CHAPTER – 6

E TRAINING FEASIBILITY ON THE INDIAN RAILWAYS

Nothing great is ever achieved without enthusiasm

Ralph Waldo Emerson

6.1   The previous chapters have brought out the developments on the e learning scene at the international, national and organizational level. The study indicates that today e learning is not only a viable medium of learning in terms of cost and effectiveness but the only medium that can cut across time, size and geographical barriers that have hindered learning by traditional methods. This chapter proposes to understand the viability of an enterprise wide application of CBT and e learning in the Indian Railways.

6.2   The Indian Railways were one of the first organizations in the country to make use of ICT. They are, perhaps, operating the largest Passenger Reservation System in world. Other large projects, such as, FOIS, computerized signaling and telecommunication, Railnet and a host of other applications are also leveraging ICTs to bring transformation in the way work is managed and provide better services to customers.

6.3 The Railways have an optical fiber cable network, digital microwave, satellite connectivity, Railway phone modem connection, BSNL modem connection and other wireless communication setups. Every railway station is directly or indirectly connected through some communication media. RailTel Corporation, a public sector undertaking (PSU) under the Ministry of Railways, has already established a high speed Optical Fibre Cable (OFC) network covering appx 33000 route kms connecting about 3000 railway stations and is planning to extend the network to cover 5000 railway stations in the country, covering 45000 route kms in order to provide high bandwidth and multi-media services. It is now implementing a plan to provide cyber cafes and Internet kiosks at railways stations. Other uses would, no doubt, follow. Recently, IGNOU has announced its plan to set up virtual colleges in study centers in these Railway stations, in collaboration with RailTel.

6.4 In regard to hardware, the Railways have large number of high speed servers, intelligent terminals, firewalls, intrusion detection system, intrusion protection system, hubs, and other IT and Communication devices to execute the different projects.

6.5 As regards acceptability by the Railway Staff, it may be mentioned that due to the large deployment of computerized applications, computer based operations have wide acceptability in the Railways and employees are familiar with computers. Despite the size of the workforce, railway employees take

changes in their stride. Once a view is taken by the management and employees are on board, changes are effected with discipline and efficiency by the staff.

6.6   To start with, premises of the Railways can be used as micro classrooms. Training programs can be uploaded on the Railnet or distributed in form of CDs initially. Training can be conducted for groups of employees with the help of projectors and PCs connected to Railnet in the training centers, workshops, sheds, community halls, EDP Centres or other Railway premises. Later, as the bandwidth improves and employees gain familiarity with computers, they can access the material directly.

6.7   While it is common knowledge, it is pertinent to mention here that the cost of computer hardware has been declining while its efficiency has been increasing. Bandwidths are increasing while the cost of building it is falling. Penetration of the Internet is rising and lack of connectivity is reducing by the day. **Therefore, the future bodes well for e training applications on the Railways.**