

CHALLENGES IN DEVELOPING A MANAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION PLATFORM INSIDE A HIGHER EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATION

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Abstract:

At present, the world is in a phase of economic and social development, with many and varied features of the knowledge society based on science and education. The organization is defined not only by the products and / or services, but also the ability to communicate to its employees and management team. Continuous exchange of messages is the correlation factor that generates knowledge in the society and inside the organization to fulfill its mission and strategies.

The purpose of this work is to identify the necessity of developing a platform which should provide the support for the organization and also for the specific activities developed inside the organization. Also, when developing such a system, there are few aspects that should be taken into consideration, according to the organization's goals. Therefore the development of a platform by a higher educational institution could improve the communication inside the organization, could improve the management's activity and also can provide access to knowledge for the students. Developing a judicial platform, for students, could provide possible solutions to problems like training and practice, or other problems emphasized by the law experts that recorded for example unreasonable deadlines given by the courts in insolvency and commercial cases in general, by improving internal and external communication and improving the quality of commercial law and not only.

Keywords: communication, organization, platform, higher education institution;

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As we witness the technologic change and development, the virtual environment becomes more operational and effective. The organization is defined not only by the products and / or services, but also the ability to communicate to its employees and management team. Continuous exchange of messages generates knowledge in the society and inside the organization to fulfill its mission and strategy.

The platforms provide an interactive environment, in our case, focused on learning and teaching activities it also can improve the communication inside the organization and consequently improve the organization's activity.

The organization is defined by its goals, structure and the social norms. The organization's goals draw the main lines about how should be designed the organization's structure. The structure it is formalized – specific formulated rules, roles of a person that occupy a particular position are established, etc. The social norms define the expected behavior of the employees and the consequences of undesirable behavior or actions. (Scott, 2002)

Communication allows creating connections between people, between institutions and between people and institutions. An important element that could influence the success of any organization is the efficient and effective communication.

Developing a structured platform inside the organization will enable an increase flow of messages consequently an improved communication. The development of a successful system requires an efficient use of organizational resources.

Communication technology combined with multimedia and software technology facilitated the development of new learning and teaching system. Due to the change occurred in the learning / teaching system, the organization must provide a new educational infrastructure.

The rapid change of digital technologies has a significant influence over the students. According to Prensky the society can be categorized into two groups, “*digital natives*”- students today “*are all ‘native speakers’ of the digital language of computers, video games and the Internet*” and “*digital immigrants*”. (Prensky 2001)

Higher education institutions could improve the communication, internal as well as external communication, by developing platforms which could provide the needed support, starting with internal messages, e-mailing, blogs and special spaces organized for initiating and developing research projects.

Electronic communication is the most important element for online- learning.. The internet it is characterized by the flow of messages and images and when it is used as an educational environment the messages flow from the teacher to the students. Also, the students communicate with the teacher and interact with the other students in the class.

In spite of the fact that when we are talking about an educational platform, considering that it is a very good instrument for communication, offering useful information and in the same time developing an appropriate learning space where all the members of this “*community*” can participate and interact, it is not easy to define.

In some educational systems the online delivery courses, is a viable system but the question is if the teachers could adapt their teaching activities in order to be effective in the virtual and in the traditional environments.

It was recommended to develop and support the learning communities in order to help and support student through the establishment of ongoing social networks (Cho, Lee, Stefanone, & Gay, 2005)

Adopting computer-mediated communication between academic staff and students, it is provided the opportunity to communicate and collaborate regardless of spatial and temporal differences (Haythornthwaite, Kazmer, & Robins, 2000).

Educational platforms provide access to courses within the higher education system to a large number of students who are unable to physically attend the courses organized in the campus because of the distance, if students live too far from campus to attend classes frequently, the need of flexibility, some students need a flexible schedule to study when you have the time, financial reasons - the lack of a consistent financial support provided for the transportation costs, accommodation, meals.

By implementing an educational platform for the students could reduce costs in terms of transportation costs, accommodation and meals, and also the costs of the learning materials and tuition fees. Thus, from the financial point of view, the platform can be a more attractive solution for the students and also for the organization.

Developing a platform we have to take into consideration the internal development and structure focused on the future users – students, teachers, instructors, departments, parents- and how the users will use the platform.

The users need different information therefore it is very important to provide the needed information and to be able to control the information flow through different channels.

Also it is important, when building a communication platform, to consider the cost of providing and receiving information, information accuracy, if the platform is user-friendly, etc.

In a large organization, with a large number of platform users the right information must be received by the right user and involves an effort to follow and to manage the information flow and also to calculate the costs.

The purpose of using an educational platform is to increase the students’ performance.

An educational platform is a complex system which enables the development of an accessible management system in order to access the information available and also access to all the resources and associated activities, online / offline assessment activity or self-assessment, synchronous or asynchronous communication, etc.

An educational platform provides a good interactive environment, focused on learning and teaching but also can improve the communication inside the organization.

The educational platform requires learning activities based on projects and individual and group tasks therefore it is compulsory the students to develop and improve communication skills and the teachers to guide, asses and follow the communication activity.

The learning activity is more efficient when the teacher builds the learning material having in mind that the students should interact with the learning material, to understand and to interact with the other students in order to communicate and to fulfill the given task. But also the student has to have the possibility to interact with the teacher using as the communication channel the educational platform. In this context, the student is an active part of a learning community.

The student cannot be treated as a consumer /client to whom university provides education as a product or service more or less appropriate, but must be considered as a resource by the university and also by the labor market.

Trying to develop an educational platform the student should not be treated as a simple customer or as a simple user or an absent beneficiary of the platform but as an important and integrated element in the host organization that actively participates to the development and improvement of managerial activities, communication within the organization and not least of teaching- learning activity. Thus the organization that hosts the educational platform manages to establish the type of social relationship with the student and the organization's role and responsibilities toward the student.

Some of the identified advantages of developing an educational platform are related to the educator's activity. It is known that the evaluation of the teacher's activity it is very difficult to realize and to interpret the results.

Very often law professors try to find new ways to improve the activity of teaching- learning activity in order to prepare the students for the future careers therefore the teachers focused mostly on improving and developing the curriculum but also offering practical skills training.

The platform could help and provide teachers with a variety of useful tools for teaching, training, learning and assessment and could adapt to the needs of the students. It is important to say that the platform is tailored to adapt to their needs, the information to be available anytime and anywhere, even outside the classroom enabling collaboration and communication through modern communication tools at anytime and anywhere.

The teacher can elaborate the course having in view the students' needs and the curriculum. Using the platform could be organized online - virtual classes where the teacher can communicate with the students using audio and video means of communication. The teaching- learning activity could take place outside the campus, using the platform the teacher can organize the activity but if the student needs more flexibility it can access the information anytime and anywhere according to its needs and possibilities.

The activities and resources provided for the students during the course are varied and attractive. The database for managing the students' personal information, the assessment results, questionnaires for students, parents, and also teachers' evaluation results, feedback, study themes and homework, the resources (books, articles, images, presentations, short movies, documents, etc) should be uploaded and accessible for each user.

For law students it is very important to develop some practical skills for their future activity not only to receive information.

Organizing students into groups and combining team work, problem solving, decision- making and traditional research by using the platform, could be developed projects and even *games* in order to evaluate skills through the technology.

Students could develop communication channels with students from other universities and countries enabling the research projects development; have access to faculty members from all over the world, create networks and even organizing virtual conferences, virtual courts and virtual law firms.

Instead of establishing offices the virtual law firms use the platform. Using the platform should be taken into consideration the communication flow by establishing communication objectives and results so a virtual law firm can provide the information services and can provide specific practical activities for students in a supervised environment.

The future lawyers need to be trained in how to analyze the documents critically, so they make good choices and they counsel on behalf of their clients.

The attorney should take time to explain the documents, adapt the documents to the client's needs of the, and be available to answer the client's questions, fulfilling these steps than the attorney provides a useful service that must be rewarded.

All these activities should be organized and supervised by the teacher on the platform therefore the costs of these activities, from the university's point of view and also of the student are lower than the costs of the traditional paper -pencil activities.

The lawyer's main working tool is the information but it is very important how it manages the information, the analyses of the information, how is the information used and how the lawyer manages to communicate the information to its client in such a manner that the client to understand the message and to use the information for further actions.

The results of all the activities undertaken by the students will be published on the platform.

Perhaps another identified advantage of using a platform is that the community can share all the resources, experiences and could become a "*best practice guide*"

The advantages offered by the platform can be identified and recorded more easily only after the development, implementation and use of the platform allowing to integrate more activities and resources.

The complexity of this environment could present a large number of technical and social problems, also bringing a special set of difficulties as well as for the educators and for the developers who intends to place the educational activities in the virtual space.

Other possible problems that may occur in developing the platform are:

- ✓ Technical aspect: the interaction between user and platform could present some technical problems regarding the lack of appropriate equipment, the lack of
- ✓ Experience (from the teacher's point of view- in organizing a virtual class, and from the student's point of view - organizing the learning activity in a virtual environment); traditional teachers, by

using the platform, may miss having person-to-person contact and direct communication; relying on technology may occur system crash bringing the activity to a pause and even loss of information.

- ✓ Identity: building a profile, a social or professional relation could represent a problem in terms of identifying the other users;
- ✓ Culture: as any other organization or community, should be set rules, norms, codes, protocols in order to create and develop a safe environment;
- ✓ Cooperation: cooperation and collaboration between students or teacher should follow some set steps, because building and authentic student – teacher relationship is an important factor for successful group activities.
- ✓ Time: the time spent developing courses, designing the teaching activities according to the platform’s demands could take too long, and could require special skills for the teachers; but a course once developed can be used at any time and also can be continuously improved by adding new and updated information and other resources;
- ✓ Economic: speaking about platforms from the economic point of view, we have to take into consideration whether it is hosted locally or outsourced; maintenance cost; uploading and downloading costs, etc; (Warburton S., 2009)

The activities developed on the platform are divers, and beside the mentioned activities (courses, teaching/learning activities, etc) there are many other activities like research projects between universities or research centers, online conferences, can also serve as a tool for teachers’ training and also at the level of the organization as a management and communication tool.

Virtual universities and online –learning will be the most accessed and chosen systems of education in the future years.

Conclusions:

The platform represents a very attractive environment for educational activities, especially for the students, but each identified problem in the use of virtual platforms represents a challenge that should be dealt with. In order to create a strong learning community it is essential to facilitate communication among the community participants.

In a continuous changing society where the traditional elements coexist with the modern elements, where the economy is based on knowledge and the universities – institutions based on knowledge, reflect the type of society in which they exist, the higher education institutions must keep pace with market’s demands and needs, to be oriented towards customer and anticipate the market needs.

Information is power - but equally important is how it is used and how information is communicated so that the message to reach the receiver - through multiple media tools and technologies - without being distorted. The value of an organization no longer depends on the heritage value but on strategic thinking, on an operational management, effective communication and especially on a functional and performant informational system.

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