

# Work Based Induction Training in Europe

## A Summary of the State of the Art report by Learn@work

Marie Bijns

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### 1. Introduction

In current Western education context, many concepts being taught in the classroom lack a real world context, learning happens more and more at work. However this learning is often unrecognised. It involves knowledge and skills that are attainable and immediately applicable. The learning is ongoing in the daily work practices and its intensity is large enough for us to rethink how best to leverage the workplace to enable employees to learn ever-changing, essential knowledge and skills<sup>1</sup>.

“New business and organisational models are thriving, invalidating long-term established approaches. The result is innovation at all levels – in societies, economies and within organisations. Change necessitates learning – we need to continuously acquire new skills, knowledge and behaviours throughout our lifetimes”  
- Richard Straub -<sup>2</sup>

Learn@work is a European Commission - funded project which aims to improve this process of learning at work, and in particular induction training, by stimulating the use of technology-enhanced learning methods, thereby making training more flexible and efficient. But as the State of the Art report<sup>3</sup> makes evident, there are different training models and methodologies for establishing such training.

The focus of Learn@work is the use of ICT to enhance the induction and continuing support for learners in the workplace. Learning in the workplace often implies a distance or semi-present mode of learning, nowadays usually with a high ICT element. This is challenging for learners who may be unfamiliar with formal educational practices and are also outside the supportive environment of a university or college. How can an individual 'become a learner' in this context and what is the role of ICT in facilitating this process?

### 2. ICT and Work Based Learning

The use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) is now regarded as one means of enhancing both the learning opportunities and the effectiveness of learning for adults in the workplace. It has been found that Work Based Learning, which may or may not be related to a formal curriculum, can often be an isolated and unsupported activity for individuals, and that it is often difficult for individual, isolated adult learners-at-work to keep up their momentum and motivation. It is now considered useful for worker-learners to have support on-line from both peers and 'accompanying' experts, so that their own isolation is reduced.

ICTs can enable a richer combination of formal and informal learning, and can offer more options for group and individual activity. They can provide more flexible approaches than formal, individual learning packages that are paper-based or that are confined to CD-roms/tapes/videos.

ICT-based induction and support techniques are well established in traditional (usually institutional) e-learning contexts, but remain to be explored fully in Work Based Learning. The main feature of learning in the workplace is that it is undertaken by mature learners and that the learning is almost always immediately put into practice. This encourages a reflective and independent approach to learning.

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<sup>1</sup> Bergeson, T, et al., Work Based Learning Coordination Manual/Guidelines, 2004

<sup>2</sup> Straub, R., 'Competing in a "flat world" – the transformational power of e-Learning', Book of abstracts, Online Educa Berlin 2005, p1

<sup>3</sup> State of the Art: Work Based Induction Training in Europe – Collaborative research into supports for induction of new workers using ICTs and supports for induction of worker-learners to e-learning. [www.learnatwork.info](http://www.learnatwork.info)

### 3. Induction training

There are two ways of defining induction, one narrow and one extensive. In the narrow (and commonly used) definition, induction training is regarded as the training provided to new employees to acquaint them with the company structure, their specific job requirements and practical/organisational issues. As part of the process of gaining knowledge and skills at work (learning at work), the first phase an employee has to pass is the initial introduction to work. Arriving at a new job, an employee is confronted with plenty of new information, not only job-specific but also practical and legal issues for example. To facilitate the process of integrating the new employee in his/her new working environment, it is therefore of great importance to start off well with the induction training.

However, the Learn@work consortium prefers to enlarge this definition and use it in its broad sense, with an emphasis and 'new' related to any possible aspect of working. This can contain several things. First of all, the narrow definition: training for a new employee and secondly, an employee, who is not necessarily new in the company, learning new skills and competences or with the need to acquire new information in order to improve his/her job performance. This can also apply to people transferring from one position to another within a company, or simply to employees who need to get acquainted with a new computer programme which will be used in the company.

As a result of these two aspects, Learn@work decided to define induction as the transfer from a 'non-learning' situation to a 'learning' situation, regardless the current position or status of the employee within the company and regardless the content of the training. Induction is a way of Work Based Learning and, as Learn@work defines it, also a way of lifelong learning, two key concepts in current society.

#### ***Lifelong Learning***

*The spread of development in the field of ICTs has played an important role in the development of a knowledge society in general and the methods for independent learning in specific. The developments in ICT not only force us to place the theme of lifelong learning at the foreground, but offer at the same time several possibilities to develop more individualised learning programmes.*

#### ***Work Based learning***

*Work based learning means that the process of learning is strongly related to the locality of the workplace. However, it does not always mean that the training happens in the workplace itself. The concept can also indicate the execution of specific tasks, related to a real working situation, regardless of the location from which these tasks are carried out.*

Whatever definition is taken, in both cases Induction training is vital for new employees. According to the website [businessballs.com](http://businessballs.com) - a free ethical learning and development resource for people and organizations, run by Alan Chapman, in Leicester, England - "Good induction training ensures new employees are retained, and then settle in quickly and happily to a productive role".

Learn@work regards induction (that is, the early supported experience of the educational process) as being particularly critical, but recognises that induction may actually extend throughout the programme. Induction may involve new employees, but may also include established members of the workforce who have to acquire new skills due to job change or transfer. Learning in the workplace implies a wide range of learning situations and learner groups, and consideration has to be made to the different social, cultural and material contexts in which online support and development occurs.

### 4. Current trends

#### ***Virtual environments***

According to Dori Digenti "organizations rapidly move their training focus to virtual environments, resulting in a proliferation of methods to support formal learning has appeared: teleconferencing, videoconferencing, e-meetings, and online courses. The move to virtual delivery often involves combining a body of knowledge with resource links, interactive segments, personalization features, and other bells and whistles. Yet, even in the innovative uses that make the learning experience more engaging and possibly more effective, the underpinnings are still those of formal learning"<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Digenti, D., Make Space for Informal Learning, 2002, Learning Circuits, <http://www.learningcircuits.org/2000/aug2000/digenti.html>

## ***Informal learning***

On a parallel track Dori Digenti states that “there's a growing recognition that valuable learning often takes place through informal learning. Informal learning is based in conversations, social interactions, and team projects, in which learning is part of the interactions between people. It has been acknowledged as one of the key reasons for forming communities of practice, networks, and other forums that allow people to network and socialize. Informal learning isn't limited to a predefined body of knowledge, but rather emerges from the interaction of people. At the heart of it is the transfer of tacit knowledge - knowledge that's not articulated but is acquired by individuals through experience”<sup>5</sup>

## **5. Current status in Europe**

### ***ICT use in Europe***

To summarise a report from Eurostat<sup>6</sup> in the EU25, in 2005, 37% of people aged between 16 and 74 had no basic computer skills. Among Member States for which data are available, the survey showed notable differences between countries. Large differences also existed between age groups and between different education levels. Eurostat also states that in 2004, more than 89% of enterprises in the Member States had Internet access and were using it. Denmark, Finland and Sweden are the most advanced countries as far as Internet use is concerned, and this applies to both enterprises and individuals.

Internet is mostly used for searching for information and on-line services. Secondly it is used for communication, i.e. the sending and receiving of e-mails, participation in chats and forums followed close behind, Internet is also used, but to a much lesser extent for ‘on-line ordering and selling of goods and services, banking’.

### ***e-Learning Applications for the Training of Employees***

e-Learning Applications are increasingly used in European companies for the training of staff. As well as there are differences between the different EU member states there are also differences among the companies. e-Learning is more used in large enterprises as in small or medium sized enterprises.

## **6. Organisation of induction training**

As with other types of training, the learning can and development can be achieved through many different methods. It's important to use as many as needed to and which suit both the individuals and the group, but it is also important to remember that induction training by its nature requires a lot more hand-holding than other types of training.<sup>7</sup>

- on the job coaching
- mentoring
- delegated tasks and projects
- reading assignments
- presentation assignments
- attending internal briefings and presentations, e.g. 'lunch and learn' format
- video
- special responsibilities which require obtaining new skills or knowledge or exposure
- internet and e-learning
- customer and supplier visits
- attachment to project or other teams
- job-swap
- shadowing (shadowing another employee to see how they do it and what is involved)

Every employee, every company, every context has different needs and different expectations for the training. Trainings can vary from learning communication skills to learning new Informatics or new company policies. It's clear that this field can not be limited to a certain checklist with bullet points mentioning all

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<sup>5</sup> Digenti, D., Make Space for Informal Learning, 2002, Learning Circuits, <http://www.learningcircuits.org/2000/aug2000/digenti.html>

<sup>6</sup> Eurostat: “internet activities in the European Union” report Eurostat, 2004, [http://epp.eurostat.cec.eu.int/portal/page?\\_pageid=1090,1&\\_dad=portal&\\_schema=PORTAL](http://epp.eurostat.cec.eu.int/portal/page?_pageid=1090,1&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL)

<sup>7</sup> induction training and induction checklist, <http://www.businessballs.com/inductiontrainingchecklist.htm>

aspects of induction trainings.

## 7. Learning methods

### ***Learning on Demand***

According to Stephen Downes “learning on demand is best understood in contrast to the most familiar sort of learning, scheduled or classroom based learning. While the latter leads learners through a curriculum designed to prepare them for a wide variety of possible needs, learning on demand is the application and deployment of just the right amount of training at just the right time to those who need to possess the knowledge or learn the skill”.<sup>8</sup>

One of the main benefits is the flexibility of learning on demand. “Updates to multimedia modules are easy to make and easy to deliver quickly so that employees can implement new policies and procedures with little disruption to clients. This, of course, is a return to the idea of knowledge management. Updates produced at the input end of a knowledge management system can immediately become new learning opportunities at the output end”.<sup>9</sup>

### ***Blended Learning***

Blended learning is the combination of multiple approaches to learning. For example: self-paced, collaborative or inquiry-based study. Blended learning can be accomplished through the use of 'blended' virtual and physical resources. Examples include combinations of technology-based materials, face-to-face sessions and print materials<sup>10</sup>.

In an everyday work situation it involves practical problem-solving. The company context of the learners is systematically included in the learning process by combining theoretical learning with practical working activities.

### ***Computer based training***

Computer based training refers to the use of computers as a key component of the educational environment. While this can refer to the use of computers in a classroom, the term more broadly refers to a structured environment in which computers are used for teaching purposes<sup>11</sup>. The concept is generally seen as being distinct from the use of computers in ways where learning is at least a peripheral element of the experience (e.g. computer games and web browsing).

### ***Online learning***

Online learning descends from Computer Based Training, interactive multimedia (dating from laserdiscs and more recently, CDs with online learning) and integrated learning centres<sup>12</sup>. With the internet boom since the mid 80s, the concept of online learning has spread broadly. It is an umbrella term to describe any education or training that occurs online.

### ***Informal learning***

Marcia L. Conner defines informal learning as follows: “Informal learning describes a lifelong process whereby individuals acquire attitudes, values, skills and knowledge from daily experience and the educative influences and resources in his or her environment, from family and neighbours, from work and play, from the market place, the library and the mass media”.

According to Marcia L. Conner “Informal learning accounts for over 75% of the learning taking place in organizations today. Often, the most valuable learning takes place serendipitously, by random chance”.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Downes, S., From knowledge management to learning on demand, 2003

<sup>9</sup> Downes, S., From knowledge management to learning on demand, 2003

<sup>10</sup> [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)

<sup>11</sup> Wikipedia, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Computer\\_Based\\_Learning](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Computer_Based_Learning)

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.dirpedia.com/online-learning.html>

<sup>13</sup> Connor, M.L., Informal Learning, Ageless Learner, 1997-2005, <http://agelesslearner.com/intros/informal.html>

## ***Job coaching***

A job coach offers the employer extra support for the induction of the new employee through which he will be faster integrated in the company. Generally a job coach is not aiming to coach the starter in his technical skills, but rather in the “soft skills” necessary for a certain job, for example the work attitude, communication style, manners etc. As a temporary person of confidence and contact point the job coach will offer the necessary assistance to the starter as well as the company director and the future team members of the starter to develop a fluent interaction between all of them. Furthermore it aims to heighten the motivation and performance of the starter as well as of the team members.

## ***Classroom training***

This is the classical system in which learners and trainers interact in a real physical classroom. Classroom training provides the learner with an environment that includes a lab, an instructor, and a structured approach to teaching. According to Theresa Stroisch and Stephanie Creaturo effective classroom training should be viewed as a three-legged stool: “if any one leg of the stool is weak or missing, it can make for unsuccessful training. The three important components of trainer are: the trainer, classroom, and content”.<sup>14</sup>

## **8. Extensive reading: State of the Art report**

The evolution of Work Based Learning methods and current trends are set out in the L@W State of the Art report, with illustrations of the structure and content of the training: several models and a checklist are provided, with all elements that should be considered before starting an induction course for new employees. The concept of Work Based Learning is considered with regard to the stakeholders and with regard to industry, culture, legal matters, economy, context, technology and pedagogy. The current status of Work Based Learning in Europe and in particular in the respective countries of the Learn@work project partners (Denmark, Ireland, UK, Austria and Belgium) is outlined, with case studies of pilot projects that are carried out in the framework of the project. Future and global perspectives of these models are reflected upon, and extensive resource material and literature are provided for further reading. The aim is to be a state of the art report of the current status of learning at work models and methods, with the main focus on induction training: reporting every Work Based Learning model would be impossible. For more information and to download the learn@work State of The Art Report: <http://www.learnatwork.info/>

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<sup>14</sup> Creaturo, S. and Stroisch, T., Essential Elements of effective classroom training, 2002 CompuMentor