

# Evidence on the Use of Information and Communication Technology for Employee Training in Selected Companies in U.S. – Pilot Study

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**Abstract:** The aim of this pilot study is to analyze the state of information and communication technology use during employee training in selected US companies. The study used a mixed-methods research design. First, a questionnaire survey was used which consisted of 18 questions. Some were closed, some were semi-closed and some were open ended. At the same time, the questionnaire survey used a 6-point Likert scale for several statements. The mean and standard deviation were then calculated from the results. A total of 21 respondents were obtained. Based on the data obtained from the questionnaire, 3 semi-structured interviews were conducted to obtain more detailed information regarding use information and communication technology for employee training. in these U.S. companies. Based on the results of the research, it can be said that the use of information and communication technology for employee training is popular and a positive trend in the number of such trainings is expected in companies in U.S.

**Keywords:** information and communication technology; ICT; human resources; employee training; new technology

**JEL Classification:** M53

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## 1. Introduction

What role does ICT play in human life? The information and communication technology (ICT) does not drain. What role does it play in our society? How can it be put to use in a variety of situations?

Managers and specialists, especially institutions of higher education and academic centers, must work to answer these concerns. Study fields, such as the function of information and communication technology in developing countries, as well as its influence on the organization and the influence of the training process in the organization, can be investigated.

Recently, we can see how this rapidly changing environment is threatening the existence of many businesses. Global economic changes are pushing regional economies forward. Similarly, new technologies, consumer culture, global standards, the impact of environmental changes and the cost-sharing perspective of today's businesses. Many organizations' survival was jeopardized by their inability to adapt to environmental changes (Goudarzi & Gmynyan, 2003). According to evolutionary theory, environmental variability and uncertainty need a diversity of distinct organizations, and that environmental changes have corresponded with great flexibility. Organizational strategies such as education and improvement have become

highly significant. In reality, training is viewed as a technique for determining the range in which an organization's human capital resources are deemed to be stable. Because it can be challenging to measure the payback on investment in training and development, particularly over a short time period (Malomo, 2018).

## **2. Theoretical Background**

### *2.1. Employee Training*

In a modern society, knowledge and skills requirements are constantly changing and it is therefore essential that employees continuously deepen and broaden their knowledge and skills. An individual can no longer make do throughout his or her economic activity with only what he or she has learned in preparation for a future career. Education becomes a lifelong process (Raymond & Amitabh, 2018).

Employee training in companies is a way for employers to shape employees' skills and enhance their capabilities. It is a systematic procedure for modifying working attitudes and levels of skills (knowledge, abilities and competencies), including employee motivation (Urbancová et al., 2021, Shahzadi et al., 2014) which can help to narrow the gap between subjective competence (the capacity to act and use competencies to organisational goals) and objective competence (the maximum educational attainment and requirements placed on employees) and increase productivity (Kijek et al., 2020).

The overall aim of training and development is learning. Learning means that employees acquire knowledge, skills, competencies, attitudes or behaviors. Referring to Raymond and Amitabh (2018), training and development are not just about employees learning for themselves. Simply offering training programmes today is not enough to gain the support of managers and to give credibility to the learning and development function for employees and managers. Training must show how it helps the company's competitive advantage by boosting employee performance and enhancing business strategy.

The current development of enterprises is facing very serious problems and challenges (Amor-Esteban et al., 2019). In modern globalized economic environment, the question is how to secure a dominant position in market conditions has been an issue that many companies are addressing nowadays (Kimiloglu et al., 2017). More and more companies are realizing this. At a time when people consider human resources as "the second source of profit", companies have elevated human resource development to a strategic level and are currently trying to regard human resource training and development as an important task for the enterprise development (Halbouni et al., 2016).

### *2.2 Information and Communication Technology*

Information and communication technologies (ICT) are widely adopted worldwide, especially in the field of human resource development. According to research, correct use of information and communication technology can shift the location of content and educational technology in the 21st century, which is at the heart of educational reform, will accelerate. If correctly planned, ICT-supported education can help people acquire the knowledge and skills

they need for lifetime learning. ICT If it is used appropriately, rather than just teachers and students, it allows those who have performed higher overall performance, and it provides new means of education. These new techniques of teaching and learning are based on fundamentalist teaching learning theories and a transfer of technology from science teachers to student-centered education.

According to a review of the literature, many studies have been conducted to explore the significant implications of information and communication technology in various companies with various samples and demographics, with all of the results pointing to its favorable effect on individual performance. A few studies in this area are mentioned in the following paragraphs.

Navaie (2007) discovered that training courses lead employees to be ready and increase their efficiency and performance by investigating and assessing the quality of information technology training courses for employees in the Tehran courthouse. In his research, MacDuffi (1995) investigated the relationship between human resources training and increased efficiency and improved quality of human resources performance, concluding that there is a significant link between human resources training and increased efficiency and improved quality of human resources performance. Other research has linked ICT-related stress, sometimes known as technostress, to greater work strain (Ayyagari et al., 2011), as well as decreased work performance (Tarafdar et al., 2010; Tarafdar et al., 2015; Sumiyana & Sriwidharmanely, 2020), unfavorable psychological responses and mental health deficits (Califf et al., 2020; Khedhaouria & Cucchi, 2019).

HajizadeMoghadam and Dastgerdi (2010) investigated the relationship between employee job satisfaction and the degree of reliance on IT tools to complete work tasks, with the premise that there is a positive relationship between job and life satisfaction as long as employees spend the majority of their time doing their jobs. In their research, they discovered that the computing environment in an IT project-based workplace had an impact on employee job satisfaction, particularly among those with advanced computer skills. In other words, it was discovered that the computer environment, through the organization environment and job character, might have a favorable impact on job satisfaction. As a result, it was also indicated that management and giving employees with computer training classes would assist them have a positive perception of the organization's environment, which would impact their job satisfaction.

In his examination of the effects of ICT, Kaushalesh (2004) discovered that adopting new technology does not always imply employment loss. Following the introduction of ICT, employment has increased significantly in all of the organizations studied, with skilled workers accounting for the majority of the increase. Furthermore, ICT acceptance has resulted in the creation of indirect jobs in these businesses, which vary depending on the type and scale of the business. In his study of the impact of health and safety training on employee empowerment, Lippin (2000) discovered that in-service training results in certain changes in safety preservation, employee and workplace health hygiene, and that these aspects empower employees to carry out their obligations. Fasanghari and colleagues (2008) conducted study on this topic. The impact of information technology on supply chain management was examined, and the importance of information technology in supply chain management was emphasized. It is suggested in this research that information technology can be beneficial in establishing

group works, improving inter-organizational communication, and giving chances for firms to extend their markets in the Iranian automotive supply chains. In their study, Nejadirani, Rasouli, and Behravesht (2011) looked at the substantial differences in the effectiveness of Mashhad Municipality's Parks and Green Space Organization before and after the use of information technology. According to the findings of their research, adopting information technology in this organization has boosted the efficiency of human resources and information resources, hence increasing the efficiency of the organization and lowering expenses in the organization under review.

In another study, Gilmor (1998) found that faculty members who have taken IT courses have a higher propensity and motivation for teaching than faculty members who have not taken IT courses, and their information literacy has also improved. Furthermore, Jahanian and Noroozi (2011) attempted to investigate the effect of IDCL training courses on improving employee performance with a different sample in population, and it was discovered that there is a meaningful relationship between ICDL training courses and the employees' new skill, their accuracy, their efficiency, their speed and the amount of work done, their career success, and creating interest in them. Ghorbani and Sangani (2011) conducted a case study to look into the role of information technology in city hall organizational effectiveness, and they discovered that there is a substantial link between the use of information technology and city hall organizational effectiveness. In fact, it was determined that the use of information technology in these businesses can improve their efficiency. They also advised that using information technology professionals and knowledgeable staff, creating a more culture of using information technology among managers and employees, manager and employee training to improve their skills in using current systems and other minor systems, we can improve the application and efficiency of information technology facilities in organizations, resulting in increased effectiveness.

Bloom et al. (2014) and Di Maggio and Van Alstyne (2013) have demonstrated that the implications of employees' use of ICT in their working lives are varied and can have contradictory effects on their discretion and accountability. In their study of the effect of using computers on raising employment rates and human resource capability, Card et al. (1999) discovered that those groups who use computers have a significant increase in group employment and human resource capability. Azari and Amuie (2008) investigated the effective variables in knowledge management at universities in another study. Organizational culture, organizational learning, human resources, and information technology are all considered to be relevant elements on knowledge management at universities, according to this paper. Because knowledge management is dependent on information technology and IT supports the process, information technology is regarded as the most significant. Information technology is actually presented as a solicitor and facilitator of the knowledge management process.

### **3. Methodology**

The primary design of the pilot study is a mixed method approach. The mixed method is a strong case that combines quantitative and qualitative elements. In this pilot study, the researcher mixes both quantitative and qualitative research approaches within a stage of the

study and across two of the stages of the research process. Methodological triangulation was applied by gathering data through interviews and a questionnaire.

Based on the previous research results, the research question was set: *Is ICT used for employee training in selected, ranked in the top 100 best companies to work for, U.S. companies?*

Quantitative data was obtained by a questionnaire survey done in United States (n = 21; Criteria-based selection). The results can only be generalized for the research sample. In total, 534 emails to owners or management of organizations were sent out, 21 replies were received (return rate 3.93%, it is not possible to identify directly which companies participated in the research due to the anonymity of the questionnaire). The sample was based on a ranking compiled by Fortune magazine – the 100 best companies to work for. These rankings are based on votes by individual employees of these companies and only the best ones make it into the top 100. Therefore, the research criteria were that the company had to be based in the U.S., and that it ranked in the top 100 companies to work for in magazine. The questionnaire was designed to comply with ethical rules and with the requirement for anonymity, and contained 18 questions. The questions were closed (allowing only the listed answer choices) and semi-closed (allowing the listed answer choices plus the option to add your own answer) and with more than one or only one answer options. Qualitative measures included data from questionnaire and semi-structured interviews that were used for three respondents to report their relationship to ICT and the way of acquiring ICT into employee training. The structure of the organizations by size, participating in the research (n = 21), was as follows (see Table 1):

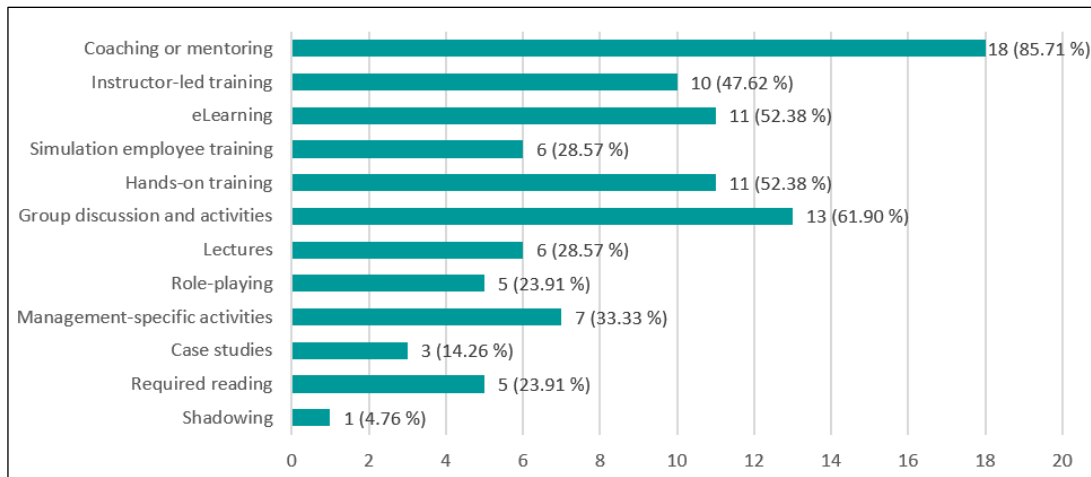
**Table 1.** Structure of the organizations by size

Size of the organization	Number of	Percentage
0-19	3	14.3%
20-49	2	9.5%
50-99	3	14.3%
100-249	1	4.8%
250-499	0	0.0%
500+	12	57.1%
Total	21	100%

The research sample included a very diverse range of field of business. The largest number of companies were from the healthcare sector (4), followed by education (3) and production (3). Other field of business include virtual events, telecom, real estate, outdoor tourism, senior living, retail or recruitment.

#### 4. Results

The first question focused on what training methods are currently used in the organization. The answers to question What kind of Training methods does the organization provide to train the employees? are shown in the Figure 1 below. The most used method is coaching or mentoring, identified by 18 out of 21 respondents. Group discussion and activities are also a highly used method, as well as hands-on training, eLearning and instructor-led training.



**Figure 1.** Structure of kinds of training methods used in selected organizations

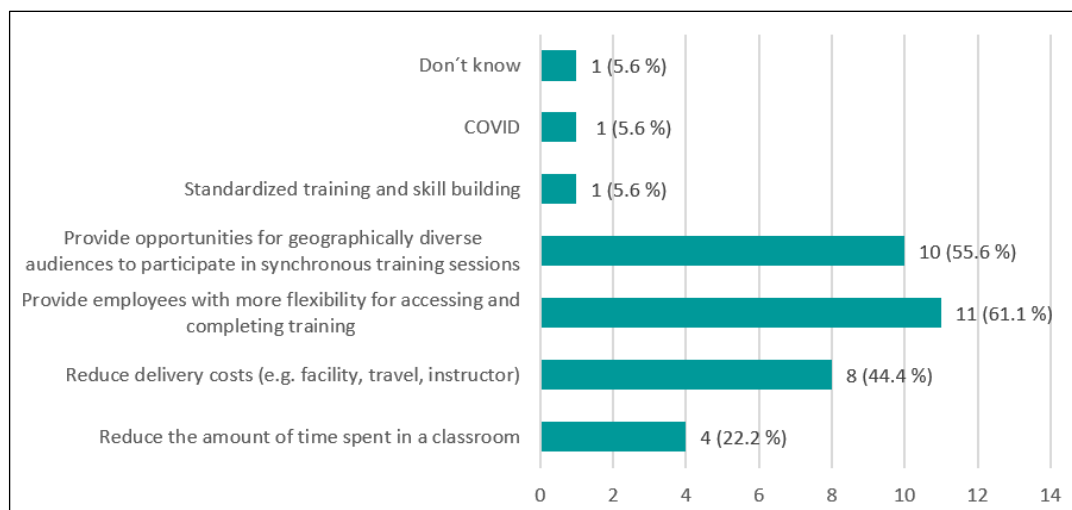
On the question of whether companies use ICT for employee training, the survey was very positive, with 18 respondents indicating yes and only 3 no. The answer chosen twice as the reason why the organization does not use ICT for training was „The company does not have a budget to develop or deliver ICT-supported training“ and „The company does not have a content or learning management system to administer ICT-supported training“. One answer each had „The company does not have the hardware or software required to implement ICT-supported training, The company does not have the technical support staff needed to deliver or maintain ICT-supported training“ and „The company feels that more traditional methods of training (on-the-job, classroom) are the most successful.“

The next question focused on what kind of ICT training the company offers to employees. There were several possible answers for this question. Webinars, eLearning and Online courses were the top most used employee training using ICT. All these three options were chosen by 13 respondents. An overview is shown in the Table 2.

**Table 2.** Types of ICT-supported employee training provided by the company

Types of ICT-supported employee training provided by the company	Number of	Percentage
Webinars	13	72.2%
Online courses	13	72.2%
eLearning	13	72.2%
mLearning (mobile learning)	4	22.2%
LMS systems	3	16.7%
MOOC courses	1	5.6%

Respondents most frequently cited providing employees with more flexibility for accessing and completing training and providing opportunities for geographically diverse audiences to participate in synchronous training sessions as reasons for introducing ICT into corporate training. An overview of all the reasons is shown in Figure 2.



**Figure 2.** Reasons for implementing/choosing to use ICT-supported training at the company

Resistance to change, technical problems and lack of time were mentioned most as barriers for implementing ICT into employee training. Less common were lack of quality software, limited budget and number of PCs, and lack of relevant content. Respondents (50%) also stated that ICT-supported training for employees is mostly used to develop supplemental training for existing training (e.g. blended training). ICT-supported training also replaces content provided by traditional means like on-the-job or classroom training (38.9% respondents). Last option was ICT-supported training is mainly used in the development of new training courses, selected by 27.8% of respondents.

In order to make ICT-supported training available to employees, the company most often had to acquire a learning management system (44.4%), recruit support personnel to manage and maintain information and communication technology hardware and software (38.9%), provide employees the opportunity to increase digital skills (33.3%) and purchase hardware and software (22.2%). On the issue of content development for this training, the results were almost indecisive. 55.6% of respondents replied that company creates the content and 61.1% that the company pays for the preparation of content to specialized companies. Four respondents chose both answers.

More than half of respondents plan to expand the number of courses offered using ICT in the next 3-5 years. This is a very positive finding for the authors' future research. Another nearly 30% of respondents answered, that they maintain the number of courses offered using ICT. The results can be seen in Table 3.

**Table 3.** In the next 3 to 5 years the company intends to...

In the next 3 to 5 years the company intends to...	Number of	Percentage
Acquire ICT for the purpose of training employees	2	9.5%
Acquire or develop training delivered by ICT	2	9.5%
Expand the number of course offered using ICT	11	52.4%
Maintain the number of courses offered using ICT	6	28.6%
Reduce the number of course being offered using ICT	0	0%
Total	21	100%

It is also interesting to note the breakdown of this question by the number of employees in the enterprise. Companies over 50 employees mostly want to increase the number of course offered using ICT. For small businesses with up to 49 employees, they would like to introduce these courses into the company or maintain the status quo.

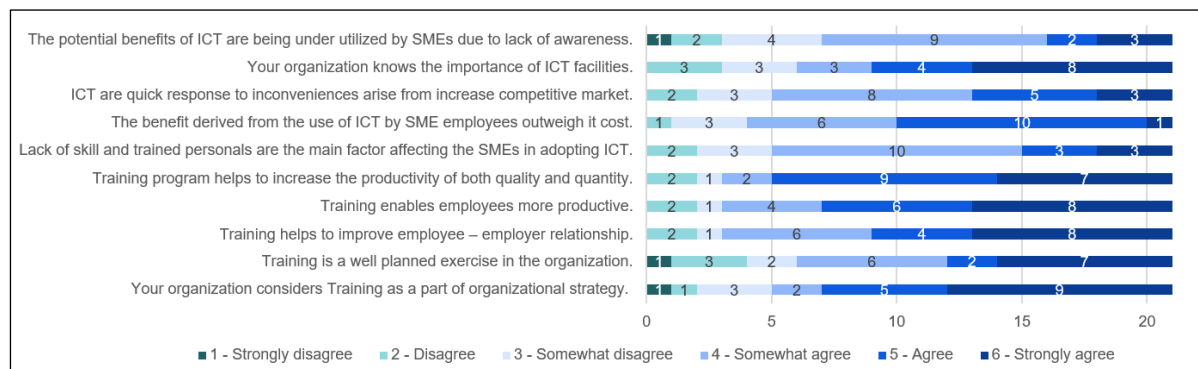
**Table 4.** In the next 3 to 5 years the company intends to...by the number of employees in the enterprise

In the next 3 to 5 years the company intends to...	Number of How many employees does your organization have?					Total
	0-19	20-49	50-99	100-249	500+	
Acquire ICT for the purpose of training employees	1				1	2
Acquire or develop training delivered by ICT	1				1	2
Expand the number of course offered using ICT			3	1	7	11
Maintain the number of courses offered using ICT	1	2			3	6
Total	3	2	3	1	12	21

Respondents see the biggest advantage of implementing ICT for employee training as the ability to provide training to employees anytime, anywhere and from anywhere (66.7%). Another advantage they identified was the acceleration of the learning process (42.9%), repeatability and unlimited number of participants (28.6%), increasing creativity possibilities (23.8%) and better demonstrativeness (9.5%).

On the contrary, the biggest disadvantage is low level of interactivity (42.9%), high acquisition costs (33.3%), resistance of employees to changes (33.3%), technical problems (23.8%), high demands on digital knowledge (14.3%) and company nuances (the ICT program may need to be flexible to fit each company's specific needs).

As another part in the questionnaire survey, statements with a 6-point Likert scale were used. The six-point Likert scale was chosen to avoid ticking the middle neutral box, i.e. respondents always had to lean towards either agreement or disagreement. The resulting data is shown in the Figure 3 below and the Table 4 below calculates the mean and standard deviation for each individual statement.



**Figure 3.** Results of Likert scale

As can be seen in the Figure 3, the majority tends to agree (4-6) with all the statements used in the questionnaire survey. Equally, when looking at the Table 5 showing the mean of all selected responses for each statement, it is clearly evident that respondents tended to agree with the statements.



**Table 5.** Results of Likert scale

<b>Claim</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard deviation</b>
Your organization considers Training as a part of organizational strategy.	4.71429	1.48461
Training is a well-planned exercise in the organization.	4.23810	1.57071
Training helps to improve employee – employer relationship.	4.71429	1.15077
Training enables employees more productive.	4.80952	1.26885
Training program helps to increase the productivity of both quality and quantity.	4.85714	1.20656
Lack of skill and trained personals are the main factor affecting the SMEs in adopting ICT.	4.09524	1.10861
The benefit derived from the use of ICT by SME employees outweigh it cost.	4.33333	0.94281
ICT are quick response to inconveniences arise from increase competitive market.	4.19048	1.13888
Your organization knows the importance of ICT facilities.	4.52381	1.46772
The potential benefits of ICT are being under-utilized by SMEs due to lack of awareness.	3.85714	1.28307

The last part of the questionnaire survey was about the respondents' interest in conducting a 30minute interview with the author regarding the implementation of ICT in education in their organizations. 6 people expressed interest, but only 3 of them were eventually interviewed. The author received permission from 2 respondents to record the interview, all three were conducted under the promise of anonymity. In this interview, open-ended questions were used. One interview was conducted on a mobile phone, two through the Google Meets platform.

During the interview, the author agreed with everyone that ICT is important nowadays and that it is becoming more and more in the consciousness of all organizations across the world. In one company, the author learned from the interviews that based on the evaluation of the company's training by the employees, the management of the company decided just to diversify the training of the employees by introducing new modern techniques. Employees complained that they were looking at the computer all the time and could not ask questions or otherwise respond and interact during training. In this same company, there was a problem when implementing new technologies to training employee resistance to change, where the respondent recommends announcing the change in advance, really making sure that all employees have the necessary digital skills to handle the new form of training and that they are not discouraged. Even in the second company, the author agreed with the respondent that the use of ICT may or may not be an advantage. It is certainly important to choose the right type of training to which ICT training will be used. For some types, such training is pointless.

## 5. Discussion

The results of the research show that there is a positive trend in the USA companies towards the introduction of ICT in employee training and that modern enterprises will not do without modern technologies in the future. As the results of previous research mentioned in the research show, the use of ICT in employee training has a positive effect on employee satisfaction. This research focused only on companies in the Top 100 companies to work for in the U.S., which is ranked based on the satisfaction of each company's employees. Thus, the answer to the research question is positive, namely that highly ranked companies use ICT for training and even consider increasing the number of such courses in the future. Therefore, the author would like to focus further research directly on employees and their opinion on the use of such courses in their companies. The author would also like to conduct further research with specific companies that would not be anonymous and could compare the results of a given company over a given period and therefore compare the effectiveness of this ICT training.

## 6. Conclusions

It can be concluded from the results of the pilot study that majority of respondents believe in importance of ICT in learning process. It can be suggested on the basis of research results that most companies already use ICT for employee training. This is a positive finding for the author's future research focus. A large number of respondents also indicated that they are likely to increase the number of such courses in the future and therefore that using ICT for employee training will become more and more common. U.S. will see a growing trend in the adoption of ICT in employee training. Companies know the advantages and disadvantages of ICT training and anticipate the spread of this type of training to their companies. In future research, the author would like to focus on this type of employee training in more depth and also make a comparison with the Czech Republic.

**Conflict of interest:** none

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