THE PARADIGM SHIFT IN EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT: AN EVALUATION OF DISTRIBUTED LEARNING AS FUTURE APPROACH

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ABSTRACT
The purpose of this article is to explore the evolution of the paradigm shift in educational management, to evaluate Distributed Learning (DL) as a future approach, to establish data of the perceptions of DL program members and to guide educational managers in improving DL programs. The current study is based on to build a conceptual framework of a holistic approach to DL programs. To investigate the program members' perceptions of DL, a rating scale questionnaire (O'Malley & McCraw, 1999) was implemented. The responses from 50 graduate program members of management education yielded a response rate of 80 % from the total sample of 62 program members. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data. The findings, as related by educational managers; suggest that program members see their job as one of facilitating program quality rather than owning responsibility for program success. The industry of DL should be more closely aligned with the profession of continuing education administration, where success, effectiveness, and quality have less to do with the formal actions of the office and more to do with the linkages and bridges that one can build with various academic units. In conclusion, the class and the DL each have their own strengths and weaknesses. By using a successful combination of both methods, more learning benefits can be attained than when using the traditional class or DL alone. According to the results of the survey, a holistic model -covering learning resource centre, instructors, learners and learning climate as a whole- is suggested in improving success in DL.

Keywords: Educational management, Education, Distributed learning, Learning resource centre, Management learning.

INTRODUCTION

The major goal of the educational management process is to help learners gain a learning ability and to create a behavioral change. The educational management paradigm of the past –symbolized by classical class environment- was only based on "the transfer of the knowledge" which describes the interaction among instructors, learners and education/training contents viewed from educational/teaching traditions of the past. The educational management paradigm of today –symbolized by case studies- requires a two-way communication between instructor and learners as well as among learners themselves. In that respect, the educational management paradigm of the future –symbolized by distributed learning (DL)- requires a "knowledge base" (learning resource centre) which is placed on internet, and the instructor's role as well as the learners' roles is equally important for the learning process.

It is clear that the way a class is organized and the expectations of the instructor play a major role in the accomplishments of the class. According to Dooley and Skinner (1977), there are three factors influencing classroom pedagogy; the educational objectives of the instructor, the pedagogic philosophy of the instructor, and the roles played by the learners and the instructor. In using either the class or DL, each of these factors must be addressed.

In today's world, a well-educated learner; knows how to obtain information, makes use of the information he/she accesses, has advanced thinking, perception and problem solving skills, processes information creatively, does not hesitate to asses and express himself and has the ability to create new information by relating the data he obtains with future goals. In that respect, here are some changes that relate with the educational managers in today's educational environment:

- from tactical and technical level to a intuitive, interrelated and conceptual level,
- from event-oriented paradigm to systemic thinking and implementation,
- from top-heavy hierarchies to integrated joint task groups in organizations,
- from following doctrinal rules, being conventional and accepting low risk to embolden leaders and create risk-taking leaders,
- from scarcity of information to an overload of information,
- from stovepipes to interoperable networks in communications,
- from clearly defined tasks to open ended projects,
- from predictable tempo to increased operational tempo,

- from large budget to decreased spending,
- from unilateral activities to multinational and joint activities,

The changing environment as described above also requires some changes on educational management as discussed in the next questions:

- How can the educational managers of 21st century be flexible and adjust to new realities on globalization, cultural and technological change and social revolution?
- How to increase the role of feedback in improving education?
- How to develop adaptable, innovative educational managers, who know how to communicate, can build effective organizations and are willing to take calculated risks?
- How can management systems best balance institutional education & training and self-development to adapt to both technological and social change?
- What cross-cultural educational management is necessary in multinational organizations?

The Paradigm Shift in Educational Management

In this connection, "educational management paradigm" means; the collective set of attitudes, values, procedures, techniques that form the generally accepted perspective of teaching and learning at a point of time. The educational management paradigms of past and today primarily have focused upon the interaction between instructors, learners and given subject matters. Naturally, the structure and the developments in the surrounding society play an important role as far as the models individual lifetime and the transition from one model to another are concerned. The models may be looked upon as changes of paradigms, assuming new forms in connection with the implementation of new discoveries or theories and new decisions or changes in views and attitudes (Sigri & Nielsson, 2003). The educational management paradigm of the past describes the interaction among instructors, learners and education/training contents viewed from educational/teaching traditions of the past (Figure-1). To a very great extent, this situation was characterized by a verbal flow, streaming from the instructor directly to the learners. The instructor possessed all existing knowledge and experience, and he/she alone decided in which way knowledge should be transmitted. In fact, the concept unfortunately may lack internal coherence and connection to anything the learner already knows (Amig, 2001: 2).

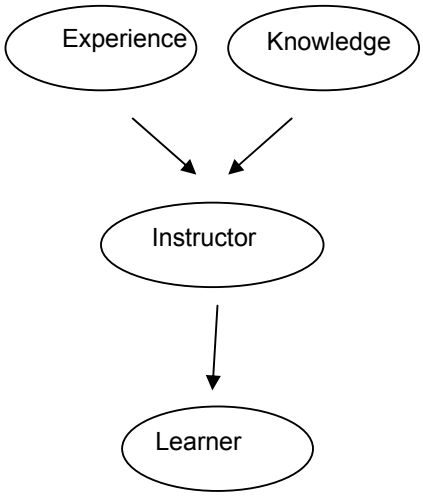

Figure-1: The Educational Management Paradigm of the Past
Source: Sigri, U.,& Nielsson, L. (2003).

The educational paradigm of today shown at Figure-2 is an expression of how interaction between instructor, learners and contents may be experienced. Still the instructor plays a central role and the main part of the communication is based upon the instructor's knowledge and experience. The communication is two-ways and it takes place both between instructor and learners as well as among learners themselves. The responsibility is a bit more differentiated from the past paradigm. Both instructor and learners are responsible for the parts of the teaching process (Husmann & Miller, 2001).

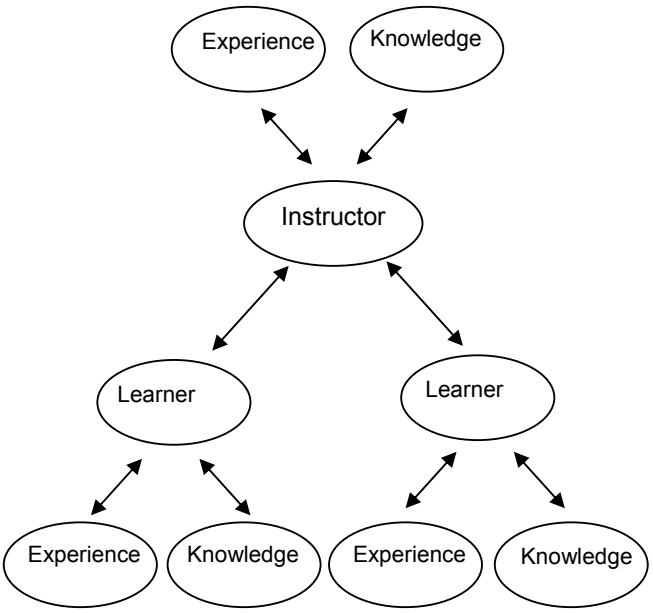

Figure-2: The Educational Management Paradigm of Today.
Source: Sigri, U.,& Nielsson, L. (2003).

The educational paradigm of tomorrow shown at Figure-3 may already be experienced as a fact in great parts of the highly civilized world. One might call it "e-learning based" paradigm with the "management knowledge base" (learning resource centre) element in which the phrase "e-learning" has to be perceived as "information technology" (Sigri & Nielsson, 2003). Here we experience an essential difference from the two other paradigms. The knowledge base (learning resource centre) is placed in the centre, and the instructor's role as well as the learners' roles is equally important for the learning process. The communication is two-ways between instructor and learning resource centre, instructor and learners and among learners themselves. In comparison with the two other paradigms the general idea now is to place the responsibility upon the shoulders of the learners (Crumpacker, 2001).

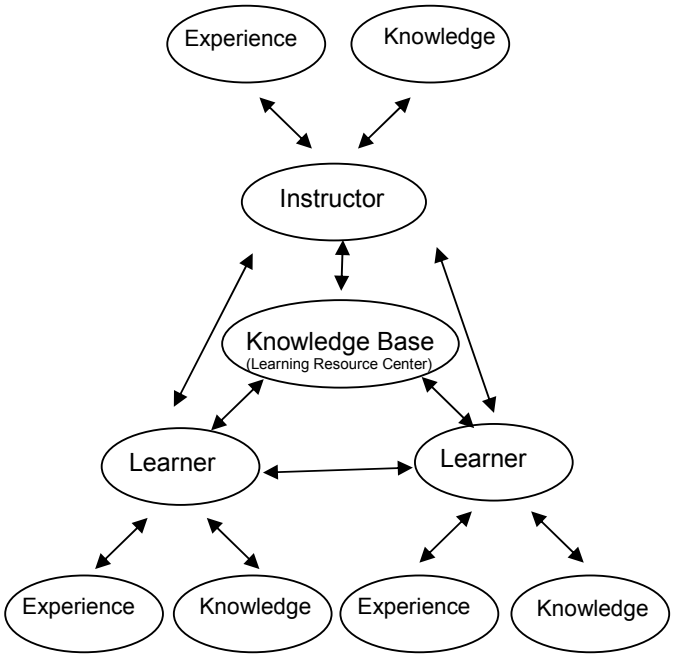

Figure-3: The Educational Management Paradigm of the Future.
Source: Sigri, U.,& Nielsson, L. (2003).

The new educational management paradigm stresses the importance of "learning resource centre" (LRC) which is a place where learners may go to locate instructional materials and use equipment to solve a problem or fulfill a learning objective. Furthermore, a specific clarification with regard to technological capacities and limitations is required, in order that teaching processes are accomplished in appropriate ways. The new educational management paradigm with learning resource centre expresses a "searching-responsibility" of the learners unlike the "receiving-responsibility" of the earlier paradigms. In a pedagogic sense of the words one must distinguish between actually attending a series of lectures with only limited or no dialogue and the kind of teaching in which learners/learners actively participate in the learning process, including problem identification, discussions, identification of key issues in the problem, individual learners/learners research in connection with the gathering of information of specific issues (Sigri & Nielsson, 2003).

Distributed Learning (DL) as a Future Approach

The information age has sparked a new trend in education; learning anytime, anyplace. Learners traditionally have gone to a specific classroom, on a specific campus, at specific times in order to take courses. Most still do so, but a growing number of management learners choose distributed learning (DL). In this mode of educational management, the learners and the instructor are separated by space or by both space and time.

Learning is no longer encapsulated by time, place, and age, but has become a pervasive activity and attitude that continues throughout life and is supported by all segments of society. Teaching is no longer defined as "the transfer of information"; learning is no longer defined as "the retention of facts". Rather, instructors challenge learners to achieve deeper levels of understanding and guide learners in the collaborative construction and application of knowledge in the context of real-world problems, situations, and tasks. Education is no longer the exclusive responsibility of instructors; it benefits from the participation and collaboration of people, peers, seniors, and learners across age groups (Mathieu, Tannenbaum & Salas 1992).

Distributed learning (DL) programming has become an important component of education. A major "program focus" problem associated with DL is generated by analytic viewpoints. A holistic view including administrators, instructors, support staff and learners instead of an analytic view must be assumed for DL programs to be considered "effective". If one of the components of this system is studied separately with an analytic manner, the whole system may be affected by the rest of the components in an unexpected way.

A prominent concern for institutions has been the structuring of how to offer courses via DL programming. Nowadays the structure and offering of courses has become the responsibility for highly trained and skilled program administrators. These individuals understand that programs are successful only when adequate numbers of learners choose to enroll in any one given course or offering. These individuals, however, are rarely the subjects of study, as instructor dimensions to teaching and learning generally dominant questions about program effectiveness (Husmann & Miller, 2001).

The question of curriculum delivery has been debated as instructors and administrators engage with outside components of learning effectiveness and the quality of programs. This dialogue, although meaningful, generally provides a disadvantage to the instructor. In a sense, the academic content of a course is the domain of an instructor, and program members looking to promote programs become secondary both on campus and in the media. The role of these individuals, however, cannot be ignored, as they provide the institutionalized impetus to offer more and better programs (Miller & Padgett, 2003).

Realizing that learners as consumers only purchase what they perceive to be legitimate products (learning), program administrators of DL programs often become caught in the middle between the key players of DL courses. These DL program administrators generally find themselves serving a wide variety of consumers with often conflicting expectations. (Husmann & Miller, 2001).

RESEARCH METHODS AND DESIGN

The aim of this study is to establish data about what DL members perceive to be essential in the improvement of DL programs which are reliant on a number of different factors in accomplishing diverse goals (Moore, 1993). The current study is based on to build a conceptual framework of a holistic approach to DL programs. The delivery of learning product is but one of several factors to be considered in advancing the notion of learning. The instructional delivery is based on variables such as, learning resource centre, instructor ability, learning climate, learner attitudes etc. These types of variables have been laid out in a variety of scenarios of teaching and learning, and for the purposes of this discussion, are considered "holistic factors" of distributed learning delivery. The holistic design encompassed in the current study is comprised of the elements, namely such as, delivery

appropriateness, learner responsibility, instructor responsibility, administrative responsiveness, and cultural values that encourage the degree of learning.

To investigate the graduate program members' perceptions on DL, a rating scale questionnaire (O'Malley & McCraw, 1999) was implemented to program members who attend DL programs in management education. Individuals were asked to respond to the question "what can program members distributed learning programs do to improve DL program quality and success?". Individual items of DL program members were rated on a 1-to-5 rating scale, where 1=no agreement that the technique would encourage success, and 5=very high agreement with the technique. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data. The responses from 50 graduate program members (officers who attend master education of management in Turkish Military Academy) yielded a response rate of 80 % from the total sample of 62 program members.

FINDINGS

Program members were asked to rate each of the statements on a rating (1-to-5) scale with five representing very high agreement to one representing no agreement. The mean ratings of program members' final round responses ranged from a high of 4.600 to a low of 3.520. 11 of 12 statements received a high degree of agreement (greater than 4.0 of a five-point scale).

Members rated most strongly the need to provide additional support for academic content development of course materials –support for enrichment of learning resource centre- (mean 4.600), give high priority to the quality of the program (mean 4.550). There was high agreement with creating a reward system that promotes the instructor to be involved in DL (mean 4.300). Program members also supported the concept of providing a reward system that assures instructor recognition or compensation for innovative and creative efforts (mean 4.270), and developing new courses and workshops to respond to changes and new trends –development of learning resource centre- (mean 4.220). Agreement was also found to encourage continual updating of course content –updating of learning resource centre- (mean 4.200), encouraging learner responsibility (4.180), providing the delivery of the technically most appropriate program (4.160), committing the energy and resources in hand directly for the development of the programs (mean 4.150). Program members found high agreement in implementing a reward system to promote creativity in a distributed learning teaching (mean 4.090) and assuring cost-competitiveness (mean 4.040) providing the same "product," that of educational opportunity, at often reduced or alternative rates to a broader group of people in a more cost-effective manner (Cushman, 1996). Program members had less agreement in promoting distance educating techniques as a method of complementing the academic department's mission (mean 3.520). Provided in Table-1 are complete statements identified by program members with each statement's mean and standard deviation.

Table 1: Perceptions on "How to Improve Success in Courses Offered through DL"

What can educational managers in DL do to improve program quality and success? (Scale: from 5 = "very high agreement with technique" to 1 = "no agreement with technique")		
Technique	**Mean**	**SD**
1. Provide additional support for content development of course materials.(provide support for enriching learning resource centre-LRC)	4.600	0.5688
2. Give high priority to the quality of the program	4.555	0.5133
3. Create a reward system that promotes the instructor to be involved distributed learning	4.300	0.7978
4. Provide a reward system that assures instructor recognition or compensation for innovative and creative efforts (e.g., fees, royalties, etc.)	4.270	0.7540
5. Develop new courses and workshops to respond to changes and new trends (development of learning resource centre-LRC)	4.220	0.6827
6. Encourage continual updating of course content (updating of learning resource centre-LRC)	4.200	0.7516
7. Encourage learner responsibility	4.180	0.6500
8. Provide the delivery of the technically most appropriate program	4.160	0.7080
9. Commit the energy and resources in hand directly for the development of the programs	4.150	0.7708
10. Implement a reward system to promote creativity in DL teaching	4.090	0.7989
11. Assure cost-competitiveness	4.040	0.7560
12. Promote distance education techniques as a method of complementing the academic department's mission	3.520	0.7170

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION

Traditional class or DL as a future approach in educational management? This has been a controversial question for so long regarding the pedagogy for educational managers. Each of these pedagogies has its own strengths and

weaknesses. The best strategy might be to integrate both pedagogies and apply them concurrently to the delivery of instruction in the same course.

Change and technology go hand-in-hand in most successful environments, and technology has proved itself as a change agent. As the educational environment has faced the need for changes, distributed learning (distance learning-DL) has provided excellent opportunities to enhance educational performance. Distributed learning (DL) has emerged as a proven strategy for meeting demands and serving diverse learning populations. Distributed learning delivers knowledge to those who need it by learning resource centre. Its convenience, cost-effectiveness, flexibility, and responsiveness allow learners in any environment to access knowledge that can be applied directly to social, educational, or work dynamics.

The notion of DL displays parallelism with traditional perspective of many program members. The work of the instructors has the highest potential to greatly impact the overall effectiveness and quality of the learning environment. The notion was reinforced by the current study findings, as program members reported their highest agreement favoring instructors and faculty in eight of their twelve perceptions. Only two of the twelve highest rated statements were tied directly to the function and work of administrative bodies. The second statement, "give high priority to the quality of the program" and the fifth statement "develop new courses and workshops" both largely were grounded in the work of administrative units rather than instructor or learner partnerships. And only one of the twelve highest rated perceptions, “encouraging learner responsibility” was grounded on learners and also only one of the twelve highest rated perceptions, “providing delivery appropriateness technically” was grounded in the work of support staff.

The findings, as related by educational administrators of DL; suggest that program members see their job as one of facilitating program quality rather than owning responsibility for program success. The industry of DL should be more closely aligned with the profession of continuing education administration, where success, effectiveness, and quality have less to do with the formal actions of the office and more to do with the linkages and bridges that one can build with various academic units. This has meaningful results in areas such as professional development and graduate program training, but most importantly, stresses the need for an academic preparation and understanding of the academic industry by program members.

Findings also reveal that most program members perceive quality to be based mostly on the performance of instructor. With such high mean ratings tied to instructor’s performance, the logical conclusion is that there is a need to invest heavily in programs that enhance instructor performance. The notion of instructor development is certainly a component of this conclusion, but specifically, findings indicate that program members and "programs" in general must find ways to adopt the instructor to the DL mindset, different set of skills and expectations for instructor’s performance.

In all, the traditional classroom and the DL each have their own strengths and weaknesses. The problem, therefore, is not to discover the one right method, but to use the most appropriate methods to enhance the type and level of learning we want learners to achieve. By using a successful combination of both methods and a mixed pedagogical viewpoint, more learning benefits can be attained than when using the traditional class or DL alone.

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