

Chapter 28

Achieving Job Satisfaction for Instructors in E-Learning: The Relational Coordination Role

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ABSTRACT

Relational coordination model has been applied to different sectors reaching positive results in terms of performance in contexts with highly interdependent tasks, uncertainty, time restrictions and tacit knowledge. In this research, the relational coordination model has been applied to prove high levels of instructor satisfaction in e-learning. According to the model, organizations can achieve performance by providing frequent, timely and problem solving communication mechanisms to support shared knowledge, in a context of shared goals and mutual respect. Instructors who teach online courses in Spanish universities and e-learning companies have been surveyed on these particular issues. By using Structural Equation Model analysis (SEM), it has been shown how higher standards in terms of relational coordination among instructors in e-learning explain higher degrees of satisfaction. The conclusions should be considered by universities and companies when they evaluate alternatives for the improvement of performance in online education and training.

1. INTRODUCTION

Information and communication technologies (ICT) have become part of the working and personal life for a large number of people in the developed and developing world. People are using Internet for entertainment, leisure activities, shopping and information searching and sharing. Both, the increasing

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use of ICT and globalization, have led to changes in society (De-Pablos, López-Hermoso, Martin-Romo and Medina, 2012).

But the area where technology has brought a more radical change is distance education and e-learning. Students in United States, taking at least one online course in 2012, reached the total number of 7.1 million (Allen and Seaman, 2014). The growth rate of e-learning in Western Europe is 3.5%, while in Eastern Europe it records a growth rate of 8.4% (Ambient Insight, 2015). This growth trend is also met in the use of e-learning in workplace training all over the world (Docebo, 2014).

E-learning strategies for both distance and campus based education have tended to be technology-driven or concentrating on the preparation of educational materials to achieve economies of scale, separating them from the processes of teaching and learning (Kirwood and Price, 2006). Human factors related to the instructor's attitude towards e-learning, the level of collaboration and interaction between the learner and the instructor and instructor's satisfaction with his job have been found to be critical success factors in e-learning (Selim, 2007; Sun, Tsay, Finger, Chen and Yeh, 2008, Bolliger and Wasilik, 2009). Soong, Chan, Chua and Loh (2001) have shown that critical success factors in e-learning should be considered in a holistic fashion. These studies explain that the role of instructor is essential, and that teaching and learning in online education are highly interdependent.

The literature on e-learning includes many articles on technical issues, course design, studies comparing online and traditional courses and factors affecting learners' satisfaction. However, little cover about instructor's satisfaction in e-learning has been found. Moore (2005) identifies faculty satisfaction as a critical factor for quality in online education and it is important to investigate further how high levels of satisfaction can be achieved. It is relevant to inquire about learners and instructors perceptions in order to assist managers and policy makers in their attempts to improve teaching and learning conditions (Baird, 1980).

Many studies have found that there is a positive relationship between job satisfaction and performance (Cummings, 1970; Mirvis and Lawer, 1980; Kornhauser and Sharp, 1983). Gittell (2009) proposed a model of relational coordination that can help organisations to improve performance outcomes and job satisfaction. De-Pablos, García-Martínez, Perea and Angón (2013a) found this model suitable to be applied to those contexts where high levels of task interdependence, uncertainty, time restrictions and tacit knowledge are required. Several researches have found that exists a link between the use of ICT and relational coordination, which affects organizational results (Cummings, Espinosa and Pickering, 2009; De-Pablos, Montes-Botella and Soret-Los-Santos, 2014). Gittell (2009) indicates that better results are reached taking into consideration communication (frequent, timely, accurate and problem solving) and relationships (shared goals, shared knowledge and mutual respect). For these reasons, in this research the relational coordination model has been applied to explain high levels of job satisfaction in e-learning for instructors.

2. THE IMPORTANCE OF INSTRUCTOR'S JOB SATISFACTION AND PERFORMANCE IN E-LEARNING

The relationship between job satisfaction and performance has been studied in different analysis, especially for the industrial sector. Cummings (1970) found that satisfaction causes performance, performance causes satisfaction and rewards cause both satisfaction and performance. Kornhauser and Sharp (1983) have conducted more than thirty studies in order to determinate the relationship and performance in

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