Chapter XV

ERP Quality: Do Individual Users Matter?
An Australian Case

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Abstract

A dramatic increase in the number of corporate organisations using or implementing ERP systems across a range of different markets and functional units has transpired in the past decade. This saturation in the corporate world has led to the significant uptake of these types of Information Systems by universities around the world. The corporate use of Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems has been well discussed in the literature; therefore, this chapter brings a focus to the critical use of ERP systems within university environments. The need for supporting both the individual and the organization is an important aspect frequently missed by technology solutions. The definitions of ERP suggest they are far-reaching and all-encompassing, but do ERP systems meet the quality requirements of individual users?
Introduction

Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems have been defined as “on-line interactive systems that can provide a ‘total’ solution to an organisation’s information systems needs by addressing a large proportion of business functions” (Brown & Vessey, 1999). In line with this definition, this study views these complex systems as “shared information systems crossing typical organisational boundaries, having multiple users and stakeholders with different cultures and approaches to work” (Pawlowski et al., 2000). These statements suggest that ERPs are far-reaching and all-encompassing; we investigate if ERP systems meet the quality requirements of individual users.

A dramatic increase in the number of corporate organizations using or implementing ERP systems across a range of different markets and functional units has transpired in the past decade. Davenport (1998) began the discussion surrounding the significance of ERP systems adoption; Esteves and Pastor (2001) suggested the business world’s embrace of enterprise systems may in fact have been the most important development in the corporate use of information technology in the 1990s; in 2005, von Hellens et al. commented on the move into higher education.

ERP systems aim to provide a “big picture” approach to systems implementation, which can cause a myriad of difficulties for different sectors, organizational types, management styles, and most of all, individual users. The need for supporting both the individual and the organization is an important aspect frequently missed by technology solutions: ERP systems tend to address the needs of the organization at the expense of the individual (Slade & Bokma, 2001). Commonly, management focus on centralization of data and processes and reporting in the first instance with very little focus on the technology solution actively and substantially supporting the individual user in their work.

This chapter presents an analysis of the literature on ERP adoption within a university environment, focusing on quality and how it relates to individual user satisfaction. User satisfaction is crucial in this context because of the non-traditional implementation process; users may not be very involved in requirements engineering because it is abbreviated; however, because implementation entails “configuration” (i.e., invoking switches to implement the organization’s business logic) which determines what the final product will look like, this is where users involvement should be highest (but often is not).

Relating to the literature, this chapter presents a particular case of Information Systems (IS) quality through an ERP implementation within a large Australian university. The case is examined through the lens of the SOLE quality model developed by Eriksson and Törn (1991). In this case, use quality is examined...
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