Chapter 21

A Web–Based Training Experience in Turkey:
A University–National Police Collaboration

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ABSTRACT

This study describes a Web-based, in-service training program designed by Middle East Technical University in collaboration with the National Police in Turkey. The aims of this program were to diminish the cost of in-service training for chief superintendents and 3rd rank commissioners from around the country and to bridge the geographical distance between the trainees and trainers. In two years of training, 2,072 chief superintendents and 270 3rd rank commissioners attended the Web-based, in-service training program. In this chapter, we describe the resulting experiences and lessons learned from a technical, pedagogical, and managerial perspective. Recommendations are offered for similar projects and collaborations among university and governmental institutions.

INTRODUCTION

Distance education has a long history with its "complex, hierarchical, nonlinear, dynamic, self-organized, and purposeful system" (Saba, 2003, p. 12) and has an evolving nature with the emergence of new technologies and media. The origins of distance education can be found in printed media and in correspondence education (by mail). These forms have evolved into today's distance education programs, which now all contain some level of electronic communication. Moore and Kearsley (1996) defined distance education as the following (p. 2):

planned learning that normally occurs in a different place from teaching and as a result requires special techniques of course design, special instructional techniques, special methods of communication by electronic and other technology, as well as organizational and administrative arrangements.

With the advent of the Internet, a new generation of distance education has emerged. Redding (2003) noted that, although only thirty years old, the "Internet has transformed the distribution of data and communications" (p. 157). The face of distance education has changed drastically in the last decade due to the integration of telecommunication-based technologies that allowed many institutions implementing Web-based programs (Simonson, Smaldino, Albright, & Zvacek, 2009). In other words, an increase in bandwidth technologies and worldwide access to interconnected networks has enabled the Internet to develop into a viable delivery system for distance education and created the terms e-learning, digital learning, virtual learning etc. Distance education via Web environment offers life-long learning opportunities without time and space constraints. E-learning is regarded as an inevitable means to be used by all learning professionals (Carliner, 2008).

Parallel to these advances in the recent decade, there has been an increasing interest in training via Web environments, which is characterized by the term Web-Based Training (WBT). Organizations' propensity to seek opportunities to integrate innovations for their future benefit (Senge, 1990) can be met with the Web-based environments that offer flexibility of time and place and hence increased enrollment and flexible administration (Romiszowski & Mason, 2004). It can also reduce training costs and time (Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart, & Wright, 2008). Horton (2000) indicated "anybody will be able to learn anything anywhere at any time, thanks to a new development called Web-based Training" (p. xx). He further identified the important advantages of WBT for organizations as the following (p. 578):

(1) delivering the same quality of training at the same time, (2) providing training at any distance, (3) offering flexibility for any learning objectives, and methodology within any framework, (4) providing valuable learning resources, (5) keeping experts on their jobs, and (6) helping to recruit workers to maintain their skills.

Despite these advantages, organizations need to be aware of the challenges and drawbacks. Examples include the time required to employ Web applications and to update programs, the personnel needed, and the costs involved which all require careful consideration.

In this chapter, we present the experiences on the design and delivery of a WBT program that was created through collaboration between Middle East Technical University (METU) and the National Police in Turkey. The program was designed to use the capabilities of the Web environment to provide in-service training for chief superintendents and commissioners of the National Police. The authors believe that the results have implications for similar projects for linking academic knowledge with practical application and provide hints in developing and implementing a Web environment for use in regular in-service training of work-based learners.

BACKGROUND OF THE PROJECT

The Turkish National Police runs regular in-service training programs for their staff every year to prepare them for professional advancement. Until 2005, training programs had been carried out via face-to-face sessions offered at set intervals by staff from the Police Academy in the capital city, Ankara. Although a majority of the personnel work in the largest provinces of Turkey, the staff is spread around the country. This meant that a substantial number of staff-members were required to spend considerable time and money to travel to Ankara to participate in the in-service

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