Chapter 59

Strategic and Organizational Considerations Related to an E–Learning Model:
A Case of Study

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this chapter is to assess the impact of different organizational factors on the success of e-learning programs, in terms of both self-reported satisfaction and the level of learning. Hence, this study adds to the analysis of the efficacy of e-learning models from an organizational perspective by providing some useful insights, which may help to improve decision-making related to employee's continuing education and satisfaction. This simulation, using a bivariate ordered probit model, shows that economic and indirect economic incentives play a key role in augmenting the level of both satisfaction and learning. This analysis also considers how efficacy of learning programs may thus improve by linking the human resources development policy with results obtained in e-learning courses.

1. INTRODUCTION

The application of latest advancements in Information Technology to business education has contributed to fulfill most wishes of education managers. The demand for continuing education programs with top specialists, the costs of mobility, the fragmentation of learning time due to inopportune meetings, among other difficulties, seem to have come upon a solution with the

so called e-learning model (Box, 1999; Kirby, 1999;Bose, 2003).

Technological improvement and the design of high-capacity networks for sharing data have allowed for solving most of the limitations of the traditional learning methodology, by facilitating both access to information and the adaptation of programs to individual needs. However, earlier applications of e-learning have shown that those technological tools do not automatically guarantee high levels of learning (Snyder et al., 2000; Ettinger et al., 2006, Fernández Díez de Lastra, R., 2001). Moreover, Ettinger et al. (2006) demonstrate that the mere act of uploading materials of traditional courses to a software platform may reduce motivation and, thus, learning outcomes. Discussion about these problems has generated a second wave of development of e-learning models (Servage, 2005). Due to the different approach to learning under the new model, it has been argued that e-learning needs a different pedagogical system (Roy, 2006). As a consequence, a number of firms, focused on the management of educational contents for e-learning, have born during the last decade. Those firms offer teams of experts in pedagogy, scriptwriters and technicians, who work for creating personalized educational paths and taking advantage of all possibilities of software platforms for enhancing learning. In addition, the development of e-learning educational materials has actually generated an increasing demand for standard rules to facilitate the compatibility of contents and software platforms (Singh and reed, 2002; Orbea, 2008).

Previous research about factors influencing learner satisfaction reveal that learner computer anxiety, instructor attitude toward e-learning, e-learning course flexibility or quality, perceived usefulness, and diversity in assessments are critical factors affecting learners´ perceived satisfaction (Sun, P.; Tsai, R.J.; Chen, Y. & Yeh, D., 2008). Perceived self-efficacy has been also considered as key factor that influences e-learning satisfaction (Liaw, S., 2008). According to existing literature,

disposing of both advanced technological instruments and adapted learning programs does not guarantee the optimal management of e-learning within firms (Ettinger et al., 2006; Galagan, 2002; Netteland et al., 2007). In fact, it is necessary to consider where, when and how learning programs take place, to identify the possible difficulties and how the firm should manage learning through a software platform (Zhand and Jasimuddin, 2008; Rahmandad et al., 2009). Learning by using the new training model requires self-motivation and self-management, and it demands both cultural and organizational changes (Redmon and Salopek, 2000; Tynjäla and Häkkinen, 2005; McPherson et al., 2005; Ettinger et al., 2005; Davis and Wong, 2007). Hence, organizations must strategically define what the main objective of e-learning is, and what they should do in order to achieve their goals.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 describes the main objective and the methodology used in the analysis. Section 3 presents data, descriptive statistics, and the model that will be estimated. Section 4 discussed main results, and the last section summarizes conclusions.

2. MAIN GOAL AND METHODOLOGY

The aim of this paper is to assess the impact of different organizational factors on the success of e-learning programs, in terms of both self-reported satisfaction and the level of learning. Hence, this study adds to the analysis of the efficacy of e-learning models from an organizational perspective by providing some useful insights, which may help to improve decision-making related to employee's continuing education and satisfaction. To this end, the case of EVERIS, one of the first firms that introduced e-learning as the standard methodology for its employees, has been studied. From a methodological point of view, the analysis can be divided into two parts. Firstly, both directors and users of e-learning programs at

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