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Getting the most out of “E” and Distance Learning

Whatever happened to the Learning Age?

Brian Wilson – Director Europa Associates, United Kingdom
Email: brian@europaassociates.co.uk



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Getting the most out of “E” and Distance Learning Whatever happened to the Learning Age?

Summary

This paper is based on current research, assessment of Projects and direct teaching experience in academic/vocational subjects over a wide range of student levels across the EU



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Getting the most out of “E” and Distance Learning - Whatever happened to the - Learning Age?

My Presentation will include: -

Overview of E and Distance Learning

Maximising E and Distance Learning to meet the challenges of the Learning age

- The marketing approach to enhancing learning
- The influencers on the Learning Equation, starting with the Learner



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My Presentation will also include: -

Maximising E and Distance Learning to meet the challenges of the Learning age

- The Future of E and Distance Learning is in your hands
- Some recent development in E and Distance Learning across the EU
- Ways Forward to secure EU funding

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Overview of E and Distance Learning (part 1)

What is E/Distance Learning – a route to continual learning?

- A mode of delivery/learning without regular formal classes.
- Learners can learn at their own pace and at a time to suit them
- Modes of delivery include: - printed materials, DVDs and computers.
- New approaches to learning, including multi-media and interactivity.
- Learners “consume” pre-arranged content, or solve learning tasks
- Think of the Open University and Learndirect.



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Getting the most out of “E” and Distance Learning - Whatever happened to the Learning Age Overview of E and Distance Learning (2)

What can it do?

- Open up and support new teaching and approaches to learning
- Motivate more students to take part in more training
- Minimises barriers of “training is not available at a time to suit me”.
- Fits in with work or family commitments
- Can encourage people to learn by using computers as the “hook”



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Overview of E and Distance Learning (3)

What can it not do?

- Solve all your training problems
- If it is not well organised it can demotivate students
- Concentrating on technology to solve your learning problems is not the way forward
- There is a great deal of E and Distance Learning material, but it can be difficult to judge what is good quality and what is not
- What suits one learner will not necessarily suit another.

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Overview of E and Distance Learning (4)

- On-line teaching is not being used effectively
- E and Distance Learning has yet to live up to its promise
- Modes of Delivery needs to identify processes at all stages of the learning cycle
- Over the past few years, many Research Projects have reported very interesting, informative and thought provoking work in E and Distance Learning.

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Getting the most out of “E” and Distance Learning - Whatever happened to the Learning Age? A Short Historical Overview (2)

Past and current projects include: -

- Mobile, wireless and ambient intelligence
- A mixed learning environment for vocational training
- Teaching and learning environments for schools
- Technology enhanced learning for young prisoners
- The role of communication in E Learning effectiveness
- Active learning in a work environment
- Uses of a learning object
- E Learning for students who have opted out of education



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A Short Historical Overview (3)

- Many research reports do not highlight or even mention learner’s needs
- Now there are more “delivery based” projects
- E and Distance Learning is now involved in academic and vocational areas
- Today; many E and Distance Learning Professionals have realised that success is not a function of hardware or software – we must “Put the Learner first”.



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**Getting the most out of “E” and Distance Learning
Whatever happened to the Learning Age?**

**The Learning Equation (Mark 1)
The Marketing Approach to Learning
Putting the Learner first**

- What influences Learners?
- What motivates them to learn?

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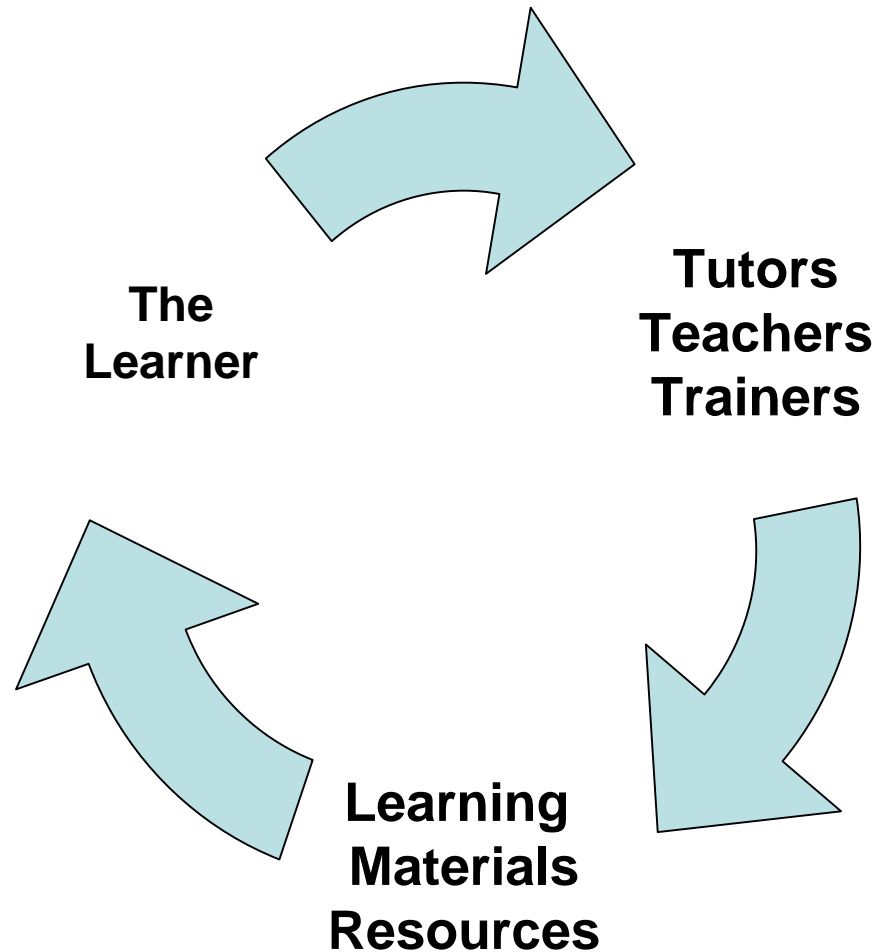


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The Learning Equation (Mark 1)



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The Marketing Approach to Learning (1)

- This diagram is far too simplified – these key aspects are closely interlinked – in fact they are all one “organism”
- A Venn diagram can be used to reflect the Learning Equation with greater accuracy

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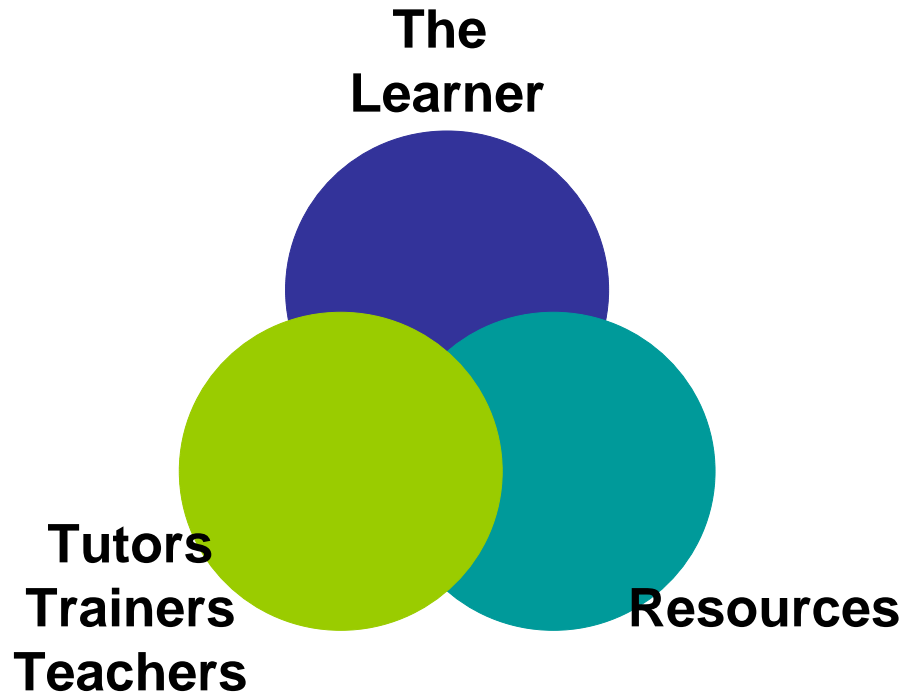


Maximising “E” and Distance Learning
What happened to the Learning Age?

The Learning Equation (Mark 2)

Learning is more complex

The Learning
Environment is all
encompassing



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The Learning Equation (Mark 2)

Learning is more complex

- Learning is dependent upon something that is very complicated and invariably difficult to assess – the human being (you and me!!)
- Turning to some of the influencers on the Learning Equation, starting with The Learner

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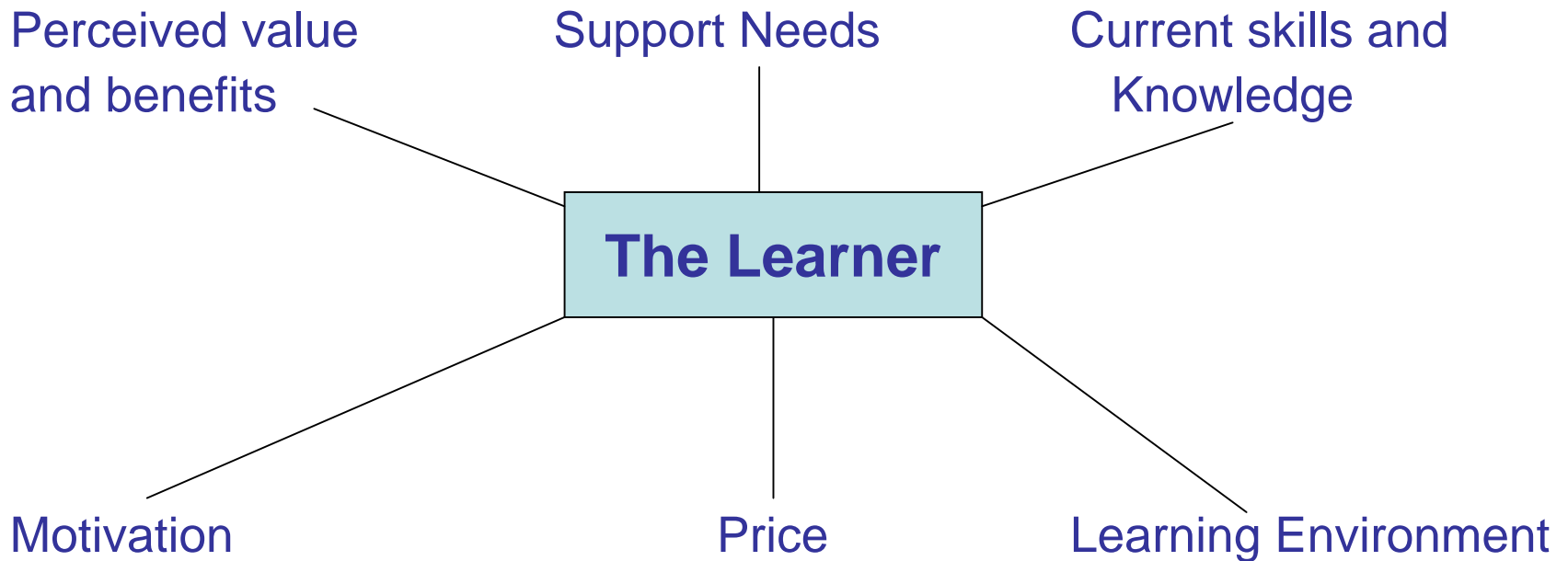
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Aspects that influence the Learning Equation





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Aspects that influence the Learning Equation (2)

Perceived value and benefits

People move towards making a purchase when: -

- They believe it is good value, reflects needs and peer group.
- They perceive that time and effort will be well spent.
- People need to be motivated, to be “sold” the benefits of training.
- “Training Pays” should be the key Marketing phrase



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Aspects that influence the Learning Equation (3)

The Learning Environment

- All too often we do not put the learners first
- Do not think enough about the Learning Environment?
- Training must deliver more positive outcomes than the learner envisaged they would achieve without training

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Problems found when organising/delivering E and Distance Learning at Work (1)

- Many employers encourage people to learn after work (i.e. in their “own time”).
- Learning after work is not the best option
- Most people, have already completed a hard day’s work, and are tired – certainly they are not in an effective learning state.

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Problems found when organising/delivering E and Distance Learning at Work (2)

What kind of a message does this send to the learner?

- The employer does not consider learning as a worthwhile investment?
- That the employee is not seen as worth investing in?
- That the employee is not “valued”?
- The message will be a negative one
- Why is the employer not paying?
- We must work with employers to ensure that such a negative approach is not taken.



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Problems found when organising/delivering E and Distance Learning at Work (3)

The Learner’s concentration levels and motivation.

- Learning after work is not the best option.
- Most people, having completed a day’s work, are tired.
- Do employers consider this vitally important aspect?
- For learning to be effective we must ensure that learners have the “strength” and motivation to learn effectively.

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Problems found when organising/delivering E and Distance Learning at home (1)

- Any family commitments?
- Are learners tired?
- Is the home quiet to support effective learning?
- Is there a separate room - will there be any interruptions?

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Problems found when organising/delivering E and Distance Learning at home (2)

Current Skills and Knowledge

- Has the learner the necessary skills/knowledge to maximise their learning potential?
- Are there any introductory learning packages to provide the necessary skills.
- Do learners have the necessary work experience?

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Problems found when organising/delivering E and Distance Learning at home (3)

Support Needs

- Many learners need the close support of a teacher.
- Just giving a learner a computer, with a good learning package, is not good enough.
- Introduce seminars at the start and during the learning programme to act as: - tutorials, assessment, explaining difficult concepts etc
- Many students learn from each other and develop team working skills by discussions etc

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Problems found when organising/delivering E and Distance Learning at home (4)

Price

- Many learners are discouraged by price
- Fees are often seen, by the learner, as a barrier – an excuse for not taking part!
- Who pays for the training?
- Why is the employer not paying the fees?
- Consider funding assistance, or stage payments to minimise barriers and attract more learners



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Problems found when organising/delivering E and Distance Learning at home (4)

Motivation

- Many adults have had a poor school experience and hence anything that sounds like training, school, learning etc will be perceived as a barrier.
- All too often I have heard “I am too old to train” – you must respond and negate this belief.
- So, motivation must be an integral part of the E and Distance Learning



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The Future of E Learning is in your hands

- Put the learner first
- Design your course from the learner’s point of view
- Work with employers to ensure training takes place in a positive atmosphere

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The Future of E Learning is in your hands (2)

If we only spent a small amount of time thinking of learning from the learner’s point of view, rather than concentrating on technology – we would find that we had: -

- More learners taking part
- Better/higher level outcomes
- More motivated learners
- Improved teaching and motivation for teachers

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The Future of E Learning is in your hands (3)

Always bear in mind: -

- Is E and Distance Learning the best way forward for the learner?
- Remember that different people learn in different ways

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The Future of E Learning is in your hands (4)

Let me be a bit controversial (1)

- Forget technology - get back to the learning fundamentals
- Design courses and learning from the learners point of view and not from the teachers idea of what should happen
- Respond positively to what learner's tells you
- If the learner sees something as a barrier; it will hinder training.

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The Future of E Learning is in your hands (5)

- Ensure teachers have the necessary skills, knowledge and “empathy” to teach and support learners.
- Spend money on training your staff
- Remember that teaching, using E Learning, requires different skills and not all teachers, however good they are at “face to face” teaching, may not be the best teacher when using E and Distance Learning
- **Finally remember – “A chain is as strong as it’s weakest link”**



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Some aspects of “E” Learning across the EU (1)

We started off with: -

- Computerise current teaching/learning material for E Learning
- Develop current learning modules using the “mechanics” of E Learning
- This was a next step on from Open Learning
- E and Distance Learning were dominated by technology.



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Some aspects of “E” Learning across the EU (2)

We then moved onto: -

- Breaking down learning materials into smaller, individual learning objects
- Breaking down these individual learning objects into separate topics (sub chapters)

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Some aspects of “E” Learning across the EU (3)

The next steps included: -

- Holding all these separate topics in a depository (warehouse management)
- Building learning objects from those held in a depository
- More thought was given to tailor-making the learning programme to suit the learner.
- But all too often the trainer’s and the organisation’s needs remained dominant.



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Some aspects of “E” Learning across the EU (4)

At this time in the UK: -

- The UK led the way in Distance Learning – The Open University
- The UK concentrated on vocational, work based learning and routes to enable students to “catch up”, or for revision

Meanwhile in Europe

- Concentration on programmes at University level

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Looking across the EU

Recent developments at University level

- E Learning enhances the learning experience, enabling students to “catch up”, reducing student drop-out rate.
- Students can complete course work, exams and tests
- Students give feedback on the lecture, support materials, the course work and the course organisation!!
- Students do not have to attend college
- Students can be taught by tutors who will be experts in their field, but not working at their University/College

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Looking further across the EU (1)

More developments for School age learners

- Linking E Learning and person to person support
- Using E Learning to attract and support the less fortunate and those with literacy/numeracy problems
- UK based initiative that targets school age students who have “opted out” of education, or cannot attend school .
- Using E Learning to attract and support the less fortunate and those with literacy/numeracy problems

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Looking further across the EU (2)

Recent Developments in vocational subjects

- E Learning needs to be tailored to the learner’s needs.
- Smaller learning packages to upskill employees in small bite-sized chunks
- Workplace learning; well organised with effective support
- Using E Learning to attract and support employees with literacy/numeracy problems



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Looking further across the EU (3)

Some Developments common to all: -

- “Student friendly” packages motivate learners
- Determine a student’s learning pattern

Other aspects: -

- Use of multi-media
- Mobile hand held devices to take learning out of the classroom
- Use of E Learning when learning another language



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Looking further across the EU (4)

Remember that: -

- The UK was leading the way in the use of “E” and Distance Learning e.g. the Open University etc
- Continental Europe has caught up and overtaken the UK

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Getting involved in Pan – EU projects

- Many EU organisations want to work with the UK
- So why are there so few UK organisation seen at partnership meetings?
- Structural funds are moving “Eastwards”

EU funding opportunities

- There are 2 principal sources of funding – Structural Funds and Pan-EU Funding



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Structural Funds

- These Funds are allocated to each Member State and region
- Some Funds offer capital and revenue expenditure – some only revenue
- Some Funds are only available in specific regions of each Member State.
- You apply direct to a UK based organisation (But Structural Funds are moving “Eastwards” and hence there will be less post 2007)



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Pan-EU Funding

- Is targeted at specific aspects e.g. technology, vocational learning, culture etc
- Everyone applies to Brussels – you are in a competition with each Member State.
- Need to develop an effective pan-EU partnership (at least 3 Member States)
- The UK has a good “track record” of securing funding

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So what to do now?

- Look to pan EU projects
- You need to be working now on your project to stand any chance of success
- Do not leave it until the “call” comes – you will be too late!!!

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To network or not to network?

- Don't work hard – work clever
- Many projects are of a similar nature and not “new and innovative”.
- We even find projects that are similar to projects and activities that are on-going
- It costs the same money to make a successful application as one that is not.
- So why are so many organisations not working with others?

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- Why are so many organisations ignorant of what is going on across the EU – or even within the UK?
- The SWLSRN could create a group to focus on exchanging information and project/research ideas – and to lead onto developing and making application that have an enhanced chance of success
- Work with organisations who can help and support you through the “funding maze”
- There are UK organisations that can help/support you in finding partners, seeking funding etc – e.g. IS Support Team Tel: 0870-191 0112 Email: is@fp6uk.co.uk

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- Developing Partnerships, Networks and Projects
- Making applications
- Developing effective management controls.
- Acting as Project Co-ordinator
- Co-ordinating European and other competitive funding Programmes
- Linking together innovative vocational/academic learning and cultural programmes across the E.U.
- Advising on the strategic use of funds

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Thank you for your time

**E and Distance Learning, that “puts the learner first” is
The way forward to ensure that - the Learning Age is
alive and well.**

**But, every thing rests on learners, trainers, employers,
academics, learning material providers, hard and
software suppliers etc**