THE INTRODUCTION OF E-LEARNING AND EXPERIENCES GAINED AT HCSO

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Summary

Encouraged by the success of the first experience, we launched our own training programme which supported individual training The new training method was an old wish of both the training section and staff. Success of the training was however influenced by not having experience in e-learning, neither in typing training, and not being able to provide **the right motivation**.

Open learning is the method in adult training which meets the continuous needs under changing circumstances. This system gave a framework for introducing new methods such as distance learning and e-learning.

There is a basic demand in adult education that the student would have the **option to choose the pace, place and means of learning**. One of the basic characteristics of open learning is **time independence**: the student can choose the pace of learning, chose the time when she/he would like to finish a unit. The substantial characteristic of open learning is the **locality independence**. To acquire physical type technical skills and expertise individually (without a specialised trainer and practicing field**)** can not guarantee a training programme of proper efficiency and quality.

E-learning programmes are developed with the planning, constructing principles of the modern tanning programmes, basically the modular structure, the competency focused contents, as well as the modern and efficient methods such as: conducting starting level tests, providing sub-programmes in accordance with the right levels for students, or training programmes relating to individual needs and algorithms.

E-learning programmes – with the exploitation of the technical conditions and possibilities – dispose of further characteristics which makes the studying process easier and at the same time deepens the knowledge of the participants. Developing and application of the **multimedia, three dimensions programmes**, as well as the ensurance of **constant testing**, **feedback and correction possibilities** are worth highlighting.

1.   Our e-learning based courses

We have launched our **e-learning** courses – **explicitly for exercise oriented ones** – in 2008 which enabled the participants to practise a lot. First we bought two programmes, which **were already on the market** and installed them: a languages course and a professional typewriting programme, which was essential for many of our staff to implement everyday work.

1.1.   Language e-learning

The some staff members of HCSO joined the e-learning English and German language programmes of the Government Centre for Public Administration and Human Resources Services (KSZK from now on) offered for civil servants. Training material and the teachers were provided by the institution (KSZK). (The training material for the courses were developed using EU funds). The conditions of the participation was regulated by **contracts**: between HCSO and KSZK, and between HCSO and the civil servant staff. The HCSO staff members could use their office PC's , but only beyond official working hours. Sixty percent of the training fees were financed by state support, the remaining 40% financed by the participants.

More than fifty staff members of the HCSO participated in the e-learning courses and **passed the final exams** successfully.

1.2. Typewriting through e-learning

It was a touch-typing (ten finger) system, which served as miscellaneous background technical skills. The training was offered for those colleagues editing long documents, but didn't use the professional typing method. There was no final exam needed to finish the course, because proceeding and success could be followed up continuously.

We couldn't and did not want to effectuate room independence: the place for doing the exercises was the office of HCSO, and the time limit was set between 7:00 and 19:00 that is the availability of the office network. The programme on the other hand fulfilled the modern organizing requirements of adult training, in regard to **individual progressing pace**.

Training material provided for the participants was drawn up with the cooperation of internationally known typing experts and according to the official typing rules. The programme consisted of 35 letter learning and 27 copying exercises. It was very user friendly: after starting the programme and choosing the next exercise oral instructions were given, and upon request, oral dictating was used to solve a task.

Recommendation of the authors' was to use **a daily routine** to fulfil the tasks with a practice time of one or two hours, approximately at the same time of the day. With this pace, 1000 characters per ten minutes can be achieved in four weeks' time. Participants were/are provided 4 months' access to finish the course.

There were 54 applicants in 2008, and 26 in 2009 for the typing course. All were admitted to the courses: they got the possibility to participate. Fourteen participants concluded the course in the first year, two (!) the second year. (See Graph 1). Two colleagues could repeat the course, but did not get to the last lesson.

Graph 1 Number of course participants (person)
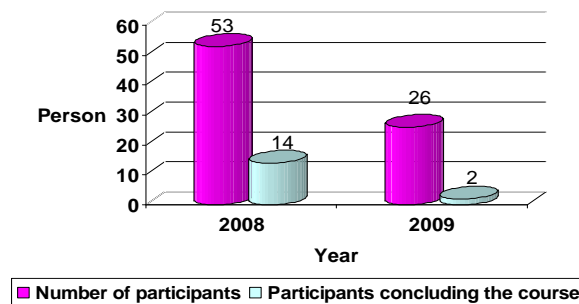
By examining the 2008 course data in detail (see Table 1) we can state, that 30 % of the attendees had terminated the course at the central office, while the ratio at the regional directorate was only 18 %. One reason for this could be, that **staff in the central office staff dispose of the arrangement of their working hours more freely**, than staff working in regional directorates.

We can also observe, that middle aged (between 36-50 years old and over 50) participants had a similar performance, while there was only **one** participant **under 35 who concluded the course**.

We can state with one voice, that **women were more persevering** than men. Only one person concluded the course among the male colleagues.

We can find 6 managers enrolling in the first year. This means, that typing **is a skill, which most managers would like to be in possession of.**

The **average mark** given for the exercises is over 4 (4,2) for those who had concluded the course, while it is **very low** (2,4) for those **not concluding the studies**. The strict grading system discouraged the staff from further practicing.

2. THE CAUSES OF SUCCESS/FAILURES OF E-LEARNING

2.1. E-learning based language training

Language training can unanimously be considered as a success. The participants were enthusiastic to start the training, could use the training material very well, and were happy to receive weekly feedbacks from the teachers. Colleagues we also motivated by the financial aspect as well: the contribution they made, and other expenses arising in case of failure.

E-learning based typewriting

Typewriting training material is used successfully by educating institutions during school years. By examining the training held within the HCSO School we can see however, that among the 80 applicants 17 did not start the course at all, 38 participants did not even reach one third of the course (see Table 3.)

There was **no** strong and renewing **motivation ensured** for the self training route. Colleagues were not motivated to conclude the course at all, (and it seems, neither to improve the efficiency of everyday work!)

Nevertheless we have to mention, that those concluding the course were very satisfied with the training material, and they were very grateful for the possibility.

We have collected the elements influencing success from the trainer/organiser and participants' point of view, marking them with + or – signs according to which side (success, failure) they added to.

Trainers/organisers

+ The organiser kept contact by e-mail and telephone with the participants.
– It was ignored, that typing is a physical type professional skill. There was no experienced typing teacher involved in the training.
– There was no personal contact.
– There is no consequence for not concluding the course.
– The monotony of the subject (it is boring to press the same key n-times) was not dissolved.
– There was no participant's written evaluating questionnaire. There was no written evaluation of the course.

Participants

– Our staff members are not in possession of individual strategies. (They have to be encouraged and thought on self–governed learning.)

o The **organising skills** of the participants were **not adequate**. The majority could not practice regularly particularly in peaceful circumstances, namely (for example eliminating phone calls).

> Skills of a self-governed student:
> o Self-definition and orientation
> o Selection and decision making
> o The use of appliance knowledge
> o Learning skills
> o Organising skills

According to a constructive comprehension of adult training the main students' qualities are the ones listed hereunder. Let us revise to what extent they were taken into consideration during our typewriting course!

The characteristics of adult trainees	Were these characteristics taken into consideration by the training?
Their experiences should be confirmed and approved	The telephone and e-mail contact fulfilled it partly. The participants did not have an opportunity to discuss their experience in a personal meeting.
They should be treated as partners	Yes.
They require confidential atmosphere	Yes.
They need some own responsibility in their studies	There was no weight on their own responsibility.
They need feedback, and would like to learn in their own pace	There was an oral feedback, and they could proceed at their own pace.

The characteristics of adult trainees	Were these characteristics taken into consideration by the training?
They need diversity, because they are not used to all day learning	We can not talk about diversity, since the practice of typewriting is a monotonous action. On the other hand, they don't have to be on training for the whole day, they can arrange their timing.
They require a connection to the previous experience	Partly. They received some information on the use of the programme in other institution, but no info on the internal experience.
They need to compete with themselves.	There was no competition
They need a clear objective and target definition, and their efforts should be acknowledged	Partly: the objective was defined, but there was no acknowledgement and target orientation
It is a need for them to share their ideas and experience	No

3.   E-learning based trainings in 2010: Typewriting and Outlook

After evaluating the previous course, we are continuing the typewriting course in 2010. We will be able to give a report about the evaluation later.

Launching our Outlook e-learning course was delayed to May 2010, due to some technical problems. Among the 45 applicants 39 were willing to participate in the training (see Table 4 and Graph 2). However only 32 turned up at the kick-off meeting.

The training material consists of 7 modules, with control questions at the end of each. The participants had to solve real tasks on a deadline in order to check the knowledge gained, practicing theory and last, but not least in order to keep up interest and communication. After the time limit, all participants received individual feedbacks regarding the quality of their work. Unfortunately the number of drop-outs were similar to the previous experiences. Furthermore, by the date set for the termination of the course, among those who were still participating less than half reached the end of the last unit.

We are still in the evaluation phase of the course, detailed information could be provided later.

Table 1 Distribution of participants of Typewriting course and who finished by are, age, gender and position in 2008-2009 (person)

	2008			2009		
	Participants	**Of which: who finished**		**Participants Number**	**Of which: who finished**	
		Number	**Percentage**		**Number**	**Percentage**
Total	**54**	14	26	**26**	2	8
I. Area						
Central office	37	11	30	23	2	9
Regions	17	3	18	3		
II. Age						
Below 35	9	1	11	6	1	17
Between 36 and 49	22	7	32	10	1	10
50 and over	23	6	26	10		0
III. Gender						
Man	12	1	8	4		0
Women	42	13	31	22	2	9
IV. Position						
Manager	6	2	33			
Employee	48	12	25	26	2	8

Source: Data from Typewriting software and data from HR database

Table 2 Average score of participants of Typewriting course by final success in 2008-2009

	2008				2009			
Participant	**Average grade**				**Average grade**			
	Minimum	**Maximum**	**Ave-rage**	**St. deviation**	**Minimum**	**Maximum**	**Ave-rage**	**St. deviation**
Who finished the course	1,7	5,0	4,2	1,0	4,0	5,0	4,5	0,7
Who did not finished the course	1,0	4,2	2,4	0,9	1,0	5,0	2,8	1,5
Total	1,0	5,0	2,9	1,2	1,0	5,0	3,0	1,5

Source: Data from Typewriting software

Table 3 Number and average grade of participants of Typewriting course by progress in 2008-2009

Year	Had not started at all	Who passed								Total
		(Less than 1/3 of lessons)					Between 1/3 and 2/3	Over 2/3 to 90%-	Over 90%	
		1	**2**	**3-5**	**6-8**	**9-11**				
		lessons					of the lessons			
I. Number of participants										
2008	7	5	5	7	7	3	5	1	14	54
2009	10	5	1	2	2	1	2	1	2	26
Total	17	10	6	9	9	4	7	2	16	80
II. Average grade										
2008		1,0	2,3	2,3	2,8	2,7	3,3	2,2	4,2	2,9
2009		2,4	3,0	3,9	3,4	4,8	1,7	1,4	4,5	3,0
Total		1,7	2,4	2,7	2,9	3,2	2,8	1,8	4,2	3,0

Source: Data from Typewriting software

Table 4 Number of participants in the different stages of Outlook e-learning course in 2010

Stages	Number of participants	Number of who finished	Reason of drop-out	Number
Offering	45		Did not want	6
Part1: Kick-off meeting		32	Did not come	7
Part2: Passing lessons		23	Did not read	16
Part3: Giving solution for				
Task 1	39	31		8
Task 2		31	Did not send task result	0
Task 3		28		3
Task 4		In process, recently 25		

Graph 2 Number of participants in different stages of Outlook e-learning course in 2010

Stage	Who finished	Drop-out
0. Offering	39	6
1. Opening session	32	7
2. Lessons	23	16
3. Task1	31	8
4. Task2	31	0
5. Task3	28	3
6. Task4	25	3