Enhancing the integration of workplace learning through the use of SMS in peer learning groups-an Indonesian case-study

Research team

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Benefits of Learning Partnership Groups

- Highlighting learning in the workplace
- Opportunity to exchange experiences and ask questions
- Encouraging openness
- Appreciate and positively utilize difference
- Problem solving
- Encouraging autonomy

Focus of the research

- Learning and cultural change in a large government organisation (30,000). Any change in culture resides in individual workers (Crane, 2002).
- Peer learning (Sampson & Cohen,2001; Saberton, 1985; Collier McManus, 2005, 2006) including the use of different modes of communication.
- Capacity-building (Kaplan, 1999; AusAID White Papers 2006, 2007). Focus on the development of people not just the giving of resources. Sustainability.

Methodology

- Sample of 40 from two tax districts
- Surveyed before and after training
- Interviewed before and after training
- Set up into Workplace Learning Groups (learning groups used in training)
- Document analysis (Learning records, action plans)
- Final survey after 3 months

Group set-up (monitored over 3 months)

- **Group Communication models**
- **1.**Face-to-face
- **2.**Face-to-face and on-line (minimal support from tutor)
- **3.**On-line (continuing support from tutor)
- **4.**E-mail (no support from tutor)
  Not specified. No reporting required
- **5.**SMS (mobile phone. Participants copy their texts to researcher's phone)
- **6.** Control group

Results

- 95% implemented new skills, 85% improved service, 70% said WLG helped them make changes for modernization
- Workplace Learning Groups helped to sustain the learning from the training program back in the workplace
- Developed generic skills of team work, strategic planning and communication
- Face to face and SMS group appears to be the most effective mode of group communication

SMS Learning

Examples of it being used in different ways:
- Getting immediate learning from students (multiple choice)
- For literacy tasks
- Note taking
- For reading e-books
- For searching internet
- For video conferencing

(Armatras, Holt & Rice, 2007;Duncan-Howell & Lee, 2007).

SMS group learning-an open and largely unmediated forum

Self-directed learning
- Set topics for discussion/learning agenda
- Utilised facilities available
- Identified skills gaps and developed training programs where needed.

Problem solving
- Topics posed as a problematic question, eg. 'How to prepare for change in the work culture?'
- Forum for debate and creative thinking
- Practical solutions presented.

Open communication - attitudinal change
- Encouragers employed
- Challenging hierarchical systems
- Taking responsibility for modeling new behaviours
- Sharing emotions

Participants' Responses

Self-directed learning
"Everything starts from ourselves"
"Use all the facilities available at the DGT; journals, intranet or training"

Problem-solving
Problem: "not all DGT employees are ready to face modernization in terms of their mindset as some of them still cling to the old pattern."
Solution: training.

Open communication-attitude change
"the most important thing is our willingness to change"
"there is a fear of our inability as staff to face modernization"
"there are many of our superiors who have not provided good examples for subordinates"

Perceived learning from participants in SMS groups (final survey).

- "we learn from other's opinions"
- "discussion widens my horizon"
- "Able to express my opinion"
- "Learn to accept and respect other's opinions"
- "Cooperate better with each other"
- "WLG can solve any new problems that arise"
- "I learned more and gained more knowledge. I can measure myself in terms of how far my participation is in the WLG"

Cultural Change

- "Government official behaviour and work processes can change for a short period of time by force and threat, but efforts cannot change mindset and perceptions easily. Organisational structure and process can be changed by force, but it would be very difficult to force the promotion of team spirit and change the deeper level of culture. In addition to control and other strategies, cultural strategies are important in order to make high performance government organisations." (Kim 2002, p.8)