KEYWORDS

e-Learning, instructional design, knowledge management, learning management systems, learning organisations, lifelong learning, motivation, self-regulated learning (SRL), technology enhanced learning environments (TELEs).

INTRODUCTION

Carry over of new knowledge on SRL from the world of academia into the world of industry (and of evidence-based business models) remains at a rather incipient stage. On the one hand, the body of research on how technology-enhanced support systems influence SRL is still fairly minimal. On the other, the market uptake of e-Learning solutions is growing at a much slower pace than had been foreseen only a few years ago. The much heralded e-Learning revolution enabled by creative twinning ventures between new learning approaches and industrial knowledge management applications (Rosenberg, 2001) was watered down with the new economy. However, when considering e-Learning as “the use of Internet and digital technologies to create experiences that educate our fellow human beings” (Horton, 2001, p.3) one would expect that the exponential rise in societal learning needs would propitiate a rapid take-off in new business opportunities. This has not been the case and one possible reason lies with the fact that ICT is still regarded mainly as a delivery technology rather than a catalyst of new paradigms in learning and training. In this adverse context SRL could provide the turning argument to enable new business models and innovative pedagogical approaches. In any event, SRL advocates will have to take into account that industry is mainly geared to short-term results, “realistic” choices, re-use of materials, skills measurement and enhancement priorities.

Success in the marketplace increasingly depends on learning. However, most people, most organisations, simply do not know how to learn. SRL contains the potential to bypass learning dysfunctions. Effective learning, epitomised in the concept of “double-loop learning”, where the learner – individual or collective – is able to challenge learning assumptions, is the consequence of advanced self-reflective aptitudes (Argyris, 1977, 1991). Thus, it is fair to say that the DNA of learning organisations is increasingly made up of SRL attributes.

The contributions featured under this first section of the book deal with the complex relationship between research in SRL and corporate applications. For obvious reasons, and within the overall balance, “learning industries” deserve a special place. The chapter encompasses five distinct perspectives on SRL as perceived by industry: (i) SRL and uptake by the business community; (ii) Lifelong learning skills (individual and corporate) and SRL; (iii) Instructional micro-design addressing learning resistances; (iv) SRL as a requisite of learning organisations; (v) Integrated commercial platforms and SRL. These five themes provide a rich and comprehensive perspective on the state of the art of SRL in the world of business. They also suggest opportunities and challenges to the
formation of intelligent partnerships involving academia and industry.

A SYNOPSIS

Lefrere opens his seminal article with a statement that significant proportions of SRL needs of workers are not met by TELEs due to short-term dictates in the workplace. While it is routine for TELEs in academia to be used to enhance learning on at least one SRL dimension, few companies offer anything by way of a SRL competence development programme. In order to produce the necessary attitudinal changes both in workers and managers the author recommends the use of insights, presentational standards and techniques from advertising and the entertainment industry to trigger performance-augmentation added to a TELE. HR departments shy away from purchasing training solutions that they do not fully master. Their preference is directed to “safe” externally-regulated learning with a limited allowance for choice exercised by learners. This pattern is consistent with the immediate targets set forth by major company stakeholders. Likewise, recent drive of top executive attention towards knowledge management needs have not been convincingly met by eLearning solutions particularly in minimising time2performance of newly recruited staff. In conclusion the author states that “the TACONET community is in advance of the wider community of trainers in looking at the economically significant issue of how to use TELEs and SRL to improve the performance of industry”.

The case for using emergent technologies to sustain a learning organisation is the core of the next article. Pinto provides evidence of a business model specialised in products designed to help young children develop SRL skills. His article goes on to explain how personal and organisational learning within the company is supported by appropriate SRL developments. The role of leadership through values appears to be a core variable to explain the relationship between collective intelligence and group learning. As a corollary self-learning and self-regulated skills are instrumental to the ethos of a learning company.

Ronsivalle & Metus provide a robust theoretical framework for learning course architectures stemming from educational micro-design activity. The paper offers a creative approach to instructional design based on mental models theory. The main algorithms identified are derived from cognitive dissonance theory. Moreover, the authors offer insights into dynamic corporate examples with special reference to extended e-Learning applications in the banking activity. Research shows how motivation for learning and overcoming “learning resistance” can be prompted by effective management of cognitive dissonance. The article ends with a provocative thesis on the relationship between “learning resistance” and “temporal dimension” or “learning time”. Given that the latter constitutes the fundamental resource the learner brings into play, management of cognitive dissonance could have a most significant impact on training effectiveness.

In his contribution Figueira describes a business player that reports on the use of a TELEPEERS tool – TELE-SRL – to assess the efficacy of a commercial platform comprising a triple offer: LMS + content + tutorship. The article brings forth the relevance of the evaluation tool to help sharpen the market approach of e-Learning provisions. In line with the author’s conclusions, and based on a showcase of business examples, SRL appears to be relevant to the roll-out of a proper networked learning environment. Thus, it comes as no surprise that companies potentially like self-supported solutions provided they help (i) boost competitiveness based on human capital, (ii) reduce costs, (iii) improve both informal and formal learning, and (iv) increase employee engagement.

Vervenne offers an original essay on self-regulated lifelong learning, a concept that emerges at the crossroad of personal SRL skills and organisational SRL contexts. The paper begins with a demand-driven perspective on competencies seen as the “common currency of the labour market”. Thus, a new learn@work paradigm would require a constant alignment between business and learning processes, that is to say a proper integration between staff development and the company’s knowledge portfolio. Learning in the workplace emerges as the only valid response to ever-changing markets where in a service-led economy time2competency is more important than time2market. A powerful tool to realise this dream is the ePortfolio – “the digital home of SRL”. Vervenne concludes by acknowledging that further research will be needed to bridge academic knowledge and proven theories on SRL on the one hand, with business process-driven adaptive learning solutions in the form of innovative service-oriented architectures (SOA) on the other.
FINAL THOUGHTS

A practical conclusion from this section is that industry is bound to organise some form of “managed” self-regulated learning as an integral part of everyday work. Companies need to tap into the creative power of their workers in order to compete. Workers demand tools and support in order to cope with ever-changing work and business processes. There is room and “good will” for a strong partnership between university and industry (to be extended to the policy making area) to look further into the theme of SRL in TELEs. Managing and motivating people stands high in the value-added ladder of the knowledge-intensive economy. Purposeful and self-regulated learning is a strong value proposition to organisations that need to differentiate and compete with success in the globalised marketplace. In this respect TACONET offers an opportunity to build a trustworthy relationship between major stakeholders.

REFERENCES


AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

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