



Chapter II

Implementing ERP Education in a Changing Environment and Different Degree Programs

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ABSTRACT

In this chapter, the ERP education program at the Department of Information Business of the Vienna University of Economics and BA is described. Especially emphasized is the embedding into the study programs both at the department and university-level. Due to a major change in the degree programs offered by the university, including the introduction of a completely new information systems bachelor and master program, changes to the ERP education program became necessary and are described. We also report several quantitative data on the lectures both before and after the changes, including satisfaction measures. From this, we try to condense some lessons for other institutions who are planning to introduce ERP into their curricula.

INTRODUCTION

Any education program can not be separated from the environment surrounding it, both on the department- and the university-level, but always needs to fit into larger programs. In this chapter, we will detail how enterprise resource planning (ERP) education with SAP R/3 has been fitted into a department, and into a changing environment of study programs offered by the university.

ERP education is today seen as a cornerstone of information systems (IS) education in general, and is part of many model curricula (e.g., Gorgone & Gray, 1999; Hawking, Ramp & Shackelton, 2001) have demonstrated that ERP can be fitted into several parts of the IS'97 model curriculum. It is influenced by several concepts like business process modeling that have become important to even larger communities like the consultant business overall. In addition, it is a changing field, as most vendors develop their products and include new functionalities like e-business, supply chain management, customer relationship management, or data mining applications, sometimes at a staggering rate (Joseph & George, 2002).

Educating students in ERP has always been a challenging task. Current ERP systems are very complex and because of the large amount of functionality offered, not easy to grasp. In addition, most areas demand specialist business know-how to understand, which is often missing especially in IS students. For students of more business-oriented degree programs, ERP offers a good starting point to enter the world of IS, and it is of high importance for them. Still today, many business administration areas mostly teach theory, without considering the tools in place in real-life companies. For many areas of business administration, foremost accounting, these tools are ERP solutions. It therefore seems of high importance for business administration students to learn about these systems and get to know their capabilities and limitations. In addition, as naturally spanning functional boundaries, ERP solutions can be used to overcome these divisions in education (Becerra-Fernandez, Murphy, Simon, 2000; Joseph & George, 2002).

VIENNA UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS AND BA AND ITS STUDIES

Overview

The Vienna University of Economics and BA was founded in 1898 as the Imperial Export Academy and got its current name in 1975. In 2004 the university gained autonomy implementing the University Act 2002. Currently, six degree programs, a doctoral study, and several post-graduate programs are offered to the 21,766 students (as of winter semester 2003/04). The staff numbers about 400 faculty, and 320 administrative personnel. In the last years, about 2,500 students newly enrolled each year. The Vienna University of Economics and BA has a distinctly international focus, documented by the fact that about every second student has experience abroad, 172 partner universities worldwide and nearly 21% of international students. The University is also a member of the Community of European Management Schools (CEMS) network, offering a master degree. There are several programs with focus on Central and Eastern Europe in place, including a special Executive MBA, a Master Class Eastern Europe and the JOSZEF Program geared specifically to East-West management training for students from Austria, Central- and Eastern Europe (Vienna University of Economics and BA, 2004).

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