# Chapter 19
# eLearning as a Political Arena

**Celia Romm Livermore**
*Wayne State University, USA*

**Mahesh Raisinghani**
*Texas Woman's University, USA*

**Pierluigi Rippa**
*University of Napoli Federico II, Italy*

## ABSTRACT

*The goal of this chapter is to study the political strategies utilized in the context of E-Learning. The research is based on the E-Learning Political Strategies (ELPoS) model. The model is based on two dimensions: (1) the direction of the political strategy (upward or downward) and (2) the scope of the political strategy (individual or group-based). The model assumes that the interaction between these dimensions will define four different types of E-Learning political strategies, which, in turn, will lead to different outcomes. The model is presented in the context of the literature on E-Learning and is accompanied with four short case studies that demonstrate its components. The discussion and conclusions section integrates the findings from the case studies and outlines the rules that govern the utilization of political E-Learning strategies in different organizational contexts, including the application of the model across cultures.*

## INTRODUCTION

The proliferation of eLearning in the past few decades has resulted in a significant body of research on this topic. While many studies focus on the technical and strategic aspects of eLearning, not enough attention has been paid to the social and political aspects of eLearning. It is our goal in this chapter to address this gap in the literature.

The research on which the chapter is based relies on the eLearning Political Strategies (ELPoS) model, which we developed. The model identifies two dimensions: (1) the direction of the political strategy (upward or downward) and, (2) the scope

of the political strategy (individual or group based). The model assumes that the interaction between these dimensions will define four different types of eLearning political strategies, which, in turn, will lead to different political outcomes.

We ground the model in the extant literature on eLearning, explaining how it can help shed new light on issues that have been mentioned by previous research. It is our belief that the model has the potential to advance the literature on eLearning in directions that have so far been neglected, particular in terms of its power to explain the politics of eLearning across cultures.

The presentation of the ELPoS model in the following sections is accompanied with a number of short case studies that focus on instances where power and politics impact eLearning. Each mini-case demonstrates a different political strategy, as per the ELPoS model. The mini case studies show not only *how* political strategies manifest in the eLearning arena but *why* this particular arena gives rise to unique politicking. In other words, the goal of this chapter is to chart the boundaries of politicking within the eLearning environment.

The discussion and conclusions section of the chapter integrates the findings from the case studies, outlining the rules that govern the utilization of political strategies in different eLearning contexts. Also in the discussion and conclusions section, future directions for research on the politics of eLearning and practical implications from the model for eLearning practitioners are discussed. In particular, the implications from the study of the model and the empirical findings to cross-cultural aspects of eLearning are outlined.

## BACKGROUND

Before we consider the major themes in the literature on eLearning, it is important to define the concept and its boundaries. Cross (2004) is considered the person who coined the term eLearning. Since then, a range of definitions have been offered for eLearning. The first type of definitions focus on the fact that eLearning is based on the Internet. For example, Rosenberg (2001) defines eLearning as: "the use of internet technologies to deliver a broad array of solutions that enhance knowledge and performance, Rossett (2001) defines eLearning as: "Web-based training (WBT)", and Adrich (2004) defines eLearning as: "a broad combination of processes, content, and infrastructure to use computers and networks to scale and/or improve one or more significant parts of a learning value chain, including management and delivery".

Other definitions of elearning are so general that they include just about all interactions and experiences in organizations. For example, Manville (2003) defines eLearning as: "Not only Internet-published courseware, but also the tools for managing, modularizing and handling: different kinds of content and learning objects (including both electronic and non-electronic forms, and even traditional classroom instruction), just-in-time and asynchronous learning, such as virtual labs, virtual classrooms and collaborative work spaces, simulations, document repositories and publishing programs, tools for prescribing learning, managing development pathways and goals and handling e-commerce and financial transactions related to learning, and the utilities and capabilities for supporting informal learning, mentoring, communities of practice and other non-training interventions". In other words, according to Manville, eLearning includes just about everything that happens in the corporate world except training.

Other definitions of eLearning go even further. For example Drucker (2000), defines elearning as: "Just-in-time education that integrates high velocity value chains". Jeurissen (quoted by Moeng, 2004) defines eLearning as: "the use of innovative technologies and learning models to transform the way individuals and organizations acquire new skills and access knowledge". Note

## Related Content

Strategies for Supporting Teachers of Students With Disabilities in the Virtual Environment

Manina Urgolo Huckvale (2023). *Engaging Students With Disabilities in Remote Learning Environments (pp. 207-219).*

www.irma-international.org/chapter/strategies-for-supporting-teachers-of-students-with-disabilities-in-the-virtual-environment/319436

Application of Big Data Technology in College Music Education

Jiang Bianand Tao Yang (2024). *International Journal of Web-Based Learning and Teaching Technologies (pp. 1-9).*

www.irma-international.org/article/application-of-big-data-technology-in-college-music-education/336838

Perceptions of Distance Learning Among Slovenian University Professors and Students

Eva Podovšovnikand Tilen Smajla (2023). *Handbook of Research on Establishing Digital Competencies in the Pursuit of Online Learning (pp. 321-349).*

www.irma-international.org/chapter/perceptions-of-distance-learning-among-slovenian-university-professors-and-students/326582

Web-Based Collaboration and Decision Making Support: A Multi-Disciplinary Approach

Nikos Karacapilidisand Manolis Tzagarakis (2007). *International Journal of Web-Based Learning and Teaching Technologies (pp. 12-23).*

www.irma-international.org/article/web-based-collaboration-decision-making/2991

Comparing the Effectiveness of Using ICT for Teaching Geometrical Shapes in Kindergarten and the First Grade

Nicholas Zaranis (2018). *International Journal of Web-Based Learning and Teaching Technologies (pp. 50-63).*

www.irma-international.org/article/comparing-the-effectiveness-of-using-ict-for-teaching-geometrical-shapes-in-kindergarten-and-the-first-grade/192084