Introduction

This chapter provides the rationale of the first of three tools suggested in this book to assess value and satisfaction of e-learning systems in order to provide an assessment of the effectiveness of such systems. The other two tools are presented in the following chapter. The first tool proposed by the conceptual model is the Value-Satisfaction grid which aggregates the learners’ value and satisfaction with e-learning systems in order to indicate the learners’ perceived effectiveness of e-learning systems. The Value-Satisfaction grid also helps indicate the action and improvement priorities that are needed for the characteristics and dimensions of an e-learning system under study. A proposed method of aggregation of learners’ perceived value of e-learning systems and satisfaction with e-learning systems to construct the Value-Satisfaction grid and the two tools presented in the following chapter is also presented in this chapter.

The understanding of the Value-Satisfaction grid provides the first building block toward a complete set of assessment tools of learners’ perceived
effectiveness of e-learning systems. The development of this set of tools is a significant achievement as scholars have suggested that prior research in technology mediated learning (TML) lacked the overall system approach and concentrated only on one or two dimensions at a time (Alavi & Leidner, 2001a, p. 9).

The Value-Satisfaction Grid of E-Learning Systems

Galletta and Lederer (1989) suggested practitioners are interested in tools “as a mechanism to uncover user perception of strength and weaknesses [of system characteristics]” (p. 421). Valentin (2001) suggests that marketing scholars (e.g., Andrews, 1987; Ansoff, 1965; Mintzberg, Ahlstrand, & Lampel, 1998; and Porter, 1991) propose using Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Threats (SWOT) grids framework to assess companies’ or products’ performance. Such grids provide positioning of companies or products on a 2×2 matrix to indicate success and suggest improvements, modification, fundamental changes or elimination needed to improve such a company or product in the marketplace. Following the SWOT method in the context of e-learning systems, the Value-Satisfaction grid is developed to provide actions and improvement priorities for e-learning system characteristics and dimensions.

Due to the heterogeneous nature of the e-learning system dimensions, it is appropriate to develop a grid for each of the four dimensions defined earlier as well as for the overall system. The Value-Satisfaction grid is developed to indicate the learners’ perceived e-learning system effectiveness and the improvements priorities for e-learning system characteristics and dimensions. The grid is developed for each of the four dimensions and includes the e-learning system characteristics as points in that grid. The grid developed for the overall system level includes the four e-learning system dimensions as points in that grid. This results in total of five grids, one for each dimension (noted as dimension grid) and one for the overall (noted as overall grid). Additional information about the grid development as well as the implications of e-learning system characteristics and e-learning system dimensions positioned in the grids is presented in subsequent paragraphs.

It is assumed that the learners’ satisfaction with e-learning systems measured on a specific dimension, defined as learners’ dimension perceived satisfac-
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