

CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

This chapter is to present backgrounds, motivations, purposes, questions, delimitation, and limitation of this research. And all of these are presented as the following sections.

Research Backgrounds

This research is formed based on the following backgrounds-changes of training's trends, emphasis on evaluation of training programs, lack of studies on trainees' experiences, and importance of trainee satisfaction. In order to understand why this research is generated, the following will introduce the research background.

Changes of training's trends

Its origin can be traced to apprenticeship training program in the eighteenth century. At that time, training was not general to every company. After Ford developed the Model T to cut production costs, many automobile manufacturers began adopting this assembly line process which resulted in a large demand of training. Besides, in order to produce military equipment during World War I, many factories trained their workers to have new skills to operate new machines and produce new equipment (Desimone, Werenr, & Harris, 2002). Owing to breakout of the two events, training becomes more and more popular. And ways to deliver training can be classified into three categories which are on-the-job training, classroom training, and self-paced training approach (Desimone et al., 2002). On-the-job training is the most common way that many employees have experiences to receive coaching or other one-on-one instruction on the job. But, in order to make the deliver of training more efficiently, classroom training was used. One of its advantages is the ability to train many employees at the same time. It also permits to use various

techniques such as videotape, lecture, discussion...etc. Many organizations even established training centers or colleges to educate their employees. However, as the first computer, Electronic Numerical Integrator and Computer, was created, computer became a popular way to deliver training. Owing to this invention, people pay more and more attention on self-paced learning. Employees found that it was more flexible and convenient for them to use computer-aided instruction. They could learn new skills or knowledge by CD-ROM packages. In recent years, there were 13 percent of all courses delivered by computers (Wiley & Sons, 2002). The space of studying was not limited in the classroom anymore. And, accompanying the rapid growth of information technology, impacts of globalization, raise of knowledge management, and the trend of training, it switches classroom training to web-based training (which is called "WBT"). In 2003, the online training market has already been estimated to reach 11.6 billion by International Data Corporation (Driscoll, 2002). WBT makes employees can learn skills or knowledge in any place and at any time. Besides, organizations can cut the costs which are generated when employees be asked to attend a training program without concentrating on their works and make knowledge be transmitted more rapidly.

Emphasis on evaluation of training programs

It's obvious that the purpose of training is to make employees have new or more skills and knowledge to afford on their jobs and raise their productivity. When organizations invest capitals in training programs, they would worry about that if the training program can benefit the organization or make them lose money. Thus, evaluation of training program gains much attention from many companies. There are many frameworks of evaluation such as Kirkpatrick's four levels evaluation, Brinkerhoff's six stages evaluation...etc. ADDIE model is also adopted by many organizations. Although many companies follow different levels of these models,

money is the most common language understood by HR managers and HRD professionals. No matter how important other levels of evaluation are, organizations prefer to express the results of evaluation in monetary terms (Desimone et al., 2002). Because they hope that training programs are investment, not costs. Thus, Return on Investment (ROI) model becomes a popular method that organizations like to use. ROI model divides costs into five categories: direct costs, indirect costs, development costs, overhead costs, and compensation for participants. Although more and more companies move their core of evaluation to ROI, we can't ignore other levels such as reaction, satisfaction, learning...etc of evaluation. Because that the cost or budget is not the unique index to evaluate a training program.

Lack of studies on trainees' experiences

The term of Web-based learning or e-learning is used to the field of education more generally than human resource development (HRD). Although more and more large-sized companies implement WBT, there are still many small and middle-sized enterprises don't have enough capitals and advanced technology to develop their own WBT. So, most of studies in the past focused on e-learning which was used at schools or some governmental institutes. Only few researches paid attention on employees' experiences of WBT. Most of WBT studies engaged in showing how to design and implement it, finding out solutions for erasing obstacles, and comparison between it and classroom training. Researches of trainee satisfaction or experiences of WBT are a little part in this field. We can't deny that on the point of blooming for WBT, giving a detailed guide to organizations to let them know how to implement and design WBT content or system is a key issue. But, understanding trainees' experiences from companies which have already established WBT is also an important preparation for a good WBT design. This is also an impulsion behind this study.

Importance of trainee satisfaction

In trainees' experiences of receiving WBT, one of the important parts is trainee satisfaction. Many frameworks such as Kirkpatrick's four levels, Warr's CIRO, Kaufman and Keller's five levels...etc all have a common training evaluation criterion which is reaction. Reaction level of evaluation means that to see if trainees like the training program or not. Besides, if they are satisfied with it is also included. In order to improve a training program to make trainees have more willing to attend it, trainee satisfaction is an important index to guide the designer of WBT. By this way, understanding what factors have influences on trainee satisfaction becomes a key issue. Organizations need to avoid or improve those negative factors to make their design more efficient.

The shift from traditional training to WBT has made organizations pay more attention on training employees with technologies. But many small and middle-sized enterprises don't have enough ability to establish this system or learning platform. However, studies on those companies which have already implemented WBT can give a guideline to other organizations. This can make them have a better preparation and perception for designing and implementing WBT in future. Besides, not only the implement and design level, how to evaluate training programs is also a big issue. When there is a training program in an organization, the effectiveness will be focused. No enterprise wants to invest on a cost-wasted activity. In order to improve the benefit of training, trainee satisfaction can't be ignored. The reason is that if trainees aren't satisfied with this program, the efficiency of learning would be decreased. So, how to engage in a good evaluation and improve trainee satisfaction to gain more benefits from training program is also necessary to be considered when develop WBT system.

Research Motivations

As the trend of using WBT in enterprises, many studies focused on establishing, implementing or designing this kind of training programs, such as “Key success factors of web-based training” (Gao, 2003). Besides, there were also many thesis and researches that related to e-learning, for instance, “A study on the performance estimating model for enterprises with e-learning” (Zeng, 2005), “The implementation for e-learning of domestic enterprises” (Liu, 2003)...etc. In these numerous researches, although few of them are related to satisfaction such as “The effects of personal factors to the satisfaction level of web-based training in business environment” (Zeng, 2001), most of researches focused on schools and education like “Factors affecting student performance and satisfaction: online versus traditional course delivery” (Mcfarland & Hanmilton, 2005), “Evaluation of student satisfaction: determining the impact of a web-based environment by controlling for student characteristics” (Thurmond, Karen, Conners, & Frey, 2002)...etc. But the lacks of studies on trainee satisfaction of WBT is obvious. WBT is a new technology in the field of business and HRD. Thus, employees’ experiences of it become very important. Trainee satisfaction is one of indexes to evaluate effectiveness of training programs. However, many organizations take it into consideration only at the evaluation level. Only when companies want to improve their WBT system, they would place the significance on trainee satisfaction. But, if we can understand what factors have influence on trainee satisfaction of WBT are before the last step which is evaluation of training programs, we could take these factors into consideration and avoid some obstacles which may cause some bad training experiences before designing WBT system. Thus, if we gain the information about trainee satisfaction only after implementing WBT or at evaluation level, the cost must be higher than preventing some dissatisfaction factors in advance. This is one of impulsions to push this

research which hopes have a basic understanding of factors affect trainee satisfaction on WBT.

Managers of human resource (HR) or training department which involved in WBT have different levels of responsibility to design, implement, or evaluate WBT system and market, encourage, monitor or remind their subordinates or employees to receive WBT. So, if these people can't understand what factors affect satisfaction on WBT, they may use a wrong way to force employees attend WBT. Besides, if they can have basic understanding about this, they can play a good transmitter of information between employees and supervisors or designers to offer good opinions and suggestions when companies engage in developing WBT program. But, the fall of opinions and thoughts between these managers and employees is very large at most of time. These managers may ignore some real feeling and experiences of employees. Because of the difference of position and responsibility, sometimes, these managers are asked to stand on organization's standpoints to think and make a decision. However, the ultimate user of WBT is employee who works in the company. Thus, if we only take enterprise or these managers' thoughts and ideas into consideration, we can't make the system of WBT more efficient. On the contrary, the training will become employees' burden. According to the several reasons, it motivates this study to explore factors which have influence on trainee satisfaction on WBT and compare the opinions between managers from HR department or others involved in WBT and employees who ever received WBT.

Research Purposes

According to above research motivations, this study focuses on exploring factors that affect trainee satisfaction on WBT. And, the research purposes are as following:

1. To understand that managers and employees' opinions of WBT in companies which adopt it.
2. To analyze what factors that affect trainee satisfaction on WBT are.
3. To compare differences of managers and employees' viewpoints which are related to influential factors of WBT satisfaction.
4. To offer some general suggestions for implementing WBT system.

Statements of Research Questions

In order to meet the first research purpose, two questions will be studied:

Q1.1: After implementing WBT, what are managers' opinions of that in their companies?

Q1.2: After using WBT, what are employees' opinions of that in their companies?

In order to meet the second research purpose, seven questions will be studied:

Q2.1: What are the categories of influential factors on WBT satisfaction?

Q2.2: In the category of characteristics of trainees, what factors are included?

Q2.3: In the category of instructors, what factors are included?

Q2.4: In the category of instructions, what factors are included?

Q2.5: In the category of technology, what factors are included?

Q2.6: In the category of design of system, what factors are included?

Q2.7: In the category of characteristics of online environment, what factors are included?

In order to meet the third research purpose, three questions will be studied:

Q3.1: What are factors that managers think they have influence on trainee satisfaction of WBT?

Q3.2: What are factors that employees think they have influence on trainee satisfaction of WBT?

Q3.3: What are the commons and differences of answers between Q3.1 and Q3.2?

In order to meet the fourth research purpose, two questions will be studied:

Q4.1: What are managers' suggestions to improve and increase trainee satisfaction on WBT?

Q4.2: What are employees' suggestions to improve and increase trainee satisfaction on WBT?

Definition of Terms

In order to make the topic of this research more clear, two important terms which are WBT and trainee satisfaction need to be identified. This also reveals the extent of the research topic.

WBT

WBT is one kind of training methods. But, many people mix it with e-learning. In order to clarify meanings of the two terms, this part introduces what e-learning is at first.

E-learning is the short term of electronic learning. It means that instruction delivered on a computer by CD-ROM, Internet, or intranet. The "e" of e-learning refers to the course which is digitalized so it can be stored in electronic form. And all of its contents are related to learners' objectives and use media elements to deliver programs (Clerk & Mayer, 2003).

From the literal meaning of WBT, it is obvious that this kind of training delivered via Internet. Employees don't need to install some particular software to use CD-ROM or some learning packages anymore. The corporations put contents and programs on the web sites to let them learn at any time and in any places. This kind of training is what this study focuses on. Besides, employees can link to other sites to get more information and resources. Different kinds of media such as using video,

sounds etc. can be integrated into the web. This makes the content of WBT more colorful and richer than e-learning. Although the extent is smaller than e-learning because of only using Internet, its convenience, vividness of contents, and richness of resources make it become a trend of learning and training.

Trainee satisfaction

Trainee satisfaction is included in evaluating training program. Some researchers regard learning satisfaction as trainees' reaction of feeling or perception to learning activities (Wang, 2001). This study uses this definition to make a research. In Kirkpatrick's four levels model, the first level is learner's reaction. It is also what we called trainee satisfaction. In this level of evaluation, it can help answer some questions such as "Did the training meet the expectations of trainees?", "Did trainees find the learning experience emotionally and intellectual satisfying?", "Was the style of presentation acceptable to learners?"...etc. (Horton, 2001).

Besides, understanding trainee satisfaction can help companies and designers to improving the style of the course and its presentation. And, by this way, it can help identify dissatisfied trainees and know how to improve factors which cause dissatisfaction of WBT to motivate them participating a training program. If training programs can fulfill trainee satisfaction, it will facilitate to market and promote WBT.

Delimitation and Limitation

Delimitation and limitation are described as following paragraphs.

Delimitation of this study

The scope of sampling in the first stage which is survey does not aim at any particular industry. The source is from the name list of Ministry of Economics Affairs. In the second stage of sampling which uses to engage in interview aims at companies who ever got bounty and rewards from Ministry of Economics Affairs. And there is

one HR or training manager who develops, implements, designs, or evaluates WBT and one employee who ever received WBT.

And the extent of research topic only focuses on WBT. No matter what types of programs it delivered and what system it use to deliver instruction, when a company only uses Internet or intranet to train employees, it is included in this topic. If some companies use CD-ROM or CD packages to train employees, they are excluded. Besides, factors which be used to develop a questionnaire to engage in the survey are from the section of literature review. And, important factors to be researched in the interview are from results of survey.

Limitation of this study

Although not all of companies adopting WBT as a way to train employees, the pool of population is still too wide. It's difficult to get a name list to know all the companies which implement WBT in Taiwan. Besides, Samples of each company are one manager from HR or training department which involved in WBT and one employee who ever received WBT. These samples, especially employees, perhaps are the one who have willing to fill in the questionnaire or participate in the interview. So, the representative of this one's perspective is limited. It can't be identified that if this people can provide general and objective opinions or only a small group thinking in this company.

Besides, most of sample companies which used in survey and interview have over two hundred employees. From the regulation of Small and Medium Affairs in Ministry of Economics Affairs, when employees in manufacture, construction, mining, and gravestones industry are under 200 people and in other industries are under 50 people, it can be included in small and medium enterprises. By this point, most of sample companies in this study are large enterprises. This means that the result of this research can't be used generally in all enterprises.

After engaging in the survey, the researcher also found a limitation of this study. The rate of replying questionnaires is only 30%. It is too low and which becomes the weakness of this study. The stage of survey is to find out the influential factors which are regarded have influence on trainee satisfaction on WBT by significant managers and employees. Owing to the rate of replying questionnaires is too low, the result is not strong enough. This is also the limitation of this study.