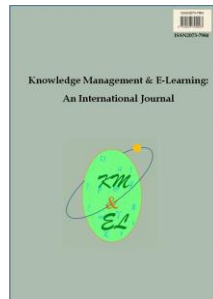

Book review: e-Learning in the workplace: A performance-oriented approach beyond technology

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Book review: e-Learning in the workplace: A performance-oriented approach beyond technology

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Abstract: The book has been an attempt to address technology-oriented approach to e-learning, which makes e-learning initiatives less effective and demotivating for individuals and organizations. It has also been intended to explore approaches and strategies to create an effective and manageable system to improve workplace e-learning through a performance-oriented approach. The goals of the book are to provide a comprehensive review and analysis of workplace e-learning research and development and to present a theory-driven design, implementation, and analysis of a performance-oriented, technology-enabled approach for e-learning. The book features performance-oriented approach by addressing the following areas: (a) establishing workplace learning on measurable goals, (b) aligning individual needs with organizational goals in setting the performance measures, and (c) using clearly specified measurable performance goals to facilitate self-directed learning at workplace.

Book details:

E-Learning in the Workplace: A Performance-Oriented Approach Beyond Technology
Minhong Wang
2018, Springer, Switzerland. 191 pages
ISBN 978-3-319-64530-8

About this book (2018):

This book analyzes the nature and requirements of workplace e-learning based on relevant theories such as adult learning, community of practice, organizational learning, and the systems thinking. By integrating considerations on organization, pedagogy and technology, a performance-oriented e-learning framework is then presented, where performance measurement is used to: 1) clarify and link organizational goals and individual learning needs, 2) direct learning towards work performance; and 3) support social communication and knowledge sharing and management in the workplace.

e-Learning and related emerging technologies have been increasingly used by organizations to enhance the skills and performance of knowledge workers. However, most of the efforts tend to focus on the technology, ignoring the organizational context and relevant pedagogies of workplace learning. Many e-learning projects in the workplace settings fail to connect learning with work performance and align organizational goals and individual needs in a systemic way. Moreover, there is insufficient effort on externalizing and transferring tacit knowledge embedded in practices and expertise, based on which to maintain and expand knowledge assets for sustainable development.

The book presents a systemic theoretical framework, design principles, and implementation methods, together with a case study to demonstrate the use and effectiveness of the performance-oriented approach to workplace e-learning, in which organizational, social and individual perspectives are integrated in a systemic way. The performance-oriented approach to workplace e-learning enables self-regulated and socially constructed learning activities to be clearly motivated and driven towards the goal of performance improvement, and makes learning at the organizational, social and individual levels integrated in a systemic way. The effects of individual and social learning support and organizational learning environment on employees' motivation to use performance-oriented e-learning are also investigated.

Keywords: e-Learning; Workplace; Organizational learning; Performance-oriented learning; Technology

Biographical notes:

Book reviewer: Prof. Xun Ge is Professor of Instructional Psychology & Technology with the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Oklahoma. She teaches graduate courses on instructional design and technology, virtual learning communities, and technology-supported problem-based learning. Prof. Ge has published journal articles, books, and chapters in the areas of ill-structured problem solving, self-regulated learning, scaffolding tools, motivation and cognition, as well as game-based assessment. Prof. Ge is the co-editor of *Interdisciplinary Journal of Problem-based Learning*, associate editor of *Knowledge Management & E-Learning*, and an editorial board member for several top-tier journals: *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, *Educational Technology Research & Development*, *Instructional Science*, *Technology, Knowledge, and Learning*, and *The Internet and Higher Education*. Prof. Ge has won several awards for her scholarly achievements.

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The book (Wang, 2018) has been an attempt to address technology-oriented approach to e-learning, which makes e-learning initiatives less effective and demotivating for individuals and organizations. It has also been intended to explore approaches and strategies to create an effective and manageable system to improve workplace e-learning through a performance-oriented approach. The goals of the book are to provide a comprehensive review and analysis of workplace e-learning research and development and to present a theory-driven design, implementation, and analysis of a performance-oriented, technology-enabled approach for e-learning. The book features performance-oriented approach by addressing the following areas: (a) establishing workplace learning on measurable goals, (b) aligning individual needs with organizational goals in setting the performance measures, and (c) using clearly specified measurable performance goals to facilitate self-directed learning at workplace.

The book is organized in five parts with a total of 15 chapters. Part I - Overview of Workplace Learning and e-Learning provides theoretical foundations about workplace learning from individual, social and organizational perspectives (Chapter 2). Furthermore, it presents the current state of workplace learning in e-place, including use of emerging technologies to support e-learning (Chapter 3), the research findings about e-learning at the workplace (Chapter 4), as well as various challenges in workplace learning (Chapter 5). Part II – Theories for Performance-Oriented Learning in the Workplace emphasizes the value of systems thinking and systems modelling approaches for understanding, analysing, and managing complex systems (Chapter 6), demonstrating how systems thinking and systems modelling approaches can be applied within a complex system of an organization (Chapter 7). In addition, Chapter 8 shows how to align individual learning goals and performance goals in measuring workplace learning and performance. Part III – Methods for Performance-Oriented e-Learning in the Workplace highlights a framework of performance-oriented learning in the workplace (Chapter 9) and a key performance indicator (KPI) model (Chapter 10), which are handy conceptual tools and resources for designing, implementing and evaluating workplace e-learning. Part IV – A Case Study demonstrates how the KPI-based approach was applied to conduct analysis, learning design, and evaluation to support performance-oriented approach through a case study (Chapter 11) and an example of developing a web-based system for KPI-based learning (Chapter 12). Part V – Influencing Factors on Performance-Oriented e-Learning in the Workplace addresses the effects of individual and social learning in support of performance-oriented learning (Chapter 13) and organizational learning environment on employees' motivation in the use of performance-oriented e-learning (Chapter 14).

Overall, the author has fulfilled the purpose of the book, that is, promoting performance-oriented e-learning in response to issues due to the prevailing technology-oriented approach and a lack of consideration of context, individuals, and organizational needs for technology use. The book does not treat workplace learning simply as informal learning, but rather as a complex system involving dynamic and interdisciplinary interactions between individuals and an organization in terms of needs, goals, missions, and purposes. It is a comprehensive book involving an exploration of e-learning from multiple theoretical lenses, a synthesis of literature from various theoretical traditions (e.g., adult learning, organization learning, instructional design), and empirical evidence drawn from performance research. This book provides a collection of research tools and resources for e-learning at workplace.

It is truly refreshing to see such a book published, which makes a linkage with instructional design, performance technology, and organizational learning while at the same time clearly distinguishing itself from related books in those fields. One unique distinction of this book, for instance, is that e-learning in workplace is approached from multiple perspectives, which is different from the traditional human performance technology that is rooted in behaviorist foundation. Although this book is designed with the primary purpose to support e-learning in workplace, the issues addressed, the empirical evidence supported, and the theories offered, are applicable to all e-learning contexts in various fields and professions. Having said that, I believe that the book could be enhanced by adding a couple of examples or case studies to each chapter or section, like Part IV, to illustrate the theme(s) of the chapter or section.

In summary, this book offers (a) theories that can be used to support both research and practice in e-learning, (b) methods for conducting research and evaluation of workplace e-learning at both individual and organizational levels, (c) instruments to measure and assess workplace e-learning outcomes, (d) multiple perspectives for multiple disciplines, and (e) numerous examples and case studies to illustrate the best practice of

e-learning in workplace. This is a useful tool and resource book for instructional designers, educational technologists, and trainers at various settings, from organization, government, military, business to higher education and K12 education. It can also serve as a valuable reference book for educational researchers, faculty of education, and graduate students. It is no overstatement to say that the way the workplace e-learning is approached in this book indicates an advancement of the field from a completely refreshing perspective.

References

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