

# Chapter VI

## Embedding E-Learning in Further Education

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### ABSTRACT

*This chapter, written from experience in implementing e-learning in further education through various roles, identifies key issues relating to embedding technologies into educational practices. From the concept that the increased expectation for technology to be used is a natural evolution, it identifies key advantages for learners and the learning process in terms of personalisation, differentiation, and interactivity. The importance of taking time to design effective resources, which include higher and deeper levels of feedback, is identified as a motivating factor, especially for independent study. The theme running throughout is the issue of developing staff skills and confidence. Ensuring training opportunities are flexible and manageable is identified as important to successful implementation. The advantages and disadvantages of face-to-face, online, cascaded, structured-play, and observational training and support techniques are highlighted alongside the introduction of a new five-step model to support gradual implementation of virtual learning environments into teaching and learning.*

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter is written from the perspective and experience of implementing and using technology in further education (FE) through various e-learning coordination and management roles, incorporating strategising and staff development responsibilities. It explores and provides examples relating to the concept of e-learning as a blend

of traditional and newer techniques and tools, encompassing the use of various technologies with flexible, accessible, and inclusive characteristics to support teaching and enhance learning. It explores how the increased expectation of the use of information learning technologies (ILTs), a term still commonly used in FE linking e-learning and e-leadership (Lifelong Learning Sector Skills Council, 2005), can be dealt with as a change

in culture, capitalising on existing pedagogical practices of individualised learning. Links and transferable elements suitable for higher education (HE) are discussed throughout.

Developing from the view that increased use of technology in teaching and learning is a natural evolution, three key ideas are explored.

- The section entitled “Personalisation and Differentiation” explores ways technology, including virtual learning environments (VLEs), can reach learners with different abilities, motivation, learning styles, or pace, and support various additional learning needs. The use of and potential barriers relating to e-portfolios are discussed briefly.
- “Designing Resources” discusses the advantages and disadvantages of using readily available equipment and software to create interesting, motivating, and interactive resources. Key issues relating to developing purely online resources including composing instant feedback for self-assessment are highlighted.
- “Professional Development and Implementation” details strategies that have worked to encourage and increase the use of technology, including examples of training, a descriptive model for utilising online learning environments, the provision of in-class support for first and early use of technology, the championing of roles, and the use of competitions to motivate individuals.

The chapter concludes by establishing where FE is in terms of embedding e-learning and summarises identified links to HE, suggesting where different educational environments can learn from and help each other. Further research is explored and additional reading is recommended.

## A NATURAL EVOLUTION

Arguments for the idea that the increased expectation of the use of e-learning can be dealt with as a culture change are explored initially. It is suggested that this change capitalises on existing practices of individualised learning. McKenna (2004) provides the following perspective: “Our world is transforming everyday. The technological transformations and breakthroughs...are increasing at exponential rates. We...are connecting over great distances, exploring and re-shaping our world... Mobile telephones [and] computers...unthinkable even fifty years ago, are now considered a normal part of...twenty-first-century life” (p. 16). This links with the American Productivity and Quality Centre’s (2002) vision that

*e-learning can change the paradigm of learning and transform the lecture model to an interactive model. Benjamin Franklin called for this in 1770 but he couldn’t find a way. John Dewey called for this in 1916 but he didn’t know how to do it. Now we have a way. (p. 6)*

Combined, the two views highlight a global change that is occurring and, in relation to the technological perspective of this publication, is a good place to start. The introduction of the knowledge economy and use of ILT in society and education is potentially the most fundamental change since the industrial revolution at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The resulting demand for skills, linked to the country’s new economy (Byers, 2000), could result in individuals viewing the change as a revolution (Blair, 2000). However, the technological advances are simply a natural evolution rather than a revolution (Williams & Goldberg, 2005). Nevertheless the power of effective inclusion to enhance individuals’ experiences is potentially more radical, as Clarke (2003) highlights, “E-learning has the potential to revolutionise the way we teach and how we learn.... This is about embedding and exploiting

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