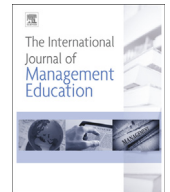


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A conceptual model for assessing blog-based learning system success in the context of business education



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ABSTRACT

With the proliferation in the use of blogs in educational contexts, a better understanding of how to promote university students' learning performance using blog-based learning systems has become an important topic for practitioners and academics. Based on DeLone and McLean's (2003) information systems success model and Goodhue and Thompson's (1995) task-technology fit model, this study proposes a blog-based learning system success model that contains seven variables: (1) knowledge and information quality, (2) system quality, (3) service quality, (4) reuse intention/system usage, (5) student satisfaction, (6) task-technology fit, and (7) learning performance. A set of propositions that describe the relationships between the seven focal variables is presented to enhance our understanding of how to use blog-based learning systems to enhance students' learning performance within a business education context. Theoretical and practical implications for the development and application of blog-based learning systems are then discussed.

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1. Introduction

Regardless of the type of organization – whether a business corporation, an educational unit, or a government unit – excellent communication skills augment smooth operations. Good communication is also essential to building a cohesive and effective team. Knowing how to communicate well to large groups can help minimize the risk of industrial problems in the workplace. In the business world, communication skills are crucial to effectively deal with customer issues and maintain relationships with suppliers and clients. Therefore, business schools emphasize the development of business students' communication capabilities. Educators often encourage a meta-learning technique of “learning to learn” so that business students are both able to learn effectively and update their knowledge after graduation (Chiou, 2008). That is, educators look to develop students' motivation and capability to continue to learn. Web log (hereafter blog) systems, which are a kind of

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Internet service are widely used in educational practice, have the potential to improve business students' communication skills, learning abilities, and performance.

The blog system is a platform for members to exchange their ideas and thoughts in order to achieve the goal of knowledge sharing. Blog posts – which typically include regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other materials such as graphics or video – are edited by an individual or group (Karakas, Manisaligil, & Sarigollu, 2015). By consistently updating the content (i.e., blogging), a user/blogger maintains his own active blog as a personal diary (Ip & Wagner, 2008). Unlike other asynchronous computer-mediated communication (CMC) tools such as e-mail, a blog system creates social sharing and offers a collective sense-making environment where an individual and a group can communicate in a simpler, easier way by (1) maintaining one's own blog, (2) reading or tracking other blogs, and (3) commenting on other blogs as well as replying to comments on one's own blog (Du & Wagner, 2007; Salmon, 2000; Upton, 2005).

In the educational context, the blog system is a popular technology used to improve students' learning performance (Huang, Chen, & Mo, 2015; Lin et al., 2006; Maag, 2005; Wang, Li, Li, & Wang, 2014; Wang et al., 2014; Wang, Lin, & Liao, 2010; Wang & Tang, 2012). Compared with learning management systems (LMS) which are centralized and teacher-centered, the use of a personalized and learner-centered blog system may mitigate the limitations of LMS (Kaplan, Piskin, & Bol, 2010). One key limitation of centralized systems is a lack of student motivation to use the tools, leading to less participation in online discussions (Lee & Bonk, 2016). A blog system can be advantageous in terms of eliciting students' motivation to participate in online discussions in that student bloggers have greater control over their entries, displayed comments, and responses (Karger & Quan, 2005). By communicating with teachers/classmates on personal blogs, students may experience a sense of ownership that reduces participation anxiety (Pena-Shaff, Altman, & Stephenson, 2005). In addition, a blog system supports data archiving that enables students to catch up on missed discussions (Halic, Lee, Paulus, & Spence, 2010). The category-/chronicle-based structure and RSS (really simple syndication) of a blog system enables students to experience less information overload and higher reading/updating convenience (Kim, Chan, & Gupta, 2007; Treese, 2004; de Bruyn, 2004). Taken together, the easy-to-publish and easy-to-access features of a blog system tend to increase students' communication skills and learning ability, as well as help them contribute to a community of students who construct knowledge actively (i.e., individual learning) and create a social interactive environment (i.e., social learning) that leads them to learn from others' ideas, share knowledge resources, and compare/compete with others' work (Lin et al., 2006). As a web-based learning system, hosting a blog allows students to decide their learning time, pace, content, and sequence. The high sense of autonomy in the learning process positively affects students' learning motivation (Klein, Noe, & Wang, 2006).

Prior educational studies have recognized that the application of a blog system can promote students' knowledge sharing and learning effectiveness by improving learner-to-learner and learner-to-instructor interactions (Cameron, 2012; Du & Wagner, 2007; Kim, 2008; Michalski, 2014). Coutinho (2007) mentions that the use of blogging, inspired by Vygotsky (1978) social constructivist learning theories, offers students the opportunity to discuss thoughts, ideas, and opinions within a social plan, enabling the social construction of knowledge. Kim (2008) advocates that traditional computer-mediated communication applications should be replaced with blog systems, and thus develops a model for the use of blog systems in educational contexts by taking into account socio-technical systems theory. Kim (2008) also finds that students with a shared blog are less interested in blogging as compared with students with a personal blog, necessitating a personalized-blogging circumstance to enhance online communication activities. Gullett and Bhandar (2010) note that 77% of MBA students like the ease of use of a blog system: students can utilize a system to achieve learning objectives and improve test scores, even if they only read blog posts but do not often contribute themselves. Despite these results, few studies have been conducted to systematically investigate how a blog system impacts students' learning performance, especially in the context of business and management education. A successful blog system can motivate students to actively construct knowledge and engage in a process of social knowledge construction with their peers. Therefore, this study attempts to develop a conceptual evaluation model of blog-based learning systems (BBLs) based on DeLone and McLean (2003) information systems (IS) success model (D&M model). The task-technology fit (TTF) concept, which argues that IS success should be evaluated in terms of tasks (Goodhue & Thompson, 1995), is also considered. The next section will delineate the theoretical foundation of our conceptual model.

2. D&M's IS success model and task-technology fit (TTF) concept

In the information management field, IS evaluations have become the main source of evidence for academics and professionals interested in understanding how organizations value and benefit from an IS. However, effective system evaluation remains a concern given the complex nature of and varying perspectives on IS success. Therefore, DeLone and McLean (1992) comprehensively reviewed studies on IS success measures and proposed a model integrating six interrelated IS success variables: system quality, information quality, system use, user satisfaction, individual impact, and organizational impact. Based on the belief-attitude-behavior structure, they specified that the two quality attributes primarily influence users' satisfaction and usage, and then individual and organizational impact. Extensive studies have validated D&M's IS success model in various contexts, but have also suggested that the D&M model needs modifications (Tam & Oliveira, 2016). Responding to these recommendations, DeLone and McLean (2003) advanced their original IS success model and made three main revisions (see Fig. 1). First, the e-commerce context, where users' voluntarily adopted the IS, was considered; intention to use was included as an important behavioral measure. Second, the new IS success model expanded the quality scope and incorporated service quality as a third quality attribute (Pitt, Watson, & Kavan, 1995). As with information and system quality,

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