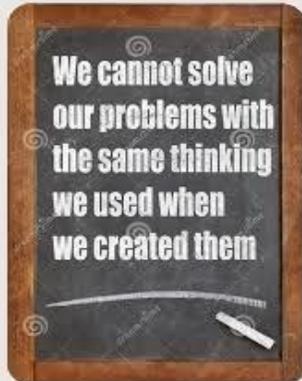


How learning can achieve competitive advantage

In difficult economic times research has shown innovative firms have favorably weathered the storm (de Kok, 2011). SMEs are naturally geared towards innovation as they are relatively flexible in nature.

For innovation to occur:

- The creation of new knowledge and skills are key.
- Learning can develop these skills and facilitate the ability of employees to adapt to change.



In addition research has shown a positive relationship between learning and firm productivity and quality (Blundell et al, 1999; Konrad and Mangle, 2000; Ashton and Fealstead 1995; Conti, 2004).

Most learning in SMEs is largely done 'on the job' as learning solutions provided by external organisations are:

- Costly
- Not relevant to the companies needs
- Require a lot of time away from the employees' work.
- There is a lack of visibility of their ROI.

Archimedes: A problem oriented approach?

Archimedes aims to address these issues by developing a learning solution centered around the problems SMEs face. In the proposed solution the employee solves a problem within the organisation and learns key skills as a result. This solution is expected to provide an immediate ROI, is tailored to the SME needs and can be conducted on the job.

To achieve this the project will:

- Identify current learning practices in SMEs.
- Identify the current challenges SMEs face.
- Develop a guide to assist companies to use problem solving to develop new skills.
- Develop a handbook to guide companies using this approach.
- Develop training material to assist SMEs to solve these problems.
- Create a learner support network to assist employees in SMEs to solve relevant issues.
- Develop IT tools to assist SME learning through problems.



Contact us if your company:

- wishes to be part of our research.
- wants to avail of the learner support network.
- wants to avail of the handbook on *"A guide to using problem solving for skills development."*
- would like to access the training material.
- would like to avail of the IT tools for learning.
- would like to receive the a quarterly Archimedes newsletter.
- would like to participate at workshops dedicated to organisational PBL framework and ICT platform.
- would like to participate at local or national events



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