Chapter 6
The Power of E-Learning:
An Effective Solution for Turkish Police Management Training Courses

Ali Semerci
Turkish Police Headquarters, Turkey

Hafize Keser
University of Ankara, Turkey

M. Yasar Ozden
Middle East Technical University, Turkey

ABSTRACT

Contemporary police organizations benefit from technological advances not only for preventing and fighting crime and criminals but also for training their officers for better service. Likewise, the Turkish police organization has established an e-learning portal to enable managers to attain required managerial competencies and to learn modern policing concepts in a cost-effective training environment. This research examines the perceptions of participants who attend management-training courses conducted via e-learning. Five factors of trainees' e-learning perceptions are examined through a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, consisting of a questionnaire, one-to-one and focus group interviews, and observation. SPSS program and quantitative methods are used to analyze and interpret the findings. Research has indicated some positive perceptions, such as place and time flexibility, enjoyment of learning, becoming acquainted with modern learning methods and technologies, being able to participate in training without leaving work and personal life. Conducting a management-training course via e-learning is positively perceived by the majority of course participants, and they recommend e-learning for upcoming management training courses, specialized training, and professional development courses. However, research has also revealed that some technical and administrative problems affect negatively the trainees' perceptions of e-learning. Based on the findings in this chapter, recommendations are offered for similar projects.

1. INTRODUCTION

Though the speed of advances differs from country to country, and is subject to institutional investments, and organizational and cultural factors (Aalst, 1998), all nations around the globe are inevitably affected by rapid changes in information and communication technologies. Fundamental transformations in societies and governmental and non-governmental organizations have become a requirement rather than an option. Distributing knowledge and communication, reaching/accessing information, learning and teaching environments (learning management systems/learning content management systems), techniques and methods continue to transform at all levels. Parallel to these rapid changes, new modes of learning, such as e-learning (electronic learning), b-learning (blended learning), m-learning (mobile learning) and u-learning (ubiquitous learning) have emerged. As pointed out by Lin (2007), these changes have enabled learning and training to become digital, mobile and virtual.

The development of e-learning products, and the provision of e-learning opportunities, is one of the most rapidly expanding areas of education and training, in both education and industry (Imel, 2002 in Gilbert, Morton, & Jennifer, 2007). Together with these amazing developments, an increasing number of institutions, organizations, corporations and universities have been shifting their printed training materials to digital environments with intent to use information and communication technologies (ICT) to enhance learning (Block, 1999; Spender, 2002; Wheeler, 2001). From this perspective ICT has been viewed as a solution to cost and quality problems (Selim, 2007).

On the other hand, many commentators and analysts are making dramatic claims about growth in markets for online learning (Goodyear, Salmon, Spector, Steeples, & Tickner, 2001). However, the assumption that digital environments are better sometimes makes technologists, administrators and educators blind to more mundane aspects of teaching and learning such as course content, infrastructure, human resources and budget. Therefore, as pointed out by Rovai (2003), generalizing course effectiveness research findings across all on-line courses is a problematic issue because of the different course designs and approaches to on-line courses.

Rapid advancements in information and communication technologies make it relatively easy to create online learning environments. However, as Kinchin (2012) points out, there has not been universal satisfaction just because of the integration of new technologies into teaching. Therefore, success in e-learning requires a systematic process of analyzing, planning, designing, implementing, and evaluating e-learning environments, so that learning is actively fostered and supported (and not simply delivered in alternate format). During all its developmental stages, e-learning can be significant not only to learners, but also to trainers, support services staff, administrators as well as the institutions. An e-learning system is more likely to be meaningful to learners when it is easily accessible, clearly organized, well written, learner centered, affordable, efficient and flexible. While learners' participation to the training and their success make e-learning meaningful to instructors, similarly learners' satisfaction with the support services makes support services staff happy. In the same context, e-learning system is meaningful to institutions when it has a sound return-on-investment, and high level of learner satisfaction (Morrison & Khan, 2003 in Khan, 2005).

Online learning has been seen as a way to keep learners both well educated in their chosen field and digitally literate (Massy, 2005 in Rogers, Graham, & Mayes, 2007). Technological tools provide avenues for learning when placed in the capable hands of skillful teachers and designers of instruction (Moallem, 2003); however, simply having technology available does not mean changing everything in the teaching and learning stages. While a well-designed online course

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