

DISTANCE EDUCATION: THE CHALLENGE OF CORPORATE EDUCATION AT CORREIOS TOWARDS THE STRATEGIC PLANNING – CORREIOS 2020

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ABSTRACT

The challenges of competitive market require organizations to seek a new direction of its processes and the appropriation of new management systems which enable the development of human capital. The characteristics of Corporate Education point to a mechanism that ensures a competitive advantage in market. This article brings elements of Distance Education with emphasis on the challenges to be faced by the company Correios towards the development of its Strategic Plan. Initially, it presents a brief history of Distance Education, followed by the notion of Corporate Education in general and applied to Correios. Following, it brings the Distance Education topic at Correios and its challenges. Hereafter, they are listed the proposals designed to overcome the difficulties presented. In conclusion, they are the benefits that can be achieved by the use of Information Technology applied to Corporate Education. Finally, as methodology it was used a bibliographic exploratory research, with an emphasis on last decade publications, and semi-structured interviews, conducted by e-mail with the education professionals of the company researched.

Keywords: Distance Education; Corporate Education; Correios.

1- Introduction

This work came out of interest in doing an essay on Distance Education on the public institution Correios, in order to understand the key challenges of Corporate Education in the realization of the goals plan established by the organization, to meet the demands of employees training, necessary for the development of their competencies, and to propose alternatives to the difficulties encountered.

According to Correios (2015), the company is the second national employer and has about 119 thousand employees around the country, working mostly in the operational area. Considering the number of employees and the capillarity of its service, treatment, and delivery points, the organization faces a significant turnover of staff. People Management policies, including Corporate Education, contribute to the corporate culture and business know-how are not lost. The Distance Education represents a unique opportunity to reach people in the most diverse and distant places, and quickly learning to new (and old) staff members of the company.

In Distance Education, the teaching practice is essential to the interactivity and effectiveness of training. Although some authors seek to differentiate the figure of tutor and teacher in Distance Education, it is concluded that there is some difficulty in dealing with these two roles differently. Thus, in this study, the words tutor and teacher will be adopted as synonyms to identify the professional who acts as a mediator of learning and interacts with the student by means of technological resources.

It is believed that such work might be relevant to more than one hundred thousand employees, their families and other members of the society interested in knowing a little more about the Correios' Corporate Education and Distance Education.

2 – Objectives

The general objective is to describe the main difficulties encountered by the Corporate Education in distance mode in the skills development of Correios'

employees, inside the implementation of the Strategic Plan – 2020. The specific objectives are:

- a) to present relevant information on Corporate Education and Distance Education at the researched institution and to elucidate some of its problems and
- b) to propose measures to overcome the challenges and list the benefits, among them, corporate programs in distance mode.

3- Theoretical Framework and Methodological Procedures

In the theoretical framework it was used bibliography on the subject and information contained on the websites of the Associação Brasileira de Educação a Distância (ABED – Brazilian Association for Distance Education), Correios and Federal Government.

As methodological procedure it was conducted semi-structured interviews by e-mail with Correios' professionals of Corporate Education seeking to understand the elements that pervade the subject.

4 - Distance Education in the context of Corporate Education

For the purposes of this work, it means as Distance Education one that uses a technology strategy and presupposes spatial and/or time separation between teacher and students. With the advent of internet, personal computers, and multifunctional cell phones, Distance Education expanded so surprising in recent decades and has gained increasing attention from various countries. According to ABED (2013), the Distance Education Census 2012/2013 showed that enrollment in distance mode in 2012 has reached the mark of 5.8 million and grow exponentially every year.

In the corporate context, Distance Education has been presented as a mode very appropriate to the dynamic and specificities of employees' routine that need access to training opportunities with flexibility of space and time, so that they can reconcile them with their professional activities.

On the demands of this globalized, technological, and non-linear market, it is a paradox: the companies have a number of vacancies to be filled and, on the other hand, there are a large number of people looking for a job opportunity. Candidates often do not have the necessary skills that organization craves. The market does not prepare professionals in all points required by the corporations. One of the alternatives found to remedy this demand was the creation of Corporate Universities (CU) maintained by the companies themselves. About Corporate Education, it was elected to the following definition:

(...) Corporate education can be defined as a coordinated practice of people management and of knowledge management with orientation of long-term strategy of an organization. Corporate education is more than corporate training or qualification of manpower. It is about to articulate coherently individual and organizational skills in the broader context of the company. In this sense, corporate education practices are intrinsically related to the process of innovation in enterprises and to increase the competitiveness of their products (goods or services). (BRASIL, 2015, s.p.)

The main focus of Corporate Education is to align learning to the company's strategic planning, which requires a continuous and long-term practice, in order to carry out the corporate knowledge management. For some time, the Corporate University needed a physical space, a campus. Currently, this is more of a process, a policy of Personnel Management of organizations.

5 – The Corporate Education at Correios

According to the official website of Correios, it is possible to understand the history of its Corporate University:

In practical terms, it was necessary to align educational programs with the Company's strategies and also to broaden the target audience of these programs. These needs added the fact that in recent years took place a true multiplication of corporate universities, a system adopted by large foreign and national companies. It is in this scenario that, in December 2001, the Universidade Corporativa dos Correios (UNICO - Corporate University of Correios) was created, in order to unify the educational actions within the Company and extend them for the entire value chain. (CORREIOS, 2015, s.p.)

On the heels of other companies, Correios felt the need to transpose the idea of Training and Development (TD) to the Corporate University model. With this model it aims to standardize educational actions and create

multidisciplinary training programs that reach from the base to the most senior management of the company, targeting employees of all units, since Correios is present throughout the national territory.

5.1 – The Distance Education at Correios

Following strong tendency in the educational field, the Distance Education was gradually being incorporated into the portfolio of Correios' corporate courses. Today, employees rely on blended and distance trainings, with and without tutoring, beyond traditional classroom courses. According to research conducted with the professionals working in the Corporate Education area at Correios, the offering of online courses is approximately seven years. Currently, the Virtual Learning Environment named UniCorreios Virtual is available to access on internet, in three addresses (<http://unicorreiosvirtual.correios.com.br>; <http://ead.correios.com.br>; www.universidadecorreios.com.br). Through the site, employees can enroll in courses, conduct training and activities, consult materials and interact with each other.

In this way, Correios seeks with training an alignment with the strategic plan, which the company termed Plano Estratégico Correios 2020 (Strategic Plan - Correios 2020), prepared for the 2010-2020 cycle. The institution aims to achieve the status of being a modern, flexible, and dynamic business conglomerate, with diversified businesses, in keeping with the level of development of the market and the country.

The number of students of the courses varies according to the educational strategy chosen by the company. For example, it is possible name the Correspondente no País (Country Correspondent), which was made available on the page UniCorreios Virtual in 2014 and had as public twenty thousand employees. The course sought to meet legal determination for the Correspondent activity regulation and certification of employees, pursuant to art. 12 of Resolution No. 3,954, 02/24/2011 of Banco Central do Brasil (Central Bank of Brazil). The program was scaled with load time of 10 hours, divided in four modules, it was available until the end of the year, and it featured a

simulated the end preparing students for the certification exam applied by ASSBAN – Associação dos Bancos do Distrito Federal (Association of Banks of the Federal District). According to data provided by the institution, until September 2014, 7,000 people had completed the course.

6 – The challenges of Distance Education

It is understood as some of the challenges of Distance Education breaking the paradigm, i.e. the overcoming of prejudice. For being a tool, the Distance Education can be good or bad. The student who was literate and studied throughout his life in the traditional model needs to adapt to this new model of study and construction of learning. It is possible to cite the truancy as another great challenge of Distance Education. The amount of registrations is high; however, the rate of completion of courses is still small. The new educational platforms are moving increasingly towards interactivity, and forums and chats appear to be good dialogic spaces to fill that gap.

6.1 – The challenges of Distance Education at Correios

In Corporate Education at Correios, it can be observed the same difficulties faced by Distance Education in general. According to data provided by the company, the evasion of corporate courses at Correios, offered in 2013, spun around 30% of the enrolled. For the Distance Education, the technological resources impact significantly in carrying out the teaching actions. The technology unfolds as a challenge in many nuances to the institutions that wish to keep online courses. Since there is no physical classroom environment, the virtual environment is the space where student will develop the activities necessary for the apprehension of the content.

7 - Proposals for the Distance Education development at Correios

Before the challenges elucidated in the previous chapter, it can envision a few alternatives for the Distance Education to create an environment conducive to generation, development, dissemination, and knowledge management.

7.1 - Culture and investment change

For the implementation of a strong and active Corporate Education, the involvement of the management body of the company is essential, in order to validate the performance of education area and training programs. Corporate Education, as already discussed, is a process which aims at long-term results. Thus, projects require continuity, history, focus on objectives initially planned, and feedback of the results achieved by the organization.

In this scenario, the Distance Education can act as a strong partner. Although it requires a great investment in its initial deployment, with the selection and hiring of experts and mounting of the virtual learning environment, the implementation of Distance Education is less costly for the company, because it optimizes the resources invested in the design of educational actions to a greater number of people.

7.2 - Appropriation of new technologies

Technology is more and more present in people's lives. Therefore, organizations must follow the changes new technologies cause in everyday life of people and the way they communicate.

As mentioned in the introduction, the Distance Education walks to the multiplatform status: computers, tablets, and cell phones. In a recent publication, José Armando Valente and Maria Elizabeth Bianconcini de Almeida studied the influence of mobility in learning processes and in the context, giving prominence to the mobile wireless technologies (MWT):

Mobile wireless technologies (MWT), especially laptops, cell phones, and tablets, have created new possibilities of learning, characterized as m-learning. In m-learning or mobile learning, as it has been named in the Brazilian literature (Graziola Jr., 2009; Graziola Jr.; Schlemmer, 2008; Schlemmer; Saccol; Barbosa; Reinhard, 2007), the apprentice has continuous internet connection devices and can create learning situations on any subject at any time and in any place that he is. (VALENTE; ALMEIDA, 2014, p. 2).

8 - Conclusions and recommendations

Currently, the intellectual capital has become the great differential of organizations. In this scenario, the knowledge management appears as a powerful resource of organization for sustainability, reinvention, and maintenance in the competitive market.

Knowledge cannot be seen as incarcerated and finite. It should be understood as a process of building and rebuilding continued, collaborative, and that should move forward with business strategies, taking advantage of the Distance Education as a big supporter. It is essential that, in this process, other important aspects are inserted such as improvement of the platforms, network and virtual learning environments, training and development of education professionals, and the use of people management strategies.

To assist Correios to achieve corporate goals listed in its Strategic Plan, it is necessary a greater flexibility of its educational actions. Companies need to be inserted into the virtual reality using dynamics, teaching methodologies, and new ways to use the old methods of education as the Distance Education, which is not a methodology, but it is an educational mode that is organized through the tripod methodology, management, and evaluation.

Without exhausting the subject, this work can serve as a tool for research and future studies in the corporate environment studied. In addition, it can help extend the research conducted and, even, the objectives outlined.

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