
ELEARNING QUALITY IN SMES – RETURN ON INVESTMENT OF ELEARNING IN SMES

Natalie Morawietz, Forschungsinstitut Betriebliche Bildung, Germany, Vanda Vieira, CEEOA, Portugal

eLearning Quality for SMEs

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) have a central role in the European Union that requires special economic and social policy answers, namely, the access to education and continuing vocational training.

Under SMEs framework, e-learning should have a top-down approach and the commitment of the enterprises decision makers. On the other hand, e-learning efficiency will be achieved through end-users motivation towards training and improvement. The use of flexibility and facility of access to online training environments are also factors with strong influence in the return on e-learning investment.

This presentation offers the results of the ELQ-SMEs partnership by presenting one of the project products - a simple tool for calculating the Return on Investment of e-learning that addresses the needs of SMEs from the trade and services sector.

The general aim of the project is to promote the use of new multimedia and a guidance and counselling approach in order to promote the quality of e-learning by facilitating access to online resources and training services as well as tools to evaluate the quality and the return on investment in e-learning targeted to SMEs.

Calculating Return on Investment

Return on investment is the yield of an investment in relation to the costs involved in it expressed as a percentage. In view of the fact that ROI does not necessarily involve money, a percentage is calculated. For example, expenditure can also be measured in terms of time. In this case, for example, we refer to the time required to break even. However, we can often see that it is practical to express units in terms of money in order to state added value in the form of a ROI percentage in this way, and to facilitate comparison.

A simple tool for calculating the ROI of eLearning has been developed and will be implemented in SMEs. This tool is providing tips as the variables, the indicators and the ROI components, which can be used to calculate ROI of e-learning courses.

Results showed among others that SMEs do not invest in e-learning, because they feel that the added value offered by this type of education has not yet been adequately revealed. One of the most common methods of showing that investing in education is worthwhile is by comparing income and expenditure in a clearly defined manner. Calculating ROI, or return on investment, is a classical method which is used for this purpose.

In detail the presentation will give answers on the following study questions providing feedback on the ROI Methodology:

- The conditions of application
- The problems/difficulties
- The changes and adaptations made by each partner in the methodology/instruments used during application
- The results of ROI methodology/instruments testing
- The required conditions for the transferability of theses results and outcomes
- The way how these instruments will be used in further situations, the intentions of selling those products or other suggestions.