The Impact of E-learning on Employability Skills Development in Small Organization (A Study Case of a Small Organization in Blitar, East Java, Indonesia)

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Abstract- **Along with the development of computer technology in networking system, more and more organizations use e-learning system as a tool for learning and performance development.**

Smaller organizations face the challenge of not being able to afford their own in-house employee development programs and most rely on other organizations to enhance learning and performance improvement. Online delivered e-learning programs to their workplaces can significantly reduce the time these employees have to be away from these organizations, without sacrifices the effectiveness of the learning experience. This paper will have some overview of how a small organization in Blitar, East Java-Indonesia implements development employability skills of learning, self management, planning and organizing, problem solving, communication, teamwork, initiative and enterprise and use of technology, by involving e-learning.

Keywords- **e-learning, performance development, the effectiveness of learning experience, employability skills, and small organization.**

I. INTRODUCTION

Business organization which is the object of this study is the small family business organization located in Blitar district, East Java, Indonesia. Blitar is a small town located 170 km from the city of Surabaya, the capital of East Java. This organization grew rapidly in areas that have branches in the area around Blitar, Kediri and Tulungagung. These areas quite far from Surabaya and can only are reached by road, with the distance 3-4 hours. These areas do not have a consulting firm that provides employment training services. The owner of this organization hires some local consultants from Surabaya to develop the potential of employees in the field of management, marketing, tax, accounting and information systems. With large distances is of course limited the frequency of meetings. They use internet technology for daily consultation. Some employees also take advantage of Internet technology to develop the knowledge and expertise in the field of work, and try to solve problems in his work.

II. METHODOLOGY

This research is a case study in order to see how the impact of e-learning for employability skills in a small organization in Blitar, East Java. The method used is a literature review of employability skills and interview about the use of e-learning in improving the skills of employees. Interviews were conducted with the owner, some employees and business consultants in this organization. Questions in the interview report refer to the final Australian Flexible Learning Framework in Bowman and Kearns, 2009.

III. THE EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

Employability Skills are defined as "skills required not only to gain employment, but also to progress within an enterprise so

as to achieve one's potential and contribute successfully to enterprise strategic directions".
(http://employabilityskills.training.com.au/)

This study uses employibility skills outlined by the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST), the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) and the Business Council of Australia (BCA). They develop the employability skills that lead to "soft skills." They are:

1. **Communication** skills that contribute to productive and harmonious relations between employees and customers.
2. **Team work** skills that contribute to productive working relationships and outcomes.
3. **Problem-solving** skills that contribute to productive outcomes.
4. **Initiative and enterprise** skills that contribute to innovative outcomes.
5. **Planning and organizing** skills that contributes to long-term and short-term strategic planning.
6. **Self-management** skills that contribute to employee satisfaction and growth.
7. **Learning** skills that contribute to ongoing improvement and expansion in employee and company operations and outcomes.
8. **Technology** skills that contribute to effective execution of tasks.

(http://www.usq.edu.au/beyondeducation/employability/skills)

The Important of Developing Employability Skills

Employability skills, which are defined as the soft skills by DEST and BCA, are a competency required by each worker. Competence is like a root that needs to be strengthened. The people with high competence are those who have strong roots. Because, by having high competence, they will have a great competitiveness. Thus, there are just fewer things to worry, than by those who do not have that competence. In other words, they do not need to wait for

companies to conduct programs 'debriefing facing layoffs'. Because, healthy companies that are highly unlikely to do for them. While companies are already unwell are often doing it too late. So, the choices they have only one, to build high self-competence consciously far in advance.

Is that a loss if people have such a high competence? No, because if they continue to advance the company, so they will be part of that progress, as well as a greater blessing. However, if the company they ultimately can not be maintained, then as the root of the tree was felled, it will help you to grow again. As a firmly rooted tree, people who have a high competence have the opportunity to keep trying in order to continue to grow and develop.

Employability Skills in Delivery

Cleary, Flynn and Thomasson, 2006, have developed four component models in the resource guide *Employability Skills from Framework to Practice* based on a review of research on how to foster the development of employability skills. The model acknowledges that teaching and learning approaches that foster the development of employability skills require the application of four adult learning principles:

1. **Responsible learning** which "*emphasizes self management and initiative and enterprise as learners work independently to develop new knowledge and activities in the interest of furthering their skills.*" (p. 46)
2. **Experiential learning** which "*emphasizes 'learning to do' and 'learning from doing'. Authentic learning occurs when learners have an opportunity to apply their skills and knowledge in authentic work environments or in contexts which attempt to simulate the real. With its emphasis on real-time demonstration of skills, experiential learning can provide a strong basis for the demonstration and development of all Employability Skills. It can be particularly useful to create opportunities in which* **problem solving***

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and ***planning and organizing*** *skills are applied in real time.*" (pp. 46-47)

3. **Cooperative learning** which *"encourages learners to learn from each other, share learning tasks and learn from a range of people including colleagues, mentors, coaches, supervisors, trainers, and others. Cooperative learning based activities can be particularly useful in a classroom environment to provide opportunities to work with teamwork and communication skills."* (p. 47)

4. **Reflective learning** which *"is about consciously and systematically appraising experience to turn it into lessons for the future. This can be introspective, where learners are encouraged to examine changes in their own perceptions, goals, confidences and motivations. It addresses: developing critical thinking skills, learning to learn and developing attitudes that promote lifelong learning. Reflective learning can be useful in directly addressing problem solving, initiative and enterprise and self-management skills."* (p. 47)

IV. E-LEARNING

Wilkipedia defines e-learning as follows: *"**E-learning** (or **electronic learning** or **eLearning**) encompasses forms of technology-enhanced learning (TEL) or very specific types of TEL such as online or Web-based learning."* (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/E-learning). E-Learning happens in multiple formats including electronic mail and instant messaging, document sharing, online tutorials, teleconference meetings, delayed computer conferencing, process simulations, remote application sharing, and collaborative learning tools.

There is also a forum defines e-learning environment as a continuously supported by evolving, collaborative processes focused on increasing individual and organizational performance. The forum said that effective e-learning thrives at the nexus of web usability, communication and relationship, document, and knowledge management tools. Knowledge Management is about using information strategically to achieve one's business objectives, and the organizational activity of creating the social environment and technical infrastructure so that knowledge can be accessed, shared and created. (http://www.managersforum.com/eLearning/).

In addition to saving time and cost of transportation, e-learning methods can also help employees who want to update knowledge related to the job. For example in Indonesia, regulations and tax forms can be updated and downloaded from the IRS website, www.pajak.go.id. Employees at the tax must always update the knowledge of the tax because the tax regulations in Indonesia change very quickly. Do not let the company be unable to comply with tax laws because of lack of knowledge of the employee.

With the development of modern technology, today almost all companies use the Internet and networked computers in the workplace, e-learning can be accessed directly at the workplace, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week if need be. This increases the opportunity to transfer the insights gained in the learning experience to improved on-the-job performance. Smaller organizations face the challenge of not being able to afford their own in-house employee development programs and most rely on other organizations to meet this need. Online delivered e-learning programs to their workplaces can significantly reduce the time these employees have to be away from these organizations, without sacrifices the effectiveness of the learning experience. (Corbet, Rod. 2004)

E-learning and Employability Skills

To have a positive impact, e-learning programs need to be designed to enable employees to transfer what they have learned to their work in improving productivity and performance. Too many organizations have attempted to implement e-learning program focusing on immediate cost savings from reduced travel and time; these initiatives have generally fallen short due to the lack of
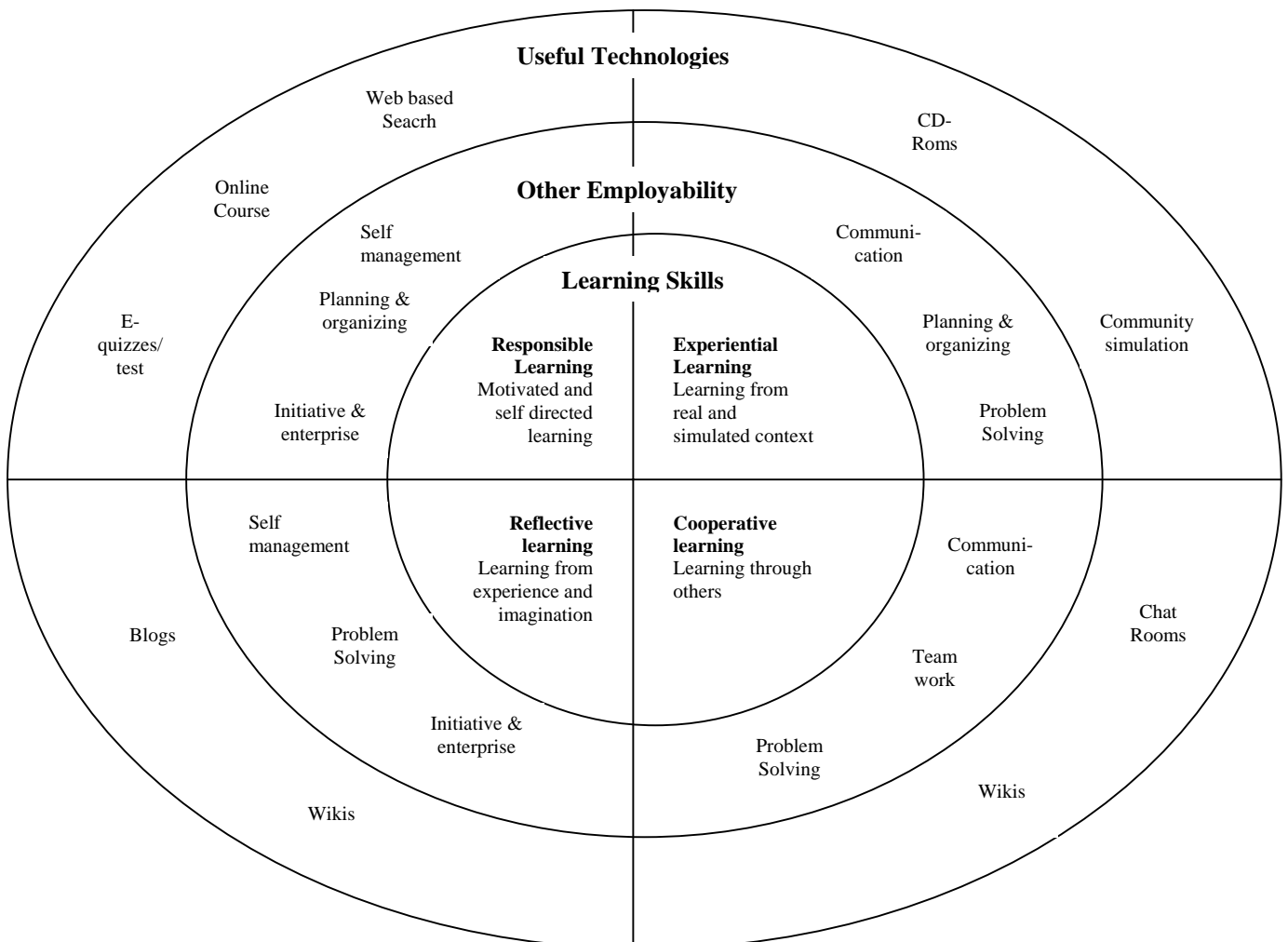
understanding of the learning process and how to effectively design e-learning applications for successful transfer to the work environment. The development of this expertise is growing and e-learning is beginning to yield the success it previously promised (Corbet, Rod. 2004).

E-learning is actually just one of the tools used in learning. Media e-learning used by employees and consultants in developing skills are in the form of CD-room (video simulations serve customers), simulation community, online courses, chat rooms, and remote control with a team-viewer program. Time set for e-learning can be formal and informal. So there are times in hours or days devoted to learning, but when employees face difficulties in work or want to update his knowledge in an informal consultant to

contact both in working hours and outside working hours. Some employees also have a sense from him for learning, e-learning media they use are web-based research, blogs, and wikis to find solutions or new information; e-quizzes/test to test his own ability; and chat rooms to communicate with consultants, colleagues or friends outside of work that can help solve problems or increase knowledge.

Based on interviews and field observations, supported by research results Bowman and Kearns, 2009, the learning styles of employees in these organizations can be categorized based on adult learning principles, as well as e-learning technologies are used. We can see the useful of technologies for the development of employability skills on figure 1.

Figure 1: The useful of technologies for the development of employability skills

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E-learning Challenges in Development of Employability Skills

The main challenge in the use of e-learning in Indonesia, especially in small town such as the limited facilities of Blitar is the internet. Internet telecommunications provider in a small area like Blitar, Kediri and Tulungagung still limited both in the number of providers as well as the quality of the signal capture. In addition, the cost of Internet in Indonesia is still expensive, so sometimes the cost of hiring a speaker for in-house training will be cheaper than the total cost of internet e-learning individuals.

The next challenge is the work culture in Indonesia is still put face to face directly. Employees still feel awkward when doing virtually face to face, so that their interest to do e-learning is smaller than the traditional training.

The next challenge is to develop competency with e-learning in this organization so far has not yet written evidence. Thus, when employees want to put these learning experiences in the curriculum vitae, they had no evidence in the form of certificates for training or learning experience is. Success or failure of learning through e-learning is seen in the performance of employees. When they showed that describe the performance of employability skills increase, so it can be said that e-learning that they do work, and vice versa.

Just as learning another way, e-learning can provide optimal benefits if the following conditions are met. 1) **Purpose.** Before deciding to follow the e-learning, you need to determine your learning objectives, so you can choose a topic, module, long learning, cost, and electronic learning tools are appropriate. These objectives should be linked to personal goals or objectives of your business directly to specific and measurable. Now we can find a lot of consulting firms and universities that provide e-consultation with the various modules learning material. 2) **Learners.** How to learn with e-learning provides an opportunity to become independent learners. Thus, to obtain optimal benefits from e-learning, you also must love to learn independently, have a positive attitude towards learning and broadening (highly motivated to master the subject taken, consider learning not as a burden but as an opportunity to improve the quality, able to enforce discipline in the study), have a supportive learning tools (eg: computers, internet access, fax, printer), skills and strategies to learn independently in a virtual world (basic skills using computers and the Internet, strategies for managing time). 3) **Support.** Just like learning another way, how to learn with e-learning will be easier if it had the support of the people associated with the learner (eg: employer, the company works, co-workers, friends and family). With support from various parties (in terms of funds, moral support, and support facilities), the spirit of learning that sometimes falls can be maintained, encouraged and even higher, problems encountered in the study can be completed, so the learning process and the resolution can program easier to implement. 4) **Other media**. E-learning is just a "tool" that can be used to achieve a goal. "Tool" if used with "the tools" will accelerate and facilitate the achievement of goals. Thus, e-learning should not be used in a pure, but can be harmonized with the use of other media to support each other achieve the goals of the learners. So, if there is a chance to use other media to learn (in the conventional classroom learning, learning through mailing lists, video, radio, fax, or correspondence), is not wrong if it is coordinated to each other. 5) **Choose what you need**. If you only need to travel by car, you do not need to use an airplane. If you need information and general knowledge to broaden your horizons, you should not need a means to broaden your horizons in a particular field, you do not need to pay to follow the complete e-learning, you may participate in a dialogue or a member of the electronic mailing list that provides the information you need. (jauari88, 2007)

V. CONCLUSION

The development of employability skills is a learning process. Constructivist epistemology of learning is based on the assumption that learners are actively involved in the learning process. Through the direct experience of the learners will get a deeper understanding of learned material and not just knowing what he had learned. E-learning, is one form of learning using constructivist epistemology, where the learner can engage in independent learning process (computer mediated learning) and the guided (computer assisted learning). E-learning design should be based on the concept of learning, while the technology itself is a supporting-agent which serves to facilitate the delivery of material.

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