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ACCEPTANCE OF E-LEARNING

The past decade has witnessed a dramatic increase in the development of technology-based teaching and learning (Alavi & Leidner 2001: 1). Nowadays the validity of knowledge becomes outdated very fast, and organizations have to face the challenge to respond to this situation. This demands an accelerated learning process, and being aware of the latest news and business relevant information becomes more and more an absolute must, for each employee, team and organization (Oertig 2001: 1).

However, E-Learning can not improve learning and teaching processes and in this context enhance organizational performance if it isn't used. But the resistance to E-Learning technologies is still a well known phenomenon.

The logic of "If we build it, they will come", which in other words states the assumption that simply offering content online and relying on the latest technology itself will inevitably, entail active usage, stayed unconfirmed. The result of a recent study which has been carried out by ASTD and the Masie Center showed that "... just making E-Learning technology available will have no significant effect on employee development or workforce productivity" (2001:1). Now organizations have to face the challenge to get their employees to actually use and accept E-Learning systems as a part of their working environment.

The concept of acceptance is mainly used in Organization Theory, Marketing and Information Management, but at each case in different ways. Information Management is combining the Marketing and the Organization Theory perspectives, since information systems are new products as well as they necessitate organizational process changes (Simon 2001: 88). Thus concerning Information Management, acceptance is ex-

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plored within the context of how frequently information systems are actually used (Lucas 1975).

Referring to E-Learning, this means that only looking at the product or technology side is not enough. "Organizations cannot rely on the technology itself to drive interest, ..." (ASTD/Masie Center 2001: 7). As mentioned by Back et al. (2001), the change management aspect as well as the strategic orientation has to be considered to get a holistic view of E-Learning.

Within the scope of my doctoral thesis I want to deal with the different aspects of the acceptance of E-Learning, concerning its implementation within organizational environments. The aspired aim within the research project is to provide relevant information and assistance for managers, regarding the factors that affect the acceptance, the use and thus also the satisfaction of E-Learning.

The method, in order to accomplish this research project, will be the case study approach. Since the research project ought to contain a reference to practice, three to four representative organizations are to be explored.

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