fits-all product involves "personalizing" learning. What do we mean by personalizing learning? We mean considering the diversity of learners (learning characteristics) in order to better adapt their learning to their needs (current and target skills), by offering them customized online solutions (synchronous, asynchronous and mixed) and by optimizing learning situations (alternate teaching methods) to reflect work-related requirements (e.g., adapted to their time constraints, work environment and job demands) and each learner's skills.

Background
Web technologies are developing at an unprecedented pace and constitute an excellent tool for improving the flexibility and effectiveness of learning. An increasing number of studies demonstrate that an adult can learn more – and faster – with an online course than face to face in a classroom. What about teachers, who must teach themselves on the job how to use these technologies and effectively integrate them into their teaching? A number of obstacles and a certain resistance hinder this training and integration, the most significant being the time available and the motivation to learn.

Increasingly, teachers are seeking à la carte training solutions that can be split up and accessed at different times in the workplace or close to home. The Internet offers more and more courses that successfully bring the knowledge conveyed in line with learners' actual needs, regardless of where they may be on the planet, or where their workplace is located. But what do we really know about the impact of these online solutions on workplace learning? There is little literature on the subject, thus the relevance of research to analyze these types of intervention and document the success factors of online training in the workplace.

Goal
Given that little formal research has been conducted on the use of Web technologies for developing the technological and pedagogical skills of teachers in the workplace, and even less on operating training programs that provide a personalized approach to learning, the goal of this study was to test a mixed online learning model that provides a personalized mix of synchronous classroom instruction and asynchronous distance learning to suit the learning characteristics of adult learners in the workplace. With this educational approach in mind, the Form@tion program was launched online to offer professional development opportunities to teachers in the workplace who wished to develop their skills in online teaching.

More specifically, the objectives of this study are to understand working teachers' resistance to change and the obstacles facing them in terms of information and communications technologies

(ICT); to test a mixed training program that offers a personalized training plan to meet the training needs and learning characteristics of practising teachers; and to measure the changing attitudes of teachers towards the need for lifelong learning.