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The Role of E-learning in One International Project-based Organization in China

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Abstract

Globally, the fast-changing business environment requires a period for people to learn and accept new information and knowledge which comes more quickly than ever before. E-learning systems, as by-products of information technology are popular today especially in those international organizations with subsidiaries in many countries around the world.

As typical project-based organizations, some market research companies in China have also adopted e-learning systems already for some years to meet the requirements of global learning and knowledge sharing. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore the role of an e-learning system in a Chinese market research company in Shanghai.

By examining the literature on learning, e-learning and project-based organizations, the research gap of e-learning in the context of project-based organizations has been defined. Through conducting semi-structured interviews in a Chinese market research company, the results demonstrate the current role of an e-learning system as an additional learning channel for individuals. This has not, however, brought significant changes from an organizational perspective due to many factors such as limited interactions between headquarters and local offices, language and cultural barriers, lack of top management support, and issue of time constraints.

In order to encourage the use of an e-learning system, the Chinese offices need to build a supportive learning environment internally such as providing a Chinese version, establishing the communication platform, leaving some flexible time for employees to learn and also to link the learning results to individual performance. Moreover, the headquarters also needs to try to motivate the local (Chinese) employees to be more involved in the e-learning processes such as launching, maintaining and giving feedback to improve the effectiveness and also to push forward the impacts of e-learning from an individual level to team or organizational levels.

Key words: Learning, E-learning, Project-based Organizations, China
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the reader with a general picture of this study. First, the background leads the reader to understand the general situation of this research field from different perspectives and this is followed by objectives, research questions, and research limitations which provide a more detailed and clearer idea of this research topic. Finally this chapter ends with an outline of the whole thesis.

1.1 Research Background

Nowadays, globalization has become an issue of interest in the corporate context. Human capital and knowledge have become essential in driving the so-called knowledge-based economy (Sampson et al., 2002). Companies need to manage information in an efficient way due to dynamic changes that lead to a more rapid obsolescence of skills and competences (Bagnasco et al., 2003). E-learning hence becomes an increasingly popular alternative form of corporate strategy aiming to extract the competitive advantage in global competitive markets (Mcrea, Gay and Bacon, 2000; Figgis et al., 2001).

Dominated by project structures project-based organizations have already been proved to be a good response to fast-changing environments, including both technology and client aspects, complex and large tasks, risk or knowledge-intensive activities (DeFillippi and Arthur, 1998; Turner and Keegan, 1999; Lindkvist, 2004; Martinsuo et al., 2006; Hobday, 2000; Davenport, 2006; Mitsuru, 2007; Gacciatori, 2008). Project-based management brings some positive changes to organizations such as improvements in efficiency, motivation and innovation. However, it also makes organizational level learning become more difficult and may create a gap between projects and operations (Hobday, 2000; Lindkvist, 2004; Davenport, 2006; Thiry and Deguire, 2007; Ajmal and Koskinen, 2008).

China’s booming economy, averaging approximately 10% annual growth in the past thirty years, has attracted many international companies to come to this huge potential market. The market research industry, brought in by Go China by Proctor and Gamble 20 years ago, is still a young industry but one of the fastest growing ones in China.

The market research industry is characterized by knowledge-intensive projects, rapidly changing clients and markets, and service-provision. Almost all of the market research companies have to complete for a lot of projects to achieve their business goals and their employees are generally moved flexibly in and out of different teams based on the change of projects. Therefore, market research companies can be defined as one kind of project-based organization, with prominent and dominant projects and
with weak functional links.

Working in an energetic and young industry, Chinese market researchers need to learn from their counterparts in western countries so that gradually they can develop their knowledge and models which are suitable for the Chinese market. Therefore, in multinational market research companies global training has been regarded as a good and effective way for knowledge-sharing between western and eastern countries.

In recent years due to the development of IT technology and also the requirement from a fast-changing environment, e-learning has become a part of the learning or training system in some market research companies. Generally the organization’s headquarters is responsible for launching and maintaining this system and all the employees all over the world can access this system at their convenience in their own countries. Similarly, as part of a global organization market researchers working in China can get the most updated information or knowledge from this system.

However, as a latecomer in this industry, the development of e-learning systems in China is different from western countries because of the different attitudes and usage of Chinese researchers. In other words, the role of e-learning in Chinese companies may end up with different results compared with how it works in the companies in developed countries.

We have witnessed the adoption of e-learning within project-based organizations such as the concept of a blended learning approach (Eklund et al., 2003; Bennink, 2004). However, so far, not much literature discusses e-learning project-based organizations in China. Therefore, our research is trying to contribute to fill this gap, by addressing the role of e-learning within the context of project-based organizations in China. Moreover, as typical project-based organizations a multinational market research company has been chosen as our investigative target to help us explore this topic.

1.2 Research Objective and Research Questions

Based on the above reasoning, we propose the following research objectives and questions:

The primary objective of the research is to explore the role of e-learning in an international project-based organization in China.

Based on this rationale the research question is developed as:

What is the role of e-learning system in an international project-based organization in China?

In order to avoid some confusion of the meaning of role here, it is defined as the importance of e-learning systems in organizations. More specifically the following
three questions are formulated for further investigation:

1) Why does the organization adopt an e-learning system?
2) How do the users use the e-learning system within the organization?
3) What is the impact of the e-learning system to the individuals or the organization after its implementation?

1.3 Research Limitations

The concept of e-learning here only refers to learning behaviour supported by computers or the internet, launched by organizations, in the context of a business environment.

Our empirical study particularly focuses on an international market research company in Shanghai, China. Therefore, it might not be appropriate to generalize the results to other organizations in China or elsewhere. Special care should be then taken when interpreting the results to:

1) the whole market research industry, especially to small and medium-sized companies or local companies
2) all project-based organizations in China.

Furthermore, the analysis in the empirical part is totally based on qualitative data without the support of any quantitative test, because this study is aimed to explore, not identify, the role of e-learning in only one Chinese project-based organization.

1.4 Outline of Thesis

This research is divided into seven chapters and the general outline is shown below:
Diagram 1-1. Outline of Study

Chapter One: Introduction

Chapter Two: Research Methodology

Chapter Three: Empirical Results: E-learning in IPSOS

Chapter Four:
Theoretical Framework: E-learning and Project-based Organization

Chapter Five: Discussions and Analysis

Chapter Six: Conclusions and Implications

Chapter Seven: Further Study

References
CHAPTER 2
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK:
E-LEARNING AND PROJECT-BASED ORGANIZATION

This chapter focuses on the theoretical framework by examining the literature of learning, e-learning and project-based organizations. The opinions or arguments listed help readers to understand the main three rationale, which are the theoretical basis for this thesis, and also the gaps which motivated us to study this topic.

2.1 E-learning
2.1.1 Definition of E-learning
E-learning has emerged as a popular method of training for both corporations and educational institutions. There are many definitions of the term, e-learning. Even the word, e-learning itself has several synonyms which include web-based learning, online learning, technology-based learning and distributed learning, all of which mutually refer to the essence of the acquisition and use of knowledge distributed and facilitated by electronic means (Wentling et al., 2003). Morrison (2005) defines it as the continuous assimilation of knowledge and skills by adults stimulated by synchronous and asynchronous learning events, sometimes Knowledge Management outputs, which are authored, delivered, engaged with, supported, and administered using internet technologies. Bennink (2004) explains that e-learning involves the use of technology to enhance learning including digital collaborations, satellite broadcasting, CD-ROMs, videos and audios conferences, mobile technology, interactive TVs and web based technologies, while online learning is just a subset of e-learning which involves learning through the use of computer networks (Internet, Intranet and LANs). It should also be noted that particularly in an organisational context, e-learning is also referred to as e-training (apart from the above mentioned synonyms) in some literature.

2.1.2 Why adopt E-learning?
Many factors have led firms and corporations to take e-learning initiatives for training their workforces. Training is needed whenever a gap between one’s expertise and one’s work requirements is identified (Bagnasco et al., 2003). In this era, the economy is supposedly driven by human capital and knowledge as opposed to just physical capital as in the past (Sampson et al., 2002). Some authors argue that demands such as personalised training schemes suited to the individual’s needs, just-in-time training and a cost effective approach to training a globally dispersed workforce encourage the development of e-learning as an attractive alternative to traditional training (Sampson, 2001; Newton and Doonga, 2007). Urdan and Weggen (2000) strengthen the argument that businesses are transforming and since knowledge rapidly becomes obsolete, there is a strong need for a new learning platform that supports just-in-time training while being cost effective at the same time.
Furthermore, e-learning has also gained strategic importance due to the migration towards value chain integrations and extended enterprises (Mcrea, Gay and Bacon, 2000). Similarly, according to Werner (2003), a key success strategy is the need to develop an e-learning strategy that ties in with the overall business strategy. It becomes clear that e-learning could be a significant element of corporate strategy. In addition, Figgis et al. (2001) state that training and learning are more and more considered as creating competitive advantages for businesses. Cisco also claims that “the key to gaining a competitive advantage is the ability to rapidly disseminate information, education, and training”. It seems logical that in order to survive, firms and organisations need to prepare to catch up with the dynamic changes and knowledge which must be constantly updated as Bagnasco et al. (2003) say that the challenge is to manage against fast obsolescence of technical skills and to let workers acquire expertise in new topics, just in time to face changes in working practises. This coincides with our purpose of exploring the role of e-learning in organisations.

2.1.3 E-learning in different corporate settings

It is interesting to note that e-learning could be practised in virtually any organisation of any size from the big players such as AXA, Carrefour and Cisco (Jurich, 2001), to small to medium enterprises and small enterprises (Hamburg and Lindecke, 2005). However, the implementation nature of e-learning seems to be different from companies of different sizes. The most important feature of these smaller companies is that they are highly dependent on their limited workforce and thus e-learning benefits them in terms of lower delivery costs, on-site training which does not affect the level of productivity and provides flexibility of the training schedule (Hamburg and Lindecke, 2005).

However, they also stress that these small enterprises face some obstacles to implement e-learning. The first obstacle is that these enterprises presume that an e-learning platform to have higher maintenance costs. Sometimes, they face the issue of compatibility as they do currently possess the required technological infrastructure that supports the system of e-learning. Bagnasco et al. (2003) suggest that the buy-in of e-learning may be more suitable for small firms, giving examples such as the HP educational service (http://education.hp.com) so that smaller enterprises could purchase per usage of the service and do not waste time and money to develop a full platform by themselves. Kapp and Felice (2003) see partnerships as a way for smaller enterprises to acquire e-learning opportunities at a lower cost, but in order for such partnerships to be effective, third party facilitation is usually required (Sloan Consortium, 2003).

On the other hand, the more important factor seems to be that of the learning culture of each organisation that influences e-learning. Wade (2003) emphasises the importance of a learning culture in determining the success or failure of e-learning. So far, a lifelong learning culture that supports e-learning seems to be missing in most
SMEs (Hamburg and Lindecke, 2005). Therefore, it is important for firms to have a supportive learning culture and one of the ways, according to Hamburg et al. (2004), is to try to blend traditional learning methods with e-learning solutions (a blended approach).

E-learning is also practised in larger organisations. Jurich (2001) demonstrates the real use of e-learning in three big corporations which are AXA Insurance, Carrefour and Cisco. AXA started using e-learning due to the nature of its business. As a global insurance company, it has a scattered workforce in different parts of the world. Training becomes difficult and costly. Carrefour also experienced the same kind of problem and thus both benefited from cost savings as well as from faster distribution to large numbers of trainees. Based on the above theoretical framework, we aim to further investigate the role of e-learning but specifically, in the context of project-based organizations.

2.1.4 Benefits and barriers of E-learning

E-learning seems to have many advantages over the traditional training methods as seen from many literatures. According to Newton and Doonga (2007), benefits of e-learning include:
- Higher retention of content by learners
- Cost savings
- Improved mobility (anywhere, anyone and anytime)
- Able to monitor progression
- Support many training methods
- Other.

However, many organizations are still hesitant of introducing e-learning because of failures in other organisations or due to their own misunderstandings (Bennink, 2004). The element of culture is one of the important determinants of e-learning implementation. Statistics shows that French companies still prefer traditional methods of training and the allocated expenses for e-learning is only 11 percent when compared to 60 percent for US companies (Jurich, 2001). It is even more difficult since multinational companies have a global presence. Culture is different across countries which in turn affects the learning preferences of workforces (Jurich, 2001). In our research context, we would emphasize a Chinese organization which could be quite different from both the French and the American examples indicated above due to various reasons. She further analyses that not only learning preferences could be a major barrier but also the self-discipline of people is also of high importance. Usually, without control and encouragement, e-learning would not be effective. More details of e-learning assessment and evaluation are discussed later. Nonetheless, barriers to e-learning may also include factors like lack of management and stakeholder support, lack of infrastructure e.g. low bandwidth especially for those in more isolated areas, lack of computer skills, staff resistance, and copyright issues (Bennink, 2004).
Besides the above benefits and barriers of an e-learning system, Newton and Doonga (2007) also point out three other main problems as indicated below that become an issue for e-learning to be implemented in organisations:

First, the cost savings factor may be difficult to justify because many firms tend to use return on investments (ROI) to measure the cost savings benefit but in reality ROI is too complex and too difficult to calculate. Hence, it is unclear whether a firm would benefit from cost savings and even if so, the magnitude of savings is not apparent.

Second, the fact that technology is continuously improving may make it difficult, for them to be constantly investing in the new technology required for an e-learning system. Previous systems may become obsolete and incompatible to the new devices and systems which are continuously being invented and introduced into the market.

Another important factor is human resources. As technology improves, firms sometimes overlook the need to invest in its personnel to train the other employees. Firms need to constantly employ and develop the staff who are familiar with the e-learning system to deliver and administer it effectively.

2.1.5 Who uses E-learning?

Sampson et al. (2002) differentiate the users of e-learning into two groups: front-end users and back-end users. They explain that front end users include formal learners who access e-learning through formal settings such as colleges and universities, vocational learners and workers who are motivated in their career advancement and where e-learning is seen as a good option for them to access knowledge while giving high flexibility i.e. anytime, anywhere etc. Front-end users also include occasional learners who use e-learning on an ad hoc basis which may mean that they do not have clear goals and learning objectives. Last, life-long learners may also access e-learning in non-formal settings such as their own homes.

Back-end users also exist. Sampson et al. (2002) further describe back-end users of e-learning as individuals or organizations interested in publishing e-learning materials and also providing its applications and services. They generally include authors and publishers who want to publish their work through e-learning applications in order for front end users to easily acquire them, e-learning platform providers who develop and provide applications for e-learning such as assessment or support systems, and e-learning service providers who use their own or third party platforms to provide broker services.

Front-end and back-end users have different requirements for their use of e-learning (Sampson et al., 2002). Generally, front-end users need efficient and rapid access to the materials and services according to their specific needs and preferences. Back-end users need the tools that would help them to meet the front-end users’ needs and to allow them to reuse the materials in an efficient ways. Diagram 2-1 depicts Sampson’s concept of e-learning users.
2.1.6 Evaluation of E-learning effectiveness

E-learning may seem to be a better and preferred method but not all companies implementing it will succeed. Bennink (2004) claims that there is not just one right formula in developing and delivering e-learning effectively, instead, the attempt to serve the needs of both organizations and learners is the main success factor. He proposes companies to learn from others’ experiences as well as to form partnerships with those organizations which possess similar needs. Wade (2003) suggests that it might be an element of learning culture of each organization that determine the success or failure of e-learning.

Kirkpatrick (1979) attempts to develop a framework to evaluate the effectiveness of e-learning programs and he divides the assessment into four levels as follows:

- **Level I Reaction**, measure the learners’ reactions to e-learning
- **Level II Learning**, measure what learners actually learn
- **Level III Transfer**, measure the changes after learners completed the program and
- **Level IV Results**, measure business outcomes (in trying to see the impact of ways of doing things after workers are trained).

Phillips (1996) adds the fifth level to this model, ROI or Return on Investment, which measures the benefits in monetary terms of the cost of e-learning provision.

Holton (1996) also recommends other alternatives to the model by trying to
evaluate the impact of other relevant factors such as trainability, motivation, personal characteristics and attitudes.

Another important debate regarding the assessment and evaluation comes from Morrison (2005), who asks whether completion matters in e-learning. He suggests that e-learning may serve different purpose for each person. An employee who needs e-learning as a tool to search for some information for performing his tasks at work may not need to be assessed by completing the whole course. While someone else may need to complete the course in order to proceed to higher levels. As a result, some companies may use course completion as a factor to evaluate skills and competences of their employees. However, it seems that users at workplaces may not care much about these assessments because they use the system to aid with their daily work performances. They are interested in the system if it relates to their own work (Bagnasaco et al., 2003).

In reality, some companies have their own ways of evaluating an e-learning program. Some even try to make links between training programs and business results, for instance, Unilever tries to measure the success in terms of sales (Strother, 2002). In the case of Cisco, the trainee evaluation is done in order to gauge the effectiveness of the program and also uses it to guide the modification of the program and to cater for the specific needs of the learners or trainees (Jurich, 2001).

2.2 Project-Based Organizations (PBOs)

2.2.1 Definitions of a Project

The history of ‘a Project’ as an academic term is not that long but when we look back to the beginning of civilization, some of the actual behaviors or achievements such as the Great Wall of China or the Pyramids in Egypt, which would be called ‘projects’ today (Shenhar and Dvir, 2007, 93). All of these great works which were completed in ancient times involved some elements such as team work, leadership and coordination etc, which have been defined as important factors influencing the success of modern projects.

In recent years the definition of ‘project’ has been developed by many researchers from various perspectives. PMI (2000, 6) defines a project as a temporary endeavor and MacLachlan (1996, 2) argues that project is a task. While according to Gardiner (2005, 1) a project is the activities needed to be done by individuals or teams within a limited time to achieve specific objectives. Turner and Muller (2003, 3) develop the concept from an organizational theory perspective: that a project is a temporary organization, which covers all elements such as roles, functions and limits.

2.2.2 Development of Project Management

Exploring the definitions of project management, it is found that project management has been defined as a discipline, technique collection, management form or process by various researchers. Reiss (1995, 14) argues that project management is
a collection of loosely connected techniques, some of which are useful in bringing projects to a successful conclusion. Gardiner (2005, 5-7) regards project management as an integrated discipline of managing projects successfully and usually it concerns the activities of planning, organizing, controlling leading and motivating while Shenhar and Dvir (2007, 96) think that project management is a problem-driven discipline. Srivannaboon and Milosevic (2006, 494) view project management as a specialized form of management which can be used to “accomplish a series of business goals, strategies, and work tasks within a well-defined schedule and budget”.

The common purpose of project management is to help complete the project successfully. Furthermore, based on the definition of “project as a temporary organization”, Turner and Muller (2003, 1) illustrate three new pressures on project management: uncertainty, integration and urgency, which are different from the traditional ones: time, cost and quality. Lundin and Söderholm (1995) develop “a theory of temporary organization” to emphasis the leading role of action in temporary organizations and they also propose four concepts to define temporary organizations and its environment: time, task, term and transition. By examining the published English research from 1960 to 1999, Kloppcnborgand and Opfei (2002, 12) have shown the change of project management research in the past 40 years: from mainly focused on cost and schedule control to the human resources aspects. Later, Shenhar and Dvir (2007, 95) point out that in the 2000s project management research mainly focuses on project typologies and contingencies, strategic project management, and the globalization of projects. This trend on the focus of project management shows the success of any single project cannot be taken as the success of project management anymore. Project management already is combined into the whole organizational context and becomes part of organization management. Project management has to be consistent with corporate strategy and also has a big influence on the future of many organizations. Accordingly, finishing the project under time, cost and other requirements is not enough for project managers and they need to think of project management in a much broader aspect, from the micro to the macro level.

2.2.3 Understanding Project-based Organizations (PBOs)

To explore project-based organization further it is necessary to understand how the organization structure changes because of the influence from project management theory. Many of the researchers agree that functional hierarchy and project hierarchy are located at the two opposite sides of organizational structure and many organizations have moved or are moving their position of a functionally-based structure to a project-based structure in recent years (Diagram 2-2) (Turner and Keegan, 1999; Martinsuo et al., 2006; Hobday, 2000).
This move often requires considerable organizational change. A Project-based organization can be considered as an organizational innovation, which will generate influence on the technical and social system within the organization (Martinsuo et al., 2006, 87).

So what is the real meaning of project-based organizations? Many definitions of this term by various authors are shown here. Lindkvist (2004, 5) thinks project-based organizations “give privilege to the project dimension and carry out most of their activities in projects”. Huemann et al. (2007, 316) look at it from the perspective of structure and culture as they describe a project-based organization as “a flat organization with a strong project management culture”. Mitsuru (2007, 3) says the role of a resource: project-based organization should possess all resources, including internal and external ones, and individual functions. DeFillippi and Arthur (1998, 125) explain project-based organizations from the view of its purpose: those project-based organizations form because of a specific project outcome. Based on their various emphases it is still not difficult to ascertain that the most important characteristic of project-based organization: the project structure dominates or plays an important role in the organization and the functional link is almost non-existent or very weak as shown in Diagram 2-3 (Bredinm, 2006; Hobday, 2000).

This diagram shows one of the typical project-based origins: a strong project dominates with a weak functional link.
Furthermore, this kind of structure also raises a new challenge for learning in those organizations. There is either no link or only very weak functional connections among different projects. So how to move knowledge or experience from one project to another become necessary but difficult in this company at both organizational and individual aspects. Obviously the organization needs to find more effective ways to handle this.

According to Thiry (2008, 1), project-based organizations, to some extent, have become a trend in different industries and, it seems that the shift to project-based organizations is getting more popular due to the increasing uncertainty of the environment, rapid change of technology, complexity of projects, non-routine tasks, risk-intensive activities and knowledge-intensive services (Turner and Keegan, 1999; Mitsuru, 2007; Martinsuo et al., 2006; Gaccatori, 2008; DeFillippi and Arthur, 1998; Hobday, 2000; Davenport, 2006; Lindkvist, 2004). Additionally, based on their own empirical study, Martinsuo et al. (2006, 93) argue that increased degrees of internal complexity, which originally motivate those early adopters to fix the problem of efficiency and effectiveness by using project-based management, is the dominant reason to drive the move towards project-based organizations. Moreover, external pressures also help to push the adoption of project-based management forward (Martinsuo et al., 2006, 93-94).
2.2.4 Advantages and Drawbacks of Project-based Organizations (PBOs)

Many literature give positive evaluations on the adoption of project-based organizations, in which the project is the most basic unit to undertake production, innovation, and competition (Hobday, 2000, 874). It is agreed that adopting project-based organizations generate positive impact on the following aspects: dealing with changes, integrating diverse knowledge, motivating innovation, responding to uncertainty, improving of efficiency and project culture, learning in time, as well as meeting the clients’ needs (Hobday, 2000; Davenport, 2006; Turner and Keeage, 1999; Martinsuo et al., 2006). As discussed earlier project is a temporary organization (Turner and Muller, 2003, 3) so a project–based organization is particularly suitable for those industries or organizations with numerous large flexible tasks facing a fast changing environment such as high-technology firms, service providing industry and knowledge-intensive projects. Only in this kind of environment can the nature of “temporary organizations” be developed until they are being used optimally.

However, some literature indicate the weaknesses in the adoption of the project-based organizations. First, it is difficult to be accepted by or in a functional environment especially if the functional area is strong (Hobday, 2000; Thiry and Deguire, 2007). Second it is more difficult to coordinate organizational learning or knowledge transfer (Hobday, 2000; Lindkvist, 2004; Davenport, 2006; Thiry and Deguire, 2007; Ajmal, and Koskinen, 2008). Third, it is difficult to link projects to organizational level business due to too much reliance on projects (Gann and Salter, 2000; Lindvist, 2004; Thiry and Deguire, 2007). Obviously, the main focus on projects in project-based organizations leads to the gap between the projects and the operations level, which cannot be ignored in case of negative consequences.

The analysis of advantages and drawbacks of the project-based organizations is important for the further study of the role of e-learning in project-based organizations because the adoption of e-learning, to some extent, will be greatly influenced by this structure. Also, when it comes to the implementation and evaluation stage for e-learning, a deep understanding of the pros and cons of this structure will be very helpful.

2.3 E-learning and Project-based Organizations (PBOs)

2.3.1 Learning in Organizations (A Blended Approach)

In many organisations, it may be more appropriate to use e-learning as a part of the overall training program. One of the well-known approaches is called the blended learning approach. It is the concept of using e-learning to complement formal, traditional face-to-face learning, which may include techniques like web-based instructions, teleconference, and/or videoconferencing (Eklund et al., 2003). Sometimes, e-learning is just used as preparation for upcoming face-to-face training (Bennink, 2004).
There are a number of advantages of the blended approach. First, it helps reduce cost of training without reducing the content (Hall, 2003). It also gives flexibility as styles of training are varied and individuals could choose what they need (Eklund et al., 2003). Moreover, the approach allows learners to know each other which might aid the communication in the actual interactive sessions between them (Kimble et al., 2000). It allows a combination of positive elements from both e-learning and traditional models (Hall, 2003). The blended approach is also claimed by Barbian (2002) to be more successful than either e-learning or traditional methods of training conducted alone. However, Sloman (2002) argues that the method of delivery should be dependent on the topic to be taught. He gives an example of a customer service topic that is better taught by role plays face-to-face methods rather than using e-learning system and the latter approach might be more suitable to rich information topics.

2.3.2 Learning approach in Project-based Organizations

Many project-based organizations have adopted the concept of so-called project-based learning (PBL), which is specifically developed for their organizational structure. Bagnasco et al. (2003) explain the concept of project based learning that, it is an approach that involves learners in problem solving tasks based on the assumption that learning occurs during unstructured and complex activities. Learning is integrated to real normal workflows so the learning contents come from real situations which become the main source of knowledge. Finally, after the project completion, documentations could be prepared and kept as lessons learned in the form of a Knowledge Management System (KMS) of that company. This idea of PBL supports the thinking of Bagnasco et al. (2003) that learners would not pay much attention to what is taught unless it is related to their own work, and that only some part of the contents will be retained once the course is finished. It seems beneficial that learners could use e-learning to assist with their work while also gaining knowledge at the same time. If this is the case, e-learning would not reduce their working time because contents are relevant to real work, but rather, as a way to utilise time at work to achieve more for themselves and their organisations. They also said that people need information to solve problems, to carry out their work and they also need ease of accessing information. Effective cooperation and communication is thus necessary to improve information sharing and hence PBL processes.

2.3.3 E-learning in Project-based Organizations

As implied from our literature review, e-learning is widely used in organizations including project-based organizations. Project-based organizations view e-learning as an attractive method of training in a current knowledge-based economy. In particular, the flexibility and features of e-learning suit the nature of these organizations very well.

The benefits from the adoption of e-learning has been discussed by some authors who have indicated benefits such as cost saving and knowledge transfer, which is
important in project-based organizations because the project dimension structure increases the difficulties of knowledge moving between organizational level (Newton and Doonga, 2007; Ozdemir, 2008). However, negative impacts have also been mentioned such as e-learning cannot deal with implicit knowledge (Ozdemir, 2008). E-learning helps a lot on the transfer or sharing of explicit knowledge, which can be recorded as text files, audio or video files, however there is some knowledge that is difficult to write and is more easily transferred face-to-face. Therefore, most companies take e-learning as one of the learning approaches internally or externally and so far it appears that no company can totally replace the traditional learning approaches with e-learning.

2.4 Summary of Literature Review

Having reviewed the literature regarding learning, e-learning and project-based organizations, some connections among these three theoretical frameworks are found (see Diagram 4-4):

1) Learning is a crucial element in organizations, especially in project-based organizations due to its dominant project structure and fast-changing environment. Different learning approaches have been strategically developed by organizations in order to try to retain their competitive advantages.

2) As part of the learning system, e-learning has become more popular in organizations due to its many benefits such as cost savings, flexibility and being an efficient way of learning.

Diagram 2-4.  Research purpose and the three dimensions of the study

Therefore, these rationales are the basis for further study in the topic of e-learning in project-based organizations, which is our research framework but has not been fully discussed in previous academic contexts.
CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter deals with the research methodology of this paper. It commences with research preconceptions, research philosophy and approach, research strategy and data collection methods. Then company is introduced, sampling and guidelines for interviews and data analysis method are covered. Finally, the validity and reliability of the study are discussed after methodology.

3.1 Research Preconceptions
As Fisher et al. (2007) discussed, explorers will have preconceptions or conceptual frameworks but these preconceptions are only useful to help them explore one place rather than another. Bryman and Bell (2007) also warn any researchers to be careful about preconceptions, which is a form of values that may result in biases in the research. Even though authors need to be careful about biases caused by preconceptions it is still a good way to let readers obtain more information about the degree of influence that preconceptions could generate. Both of the authors of this thesis are studying in a Master’s degree program on strategic project management. One of the authors had worked in several international market research companies in China after completing a Bachelor’s degree. Therefore, she may already have some impressions about this research since all the interviews are conducted in one of her ex-companies. Even the educational background and working experience enables them to choose the current topic to develop their theoretical framework but the conclusions are developed based only on the responses from the respondents.

3.2 Research Philosophy and Approach
It is necessary to understand research philosophy in order to ascertain the appropriate research direction and choose a suitable research approach. According to Bryman and Bell (2007) epistemology and ontology are two considerations of an underlying philosophy: epistemology is the study of knowledge and ontology is the study of being.

Objectivism and constructionism are two positions of ontology consideration. Since objectivism asserts that the existence of social phenomena is “independent from actors” while constructionism believes that social phenomena are “continually being accomplished by actors” (Bryman and Bell, 2007, 22-23). Considering our research objective is to explore the role of e-learning in a project-based organization and the respondents will answer our questions based on their personal experience on using or not using this system so we believe that this study has adopted the stance of constructionism.
There are two kinds of positions under epistemology considerations: positivism and interpretivism (Bryman and Bell, 2007). The differences are that positivists addresses “an inductive or hypothetico-deductive procedure to establish and explain patterns of behavior” while interpretivists “seek to establish the motivations and actions that lead to these patterns of behavior” (Baker, 2001, 374). Similarly as Blaikie (2000, 115) described, positivists are concerned with the statistical patterns or correlations while interpretivists emphasize the importance of finding the reasons behind the patterns. Interpretivism is the position of this research based on the research objective and questions.

Generally there are two research approaches: the deductive approach and the inductive approach. Deductive research is generally used to test hypotheses and inductive research starts with specific things and ends with general conclusions. From different perspective, in the business research field, Fisher et al. (2007, 153) gives two new terms: explorers and surveyors to help explain two broad approaches. Explorers find out unknown territory, which matches with the inductive approach and surveyors measure things, which is the deductive approach.

In this study inductive approach is adopted because
1) Before we get the empirical data we don’t have hypothesis to this topic and theory will be developed from the data.
2) The objective is to explore but not to test the role of e-learning in project-based organizations.
3) Considering the time constraints and also limited access to the target company we believe inductive research is more realistic to help us achieve our research objective.

As mentioned before, many literatures have already been concerned with learning, e-learning or project-based organizations but not many were found which analyzed e-learning in project-based organizations. Therefore, this gap allows us to continue to study this less studied aspect. Fisher et al. (2007, 153) argues that explorers usually travel into the unknown in order to make it known. An inductive research approach finally leads the study to answer the research questions of why, how and what and finally gives some general ideas and conclusions.

3.3 Research Strategy
The case study is one of the most widely used research strategies in order to “provide description, test theory or generate theory” (Eisenhardt, 1989, 535). A case study “focuses on understanding the dynamics present within single settings” (Eisenhardt, 1989, 534). Remenyi et al. (2002, 3) points out two circumstances where a case study can be used in the research area: “framework to collect and document evidence about a phenomenon and a research objective in its own right” and in the latter situation, the author could focus on a single case or multi-cases to compare to each other (Remenyi et al., 2002; Darke et al., 1998). In terms of the research objective in our study we focus on a single organization as our target, which is thus
classified as a single case study. A single case gives us the opportunity to explore the phenomenon more deeply and provide comprehensive understanding and opinions within the specific context (Darke et al., 1998). Multiple-case studies on the other hand, tend to be more comparative in nature resulting in the identifying unique and common features of different settings (Bryman and Bell, 2007, 64).

Remenyi et al. (2002, 5) emphasize that a case study should allow a more meaningful exploration of the phenomenon in its context, which is exactly the same as the purpose of our research. We explore the e-learning phenomenon at a particular project-based organization in China in this context.

3.4 Data Collection Methods

Generally, a case study can use qualitative methods or quantitative methods or both (Eisenhardt, 1989; Darke et al., 1998; Remenyi et al., 2002; Bryman and Bell, 2007). Qualitative and quantitative researches have been discussed by many researchers and their distinctions are indicated below (Table 3-1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualitative Research</th>
<th>Quantitative Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Generate theory</td>
<td>Test theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inductive logic</td>
<td>Deductive logic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses words/pictures</td>
<td>Uses numbers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focuses on meaning</td>
<td>Focuses on behaviors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data collected in ways involving the researcher and participants</td>
<td>Data collected in a ways that can be generalized to a wider population</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Brannen, 2005, 175; Hayhow and Stewart, 2006; Bryman and Bell, 2007.

Furthermore, some characteristics of qualitative research have been argued by some authors, which also can be used to distinguish from quantitative research (Kanis, 2004; Hayhow and Stewart, 2006):
- Naturalistic enquiry
- Few cases with many variables
- Interactive analysis
- Sampling developed during study
- Reflexivity as to the role of researcher

Apparently, the characteristics of qualitative research in a sense help researchers to better achieve their objectives such as the involvement of researchers in interviews definitely helps to get more underlying or additional information since the researcher can add additional questions immediately as a follow-up to respondents’ answers. But at the same time qualitative research result generalization should be interpreted very carefully. The results can only be generalized in a specific sense such as in a
theoretical aspect not as a statistical inference (Brannen, 2005, 175).

Based on the above analysis and also the research objective of this research qualitative method is used in this study. As Baker (2001) summarized “exploring complex behavior” is one of the specific situations in which qualitative research is particularly useful (Baker, 2001, 391).

Qualitative research can be achieved through many data collection methods such as observation, interviews, focus groups and documents and others (Fisher et al., 2007). According to Bryman and Bell (2007), a semi-structured interview is a context where an interviewer has a series of questions that are in a general form of the interview schedule but where the sequence of questions may vary. The interviewer also possesses the latitude to ask further questions when the replies appear to be significant. In a semi-structured interview the questions are developed in a way which includes both open-question and pre-coded question, which ensure that respondents cover all the issues and topics we want to investigate and also give enough space for respondents to answer the questions in the ways they prefer (Fisher et al., 2007, 159). Furthermore, some of semi-structured interviews in this study are conducted by telephone while others are conducted by email. The reasons of combining both ways to conduct interviews are:

1) to try to decrease the bias caused by the method of interviewing. Usually the results of a telephone interview and an email interview will be slightly different because respondents have more concerns when talking to researchers. But the main advantage of a telephone interview is to help the researcher obtain deeper information or some unexpected information due to interactive conversations.

2) consideration of the time limits. An e-mail interview is obviously more flexible for respondents because they can finish it at their own conveniences and also for researchers, telephone interviews take longer time as they have to talk to each respondent individually.

Another important consideration for an interviewer is that the way of asking questions needs to be the same for all interviews conducted, as the variations in the ways a question is asked could be likely be a potential error in research (Bryman and Bell, 2007, 219). Therefore, we have created a formal set of questions (see appendix) which are used by the interviewer in a way that is as consistent as possible.

3.5 Company Introduction

Established in Paris, France, IPSOS has become one of the leading Market Research Company in the world and now IPSOS has expanded in more than 50 countries with 8000 full-time employees to provide professional service for their clients (IPSOS website).

As a latecomer in China, IPSOS entered this huge and dynamic market in 2000. However after several years’ fast growth, IPSOS has become the largest survey-based
market research company in China. IPSOS in China now has over 840 full-time professionals in their offices in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Chengdu. A strong and stable local team and global offers five major specializations including marketing, advertising, loyalty and public affairs which are the main growth-driven factors (IPSOS website).

The Shanghai office has more than 200 employees at present and contributes more than one third of the total revenue of IPSOS China. The organizational structure of IPSOS Shanghai is shown below (Diagram 3-1).

Diagram 3-1. Organizational Structure (Functional Perspective)

In IPSOS, every project involves professionals from the research department, the field work department, the quality control department and the data processing department. In each project team, a researcher is the project manager in charge of the whole team and who manages the total project because the research department is the main business unit interacting with clients directly. Therefore, to some extent the resources of the company lean to the research department, for example e-learning is one kind of knowledge-sharing system mainly for the researchers.

3.6 Sampling

Qualitative sampling does not have the strict requirements from statistical errors and usually researchers consider much more on the qualifications and the representativeness of respondents. In order to answer the research questions, and according to the structure of IPSOS Shanghai, seven respondents from different teams and positions have been chosen as our respondents below (Table 3-2).
Table 3-2. Structure of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Way of interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supporting Departments.</td>
<td>Human Resources Dept</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Data processing Dept</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Target Users</td>
<td>Research Dept</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research Dept</td>
<td>Senior Manager</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research Dept</td>
<td>Senior Researcher</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research Dept</td>
<td>Senior Researcher</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research Dept</td>
<td>Senior Researcher</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The reasons to select the above mix of respondents are:

1) The HR manager is always a key person in the organization to push for the adoption of e-learning since e-learning could change the manner of training arrangements and other aspects.

2) Professionals from the research department are the main target users of this e-learning system so their opinions have great influences on the adoption or improvement of any new system. Moreover in order to get more comprehensive opinions from people in different positions we chose a research manager and researchers, who have been employed by IPSOS Shanghai for at least one year, as our respondents.

3) The Data processing department is one of the key supporting departments, which is involved in every single project in a market research company, so the feedback from the DP manager represents an opinion from a key supporting department.

4) No respondents are chosen from field work and quality control department because they are not the main target users of this e-learning system due to various reasons.

3.7 Data Analysis Methods

Finding an analytical path through qualitative data is not easy and there are no fixed rules widely accepted by researchers. Bryman and Bell (2007) have mentioned that a framework is desirable as a guide to undertaking qualitative analysis. As a widely used framework grounded theory, which is derived from data and analyzed through the research process, is used as the main method for our data analysis.

One of the key tools of grounded theory is coding, which is handled carefully as it is important for us to understand correctly the meanings of our respondents. Coding helps us to summarize all of the answers from our respondents and to give a standard description for these answers with similar meanings but different forms of expression.
3.8 Validity and Reliability

Validity of the results is an important issue, which cannot be ignored. According to Fisher et al. (2007, 294), validity means truth. There are some different kinds of validity that need to be considered in a research construct or measurement of validity, internal validity, external or population validity (transferability) and ecological validity. As a qualitative research we mainly focus on the first three validities. Construct validity sees if the constructs actually measures the right things. Internal validity discusses the believability of the interpretations and external validity concerns the generalization issues (Fisher et al., 2007, 295-298). Therefore, preparing to get more information about the constructs may not be what we claim to do. Doing more tests and also providing enough material and information to readers to let them judge the generalization issues are the way to help increase the validity of the findings. In fact, researchers normally do not think of a case study as a sample representing a certain class of objects and, in theory, case study findings should not be generally applied to other cases (Bryman and Bell, 2007, 63).

According to Bryman and Bell (2007) reliability is main consideration of quantitative study so here we will not further analyze reliability on our qualitative data.

3.9 Research Ethics

Research ethics is an unavoidable discussion in any research and researchers should pay attention to handle this in their study. Bryman and Bell (2007, 132) have explained the principles: harm to participants, lack of informed consent, invasion of privacy and deception. In our research we also consider this ethical issue and try not to make any part of the research process develop into an ethical dilemma. Before starting the interviews we tell all respondents the purpose of the interviews and also let them know the final uses or purposes of the data. None of the questions are related to any private information or create invasion of privacy. In the final analysis no respondent’s name is indicated and all conclusions are drawn based on their views and opinions.
CHAPTER 4

EMPIRICAL RESULTS: E-LEARNING IN IPSOS

This chapter presents the results obtained directly from empirical study. Based on the different answers from different respondents the role of the e-learning system in IPSOS Shanghai has been clearly described in this chapter. Finally, the chapter ends with the results of the expectations or improvements of the e-learning system indicated by the respondents.

4.1 Why adopt an E-learning System in IPSOS (China)?

The e-learning system in IPSOS was launched by the French Headquarters in 2003 in order to meet the demands of global resources-sharing driven by fast expansion and change. In the beginning, the Chinese offices had to pay to buy this system if they wanted to use it and later the system became free-of-charge for all employees in IPSOS Global, including all the offices in China. However, since it is a decision from headquarter, the Chinese office has to follow this strategy and cannot refuse it or change it. Actually this structure has caused some problems in its popularity and use, which are analyzed later.

4.2 What is the E-learning System in IPSOS?

The e-learning system is a web-based learning system in IPSOS global and it provides professional information and knowledge related to market research projects and other information such as statistics, management and finance (the HR manager’s perspective). However, all the respondents from research department generally do not mention the content that is not specifically related to research. Generally they think the content only focuses on the research theory aspects such as introduction to the company, position, product line and some research principles, models, statistical methods and various techniques used in different types of research.

Based on all the respondents’ descriptions, a clear picture of the e-learning system is drawn below (Diagram 4-1).
4.3 The current situation of the E-learning System

4.3.1 How employees know this System?

The HR manager said that in the last two or three years the introduction of the system has become part of the training in the orientation of new employees. This result is indicated again by some new employees’ answers which said that they received the information at the orientation program while the other three respondents (who joined before this time) have had different channels to learn about this system such as it being recommended by a line manager, got from other colleagues, mentioned in a training program or from some emails from the network administrator.

4.3.2 Who are main users of this System?

The HR manager said the main target of this system are researchers especially those new employed researchers. Moreover, some courses or information for the staff from supporting department are also available but unfortunately they do not this it. The reasons caused this unbalanced situation are:

It is quite clear that all the updating and maintaining duties are the main responsibilities of the network administrator in France, and so far in China nobody or department has been involved in this process. According to the HR manager what the Chinese branch needs to do is to introduce this system to their staff and encourage them to access this system to conduct self-learning even if this is not compulsory. The HR manager tries to get some feedback from users but no formal channel is available to pass this information to France. The end users do not have a formal channel to express their opinions or expectations of this system.
1) The knowledge in the research field is similar all over the world so it is easy to share while for the other departments such as finance or fieldwork the methods are quite different in region so it is not that helpful to learn from this website.

2) The language is a big barrier for people from other departments to use because usually English is the requirement for researchers but not for employees in supporting departments. One of our respondents, the DP manager of the company, also gives a similar opinion that she has not tried this system because of the language problem since she joined this company many years ago.

Generally, the five respondents working in the research department ever used or still use this system but two respondents from supporting departments have never used it but do not refuse to try it in future. Among those researchers we find that for newly joined researchers especially those entry level researchers are more motivated to learn information from the website.

Hence the following diagram summaries the users’ profiles (Diagram 4-2). There are more users in research department than in supporting department and among those users, most of them are entry or junior level researchers or newly joined researchers.

### Diagram 4-2. The Main Users’ Structure

**Research department > other supporting departments**

- **Entry level researchers**
  - > Mid or senior level researchers
- **Newly Joined researchers**
  - > Old researchers

Although the general situation of users can be summarized, the HR manager mentioned we cannot ignore that individual learning interests are different, which also causes an employee to decide if they want to access the e-learning system and their frequency to access.

#### 4.3.3 How do employees use this System?

As indicated, there could be many situations which make researchers access the e-learning system:
“If I need to learn some theoretical knowledge I will access it.”
Senior Researcher

“When I am free I will login in to learn some new research methods or products which are not often used in my projects.”
Research Manager

“When I just joined this team and knew nothing about ASI I went there to learn something.”
Senior Researcher

From their answers we find out that most of them access the e-learning system when they need theoretical information while for practical aspects they usually get these through on-the-job learning or face-to-face training. The main reason leading to this situation is the limitation of the content online as all of the respondents described the content as being too theoretical but not practical, which cannot directly help them to handle their projects in real situations.

When indicating if the company has some training to inform them on how to use this system all of the users give the same answer that they were not assisted in how to use the system, but they also emphasized that it is not necessary to introduce how to use the system because the instruction online is quite good and easy to understand and follow. The HR manager also said they did not have specific training on the usage of the system and also so far he has not heard any requests for it.

When discussing the frequency of use of the e-learning system most of them can not provide a clear answer. All of researchers have the similar responses: when they have time they will access it everyday but most of them stop once new projects come in. Therefore, some of them have not accessed this system for a long time because of the time issue. As indicated, before newcomers to this company seem to use it more often than their colleagues because they need to become familiar with the products and processes of the company as quickly as possible.

In terms of the problems occurring after they use this system, most of them said there were no problems and only three of them mentioned some technical problems such as forgetting a password, cannot login, etc. All of these problems were finally resolved by writing an email to the network administrator.

4.3.4 What is employees’ evaluation to this System?

When we asked them to evaluate this e-learning system generally three of the users are satisfied while the other two users indicated negative opinions and one said that generally the system is useless for her.

Considering the advantages and drawbacks of this e-learning system all of the respondents provided their experiences and thoughts. The following results are shown from three different perspectives: 1) comparisons with traditional training methods
especially face-to-face training, 2) considering it is launched by headquarters not by the Chinese offices, and 3) only look at the online system itself.

Compared with traditional training methods e-learning is more convenient and flexible for individuals. And this system provides more comprehensive information but is not specific enough (Table 4-1).

Table 4-1. Advantages and Drawbacks of the E-learning System (Compared with traditional methods)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>☺ Advantages</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More Convenient</td>
<td>Can access anytime, anywhere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More Flexible</td>
<td>Can stop and continue as required</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| More Comprehensive           | • Website covers much more professional information than a single training program  
|                              | • Trainers do not have any geographical limitations                        |
| Faster                       | Can update the knowledge at the same pace as global HQ                     |
| More Effective               | Quality will not change as a result of having different trainers           |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>☹ Drawbacks</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less Practical</td>
<td>Too many theories and hard to take effect in practical projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less Interactive</td>
<td>Cannot get immediate answers if there are some questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too General</td>
<td>All are general knowledge and lack some solutions for specific projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less vivid</td>
<td>A little bit boring even with pictures and sound effects</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As mentioned before the fact that this system is built and updated by headquarters also generates some advantages and drawbacks are described below (Table 4-2).

Table 4-2. Advantages and Drawbacks of the E-learning System (Considering the system itself)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>☺ Advantages</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More Global</td>
<td>Sharing the information globally</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>☹ Drawbacks</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Chinese Version</td>
<td>Only English version available and it decreases their interest to use this system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Involvement</td>
<td>There is almost no channel provided to let users indicate what they need or expect from this system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Case Sharing</td>
<td>No actual projects are available there to share information</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Even compared with face-to-face training some users think e-learning is boring and hard to concentrate on, but if only focusing on the system itself, the design and interface gains high satisfaction because it provides information using as variety of
media such as texts, photographs, animation and sounds. Also the webpage of the instruction is easy to follow and understand.

According to the drawbacks of the e-learning system respondents also give some opinions on how to improve this system:

First, launching a Chinese version for the branch is mentioned by most respondents in the research department as well as by supporting departments in order to motivate more colleagues to make use of this learning channel;

Second, having more practical information such as actual projects, which can guide or assist with their daily work so they will have more interest in it and one of the respondent even considers it necessary to combine a national database to this e-learning system;

Third, it considered that it would be a good idea to have a staff member in China to be responsible for this system and also to answer some questions regarding e-learning.

The HR manager lists several new ways he considers desirable to enhance the motivation and impact of this system. He suggests that e-learning results could be one of the criteria to assess employees’ annual performance levels. This change would cause more colleagues to use the system and reduce the waste of resources. Furthermore, he also suggests providing a platform in this system for all users to discuss and communicate once they have questions on their learning.

4.4 What is the impact of the E-learning System to IPSOS?

The e-learning system was launched approximately five years ago, however, when we asked about the impact that the system brings to them at an individual level, team level or organizational level, the feedback is not very positive. All of the users think that there is no change in their ways of learning and working because e-learning is just an additional channel for learning and so far it is not that important for their daily work. They use it but they do not depend on it. As for the change at the team or organizational levels, they do not consider that the system has had an impact. Only the research manager think that she can get more inter-team information from this system, which is better for inter-team communication. The HR manager also agrees that e-learning currently just provides one more channel for individuals to learn something based on their own preferences or interests and little more than this.

Before IPSOS adopted the e-learning system their traditional ways of training generally were face-to-face training, which is usually conducted as a class: a trainer together with some trainees, net meeting training or telephone training. The HR manager also mentioned that since IPSOS is a project-based organization so projects or team-based training plays an important role in all training and this kind of organizational training cannot be replaced by the e-learning program. The results show that the e-learning program has not generated any real changes in training methods or training arrangements. The HR manager, who is responsible for training,
said that training is basically the same as before the introduction of the e-learning system. Because this system is designed for the global organization and not specifically for China so it cannot substitute any of the other types of training. Users also claim that they still need face-to-face training, since they can discuss matters with trainers or among themselves and also usually face-to-face training is more useful for specific projects and e-learning is used as a complement to other training methods for staff to learn something besides project learning.

However, the e-learning system does have some other influences on IPSOS:

1 ) Enhancing the image of an international company. Both the HR manager and the researchers mentioned about this in the discussion.

2 ) Providing some benefits for their key clients. Three out of the five researchers have confirmed positive feedback from their clients since they provide the passwords to clients to share information with them. Thus, to some extent this helps them to develop and maintain the relationships with their clients.

4.5 What is the future of the E-learning in IPSOS?

We received consistent answers from most of our respondents that they think the e-learning system will become more and more useful in their future work but the company needs to put more efforts into improving it and trying to encourage its use, so it would become a more popular alternative to normal training. Only one respondent thinks that it may be replaced by some new learning alternative. The HR manager also believes that in the future more and more efforts will be made related to the improvement of the e-learning system.

4.6 Other Results shared by Respondents

During the interviews some other information not directly related to this e-learning system was also received but also helps us to understand the situation of e-learning in IPSOS. Some teams have their own ways of sharing information or knowledge which actually, to some extent, replaces this e-learning system. For example, the ASI team (a team within the research department) has their own intranet system to share knowledge, cases and information related to ASI projects and it is much more practical and specific than this organizational-wide e-learning system. Therefore how to balance or select different ways of team learning with the organizational level is quite a challenging task for the e-learning system providers. Otherwise, the e-learning system could become a learning channel with high awareness but few users. Also having too many learning channels with somewhat similar purposes is a waste of resources.

4.7 Summary of Empirical Results
Based on the analysis of results, the role of the e-learning system in IPSOS indicates as follows:

1) The E-learning system in China is adopted because of its launch by the French headquarters so Chinese offices were not involved in developing, establishing or improving this website.

2) The E-Learning system in IPSOS has high awareness, almost everyone recognize its existence, but the adoption rate is still low. In supporting departments, almost nobody uses it and even in the research department (which is the main target user of this system) some of researchers do not use it often.

3) The E-learning system has its advantages such as its convenience, comprehension and flexibility and drawbacks such as not being practical, not interactive and having language barriers.

4) The E-learning system has been accepted by the research department staff because it provides one more channel for them to update their knowledge but it has not become an important part of their work. Thus it has not brought any significant changes at the team or organizational levels.

5) The E-learning system is expected to be improved in future and also more work need to be done in order to introduce and promote this system internally and also externally.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSIONS AND ANALYSIS

This chapter combines the theoretical and empirical parts of our study to analyze the e-learning system in project-based organizations. This chapter starts with the general description of the role of e-learning in organizations and ends with the effectiveness of an e-learning system and the detailed description about e-learning and other organizational components have been discussed such as e-learning and organizations (from two perspectives), e-learning and users, e-learning and cultural barriers, e-learning and technical support, e-learning and information (knowledge) movement.

5.1 The Role of E-learning

Generally, the role of e-learning still stays at the individual level (Diagram 5-1) and it tends to be a good learning channel for those individuals that would like to spend some time on it for self-improvement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Answers</th>
<th>Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adopted E-learning system?</td>
<td>Yes, Five years ago</td>
<td>Well recognized but not used widely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees are aware of it?</td>
<td>Yes, All the respondents</td>
<td>individual learning channel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widely used by them?</td>
<td>Not really, used by some of them but not very often</td>
<td>(Need to be improved in terms of practical perceptive)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to describe it?</td>
<td>An additional learning channel for individuals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any changes on Organizational level?</td>
<td>Almost none</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation on effectiveness?</td>
<td>Good on theory but not practical</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After several years development e-learning has been recognized by employees but the application has not reached an ideal level. Also the impacts for organizations have not been indicated to date.
5.2 E-learning and Organizational Structure (PBO Perspective)

In the literature review we already discussed the application of project-based learning and the blended learning approach in project-based organizations. The implementation of these two learning approaches can be found in this Chinese company due to the current status of the organizational structure and the technical level.

The blended learning approach is more effective and practical than just implementing traditional methods or the e-learning method alone (Barbian, 2002). Lim, Lee and Nam (2007) described the mix of conventional ways and the electronic way which are well recognized in organizations (Diagram 5-2).

![Diagram 5-2. Continuum of Communication Media](image)


Training methods of face-to-face training and internet training are the main training methods used in organizations and so far they cannot replace each other due to their own strengths and weaknesses.

In project-based organizations project-based learning, especially learning within a team, is widely and usually used by employees at different levels. Project-based learning helps employees to learn knowledge directly from their jobs by various means of learning, which are usually directly related to their work (Bagnasco et al., 2003).

And people, who usually accumulate experience based on their own project experience before, now can share other people’s experience easily without time and space limitations. In this way, e-learning provides the possibility to widen the scope of learning for individuals. At present, many of the Chinese employees think the e-learning system is not very practical for their jobs due to the content on the website, for example, no case sharing section but focusing only on some theories of market research. Therefore, improvements in the e-learning system need to be undertaken at a
global level, especially for the people in developing regions, who are eager to get advanced knowledge and experiences.

5.3 E-learning and Organizational Structure (MNC Perspective)

Based on our results another phenomenon has been noticed and that is that the model of launching and managing by headquarters only, while trying to use this model in each office worldwide has caused various problems.

First, cost-effectiveness, which is an important benefit of the adoption of the e-learning system mentioned by many authors, has not been given attention by the Chinese offices. The reason should be looked at from a financial viewpoint as a branch of IPSOS, so Chinese offices should not need to spend money on the implementation of the e-learning system. Also no charge is made for using this system so the return of investment evaluation is not part of their consideration. Based on this kind of situation it is not possible for them to evaluate the ROI of the e-learning system in China due to the lack of data. Also, ROI is not a universally accurate way to measure real life practices (Newton and Doonga, 2007).

Second, some authors also mention the strategic importance of e-learning (Mcrea, Gay and Bacon, 2000; Werner, 2003). However, this has not been indicated in the interviews. After adoption of the e-learning system the Chinese company has not put it at a strategic level and currently it is just an additional free learning channel for individuals and unfortunately, in this particular case, it still does not bring any direct changes at the organizational level, especially at the organizational learning or training level.

Third, Chinese offices usually are not involved in launching and maintaining of the e-learning system therefore they are not motivated to explore the value of this system.

Therefore, for multinational companies, involvement of the branches or offices in the investment and management processes of a global e-learning system could be a way to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of this system.

5.4 E-learning and Users

Based on Sampson et al.’s opinions they define e-learning users as front-end users and back-end users, from our results all the users in China belong to the front-end users because for them to access the system to get information or knowledge they want at any time in any place is what they can do on this system. All the back-end users who provide the materials on the platform are at headquarters or in other parts of the world.

This allocation of front-end and back-end users actually already causes the biggest problem: no interaction or communication between back-end users (such as trainers) and front-end users (such as trainees). As Lim et al. (2007) described in their research even multi-media remote training such as e-learning also needs the interaction between trainers and trainees and usually the more interaction the more
effectiveness. Our results show that the communication between back-end users and front-end users in China is almost nonexistent. Front-end users do not have any channels to express their opinions about improvements of this system on contents or use, which directly leads to the result that they stop using it after they do not find it is helpful for their work. Also, back-end users cannot prepare the materials efficiently because they lack the information on what the front-users need.

The fact that these users are not connected greatly limits the popularity of the e-learning system and generates a negative influence on the effectiveness of the system. The management, especially the management in Chinese offices, needs to build a bridge to help develop effective connections between both groups of users in order to make better use of this system. In addition, the French headquarters needs to recognize this problem and prepare a better strategy to link the front and back end users together in all of its international branches.

5.5 E-learning and Culture Barriers

Culture is one of the important factors influencing the implementation of an e-learning system (Jurich, 2001). In our analysis culture is divided into inter-cultural issues (such as language and some rules and policy issues) and company learning culture (support, environment, etc.) issues.

Li (1999) also mentions language which a user can prevent from getting information of an inter-cultural type, which is also indicated again by our results. In our interviews language has been identified as one of the key barriers to impede Chinese people using this system. As the global system of e-learning was launched only as an English version, this greatly increased the difficulties for some of the Chinese employees and consequently they have not accessed this system. Even some employees who can read and write English still claim that they would prefer a Chinese version to be available.

According to Trenholm and Jensen (2000), culture can be a set of “beliefs and values, norms and customs, and rules and codes that socially defines a group of people, binds them to one another and gives a sense of commonality”. When we look at some content from this perspective the e-learning system covers some financial and, HR information as part of the supporting system. While from our results, nobody from these departments in China has ever used this system because they believe rules, policies, and some information in their fields are quite different from those of other countries, regions and even places. As Bangnasco et al. (2003) argued “learners are interested in the knowledge that relate to their own work”.

In addition to inter-cultural barriers, we also find that the internal culture also needs to be improved to expand the use of the e-learning system. Wade (2003) emphasizes that the supportive learning culture determines the implementation result of an e-learning system. Unfortunately, our results show the lack of a presence of a
supportive learning culture in the Chinese company impedes the development of the e-learning system. In the actual environment there is no platform for Chinese users to communicate or discuss the questions occurring in their learning and also there are no measurements to track the connections between learning, employee performance and profitability (Silicon Valley World Internet Centre, 2001). Both of these are weaknesses on the growth and use of the e-learning system and to some extent, they reduce the reasons for users to continuously access this system.

Virtually all the literature on this topic agrees that e-learning provides the opportunity for uses to make better use of their time because a user can access the system at any time. However, none of the literature ever mentions that time could be a problem for users to access e-learning system, but our results indicate that it is. Many of our respondents speak of having no time to access the system for self-learning even if they want to do so. Apparently, workload is a serious problem in countries such as China. When all of their time is occupied working on projects they will not have any time to learn something new. The company cannot expect their employees to use their own time to learn online because in real situations, they do not have free time at work to access the system. However, this issue may not be the case in other industries which may operate differently from the market research industry Therefore, the idea of leaving some flexible time for staff to update their knowledge and get some new information could also be a way to drive them to use the e-learning system more often. Finally, the company is also one of the parties who could benefit from the individual learning and improvements of its human capital.

This cultural issue has been raised in many fields such as project management, communication, globalization, and innovation. In the learning perspective, cultural issues obviously play an important role to attract more learners and help their learning processes become simpler and easier. Specifically, the company needs to examine how to decrease the barriers of cultural aspects not only at the headquarters of the company but also from the branches in China.

5.6 E-learning and Technical Support

How easy it is to use this system is another key driver to decide the volume of users and the effectiveness of the system. Wells and Kick (1996) also point out that a suitable graphics and multimedia system can help to enhance the trainees’ interest and motivation. Lim et al. (2007) also mention that technical design and format can influence how easily trainees do things. The company also realizes this and tries their best to make the learning system less boring and easier to use in order to gain positive feedback from users.

However, another kind of technical support needs to be improved in order to build a platform for users to communicate more effectively. Currently, front-side users do not know who they can discuss the system with or ask if they have problems
or questions during learning, which reduces their interest to continue to access this system. Lim et al. (2007) analyze the importance of communication as follows:

*The online training environment must facilitate communication between physically and geographically separated trainers and trainees, provide for shared training material, and allow for debate among participants (Lim et al., 2007, 25).*

With the development of information technology building a platform is not technically difficult so it is up to how management to think about the importance of this communication channel that would allow the issue to be resolved so that improvement of the e-learning platform can be achieved for users.

**5.7 E-learning and Information (Knowledge) Movement**

Information technology has been mentioned as a solution to help transfer knowledge within organizations (Goh, 2002, 25). E-learning has also proved that it is a quite useful tool for the company, scattered in the different parts of the world, to build a learning environment. Employees in China directly get the information or knowledge updated by their colleagues in Europe in a fast and convenient way.

However, not all the knowledge can be transferred via an e-learning system. According to Ozdermir (2008) e-learning system cannot move or share tacit knowledge and generally are used to transfer explicit knowledge. In line with his opinion the users in China have also found out that e-learning can tell them some explicit information such as principles, types of research but they need to get other knowledge they need from other channels such as actual projects and, face-to-face training.

Furthermore, the results also raise another question that not all the explicit knowledge can be moved freely into an e-learning system. From the technical aspects anything can be saved in text, audio or video files can be shared on an e-learning system. But the reality is that they do not have some real case sharing knowledge, which is considered as the most useful content of training in project-based organizations. This is also the most important reason why users think this system is not practical for them. As Chinese users they expect to see how their colleagues in western countries handle projects but so far they can only get the theoretical aspects from the e-learning system.

The general situation of how e-learning helps knowledge transfer in IPSOS China can be described that some aspects are achieved but others need to be achieved in the future (Diagram 5-3).
Diagram 5-3. E-learning on Knowledge Transfer

So the issue is how to let the explicit knowledge move more freely, which is possible from a technical perspective, becomes a key driver for effective use of the e-learning system.

5.8 E-learning and Effectiveness

From a user’s viewpoint to evaluate this system, it appears that they are generally satisfied with the results that the system brings to them, consistent with our view part that users think e-learning is convenient, flexible, and covers large volume of information (Newton and Doonga, 2007). Chinese users also focus on its global sharing function, which gives them the possibility to update their knowledge at the same pace as developed countries area. However they do not find that e-learning could be a good way to monitor progress. Possibly, this is because this system is not compulsory for them to use and this is totally up to their own interests. So the function of monitoring has not been used by the company.

E-learning has been agreed as being a good individual learning channel but so far it does not have any direct impacts at the organizational level in the Chinese company, for example, the arrangement of training does not change because of the adoption of the e-learning system.

5.9 E-learning and its Measurement

Kirkpatrick (1979) suggests measuring the effectiveness of e-learning system in four levels and also Philips adds one more, ROI to assess an e-learning system. Additionally, different companies have their own ways of evaluation. From our interviews we did not receive any formal measurements used for the e-learning system in Chinese offices. The HR manager will measure it from an individual level.
such as the user’s reactions and what they learn from informal channels but this has not reached the level of comparison of the individual’s performance before and after they use it. In terms of the measurement at the organizational level such as business outcomes or ROI, it is shown that Chinese offices have not conducted this in a formal way.

However, from another perspective some new connections between an e-learning system and business performance have been found in the results. Actually, they have already begun their trials in a totally new way in order to make the e-learning system benefit their business. First of all, they open e-learning accounts for their clients or specifically open a unique opportunity for their key clients so that these clients can obtain the same knowledge as the market research company’s employees, which make the communication between clients and employees easier and also maintains and develops relationships with clients. Also, they think that the e-learning system improves their company image internally and externally, which are intangible values for the company.

Based on positive feedback from clients and the business perspective of establishing a formal and complete evaluation system to assess the e-learning system in IPSOS China is regarded as a positive advantage. The HR manager already realizes the benefits of linking e-learning to individual performance and the management recognizes the benefits to the organization and for profit opportunities.
CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter answers our research question and also gives some implications from the Chinese company management viewpoint.

6.1 The Role of E-learning in Project-based Organizations

Before providing any conclusions it is necessary to present our research objectives and questions again. In Chapter one, the research objective was indicated as to explore the role of e-learning in a project-based organisation in China and we need to answer the question of what is the role of e-learning in an international project-based organisation in China?

According to the results and analysis (Chapters three and five), it is clear that the e-learning system has obtained high awareness and a good reputation but not been fully used by the staff in this Chinese project-based organization. Until now, e-learning in this organization plays the role of an additional individual learning channel while in terms of the roles at team or organizational level, it has not been utilized successfully.

6.2 Detailed Description of E-learning in Project-based Organizations

Back to the detailed three sub-questions mentioned in chapter one here the final answers will be presented.

Why does the organisation under study adopt e-learning system?

The branches or offices of international companies located in China adopt a global e-learning system mainly because their headquarter launches this system and promotes it worldwide. Therefore, Chinese company actually does not have clear purpose to implement e-learning system and this phenomenon is different from the descriptions from some literatures (see chapter five). Chinese company would like to adopt it as one more information channel for their staff and more important they don't need to spend any money on it.

How do the users use e-learning system within the organisation?

Everyone in this organization knows of the existence of this e-learning system and users agree it is better to have this channel to obtain more professional information and knowledge from overseas colleagues. Considering it only as an individual used system, however, is not so effective. Most of the users are from the research department and it is difficult to find staff from supporting departments who have used it. However, even in the research department the researchers seem to use it only on some specific occasions and their frequency of use is not high.
Currently most users think the content of the system is too theoretical and can not be applied in practice directly. The advantages of this system have been noticed such as fast, convenient and large volume of information. And some other barriers impeding their motivation and using such as language limitation, non-interaction and over-workload and so on.

What is the impact of e-learning system to the individuals or organisation after its implementation?

In terms of impacts brought by this system in organizations so far no obvious changes have occurred no matter in training arrangements, team level or organizational level. As individuals they think it is good to have to but this system does not have much influence on their way to learn or work in actual environment.

6.3 Detailed Reasons Leading to the Current Usage.

E-learning has been adopted for several years by Chinese companies but why it seems to work in some departments or for some people, it has not become a more popular learning channel among individuals, teams or organization as it was expected to become.

Looking deeper into the reasons behind this phenomenon the following barriers have been identified:

First, e-learning system is usually launched by headquarters to meet the demands of global sharing and Chinese branches do not need to invest and also they are not usually involved in the process of its management so top management of Chinese branches do not pay enough attention and effort to promote this system internally.

Second, as a global system it is developed in English and so far no Chinese version is available so some of people, especially in supporting departments, do not use this system because of the language barrier.

Third, content arrangement has been too focused on theory and is not seen as practical to their actual projects, which is regarded as the most important knowledge staff expect to receive from this system.

Fourth, the lack of a platform for interaction or communication greatly reduces their interests and motivation to access this system.

Other reasons such as a heavy workload, not connected to their performance reviews and some Chinese staff prefer face-to-face training are also important.

6.4 Managerial Implications

As a ready-to-use and free of charge system, the e-learning system could be improved in both soft (pull) and hard (push) aspects in order to fully utilize this resource.

Here we define the ‘soft’ aspect as creating a supportive learning environment within the Chinese organization, which would be mainly used to encourage non-users
become users and current users to use it more often. A supportive learning environment includes arranging some suitable people or establishing some platforms to help uses get through the barriers to using the e-learning system.

1) Trying to give staff a little flexible time to re-charge themselves including updating their knowledge online. It is understandable that many staff cannot use the e-learning system because their office time is fully occupied by many projects. Similar cases in some organizations, such as 15% of daily personal time in 3M or 20% of free time in Google have been proved as a good way to facilitate innovation, learning and also to increase the loyalty of employees.

2) Open new staff positions to work as coordinators to establish a bridge between headquarters and Chinese users, would be one idea to improve the use and effectiveness of the e-learning system in China. This functional department could be responsible for providing the Chinese version for Chinese users and also updating it with the same speed as headquarters. Furthermore, it could also be responsible for obtaining more feedback from Chinese users and passing this information to headquarters in order to improve the system to meet the demands of Chinese users.

3) Build some interaction channels such as a forum or community of practice for users to communicate when they have doubts or questions on the learning process. On this platform users not only play the role of learners but also do some sharing work by themselves. They can upload some files or documents they want to share with others or ask for some feedback.

In another direction, the difficult aspect is monitoring individual progress of e-learning and bringing the results into the annual review system to assess personal performance. This solution also should be considered because in an organization implementation cannot only depend on encouragement but also needs some control. Linking learning results to staff performance could be regarded as a regulation to push the usage of the e-learning system and also to encourage users to see the benefits of using this system.

In the marketing field, a ‘pull’ strategy and a ‘push’ strategy are effective ways to let consumers know and buy your products. In our implication we borrow this double-sided strategy or solution to internal management to help this e-learning system to be accepted and used by more people in the organization. More importantly, by using the pull and push strategy we can move the role of the e-learning system from an individual learning level to an organizational level and so help to make this resource generate a greater influence in the organization.
CHAPTER 7

FURTHER RESEARCH

This chapter gives some suggestions or advice for future research on this topic so that other researchers can conduct deeper research in this field perhaps, using this research as a starting point.

7.1 Qualitative Research

This research has undertaken on a Chinese company, part of an international market research company as our target for a case study but unfortunately our interviews do not include professionals from headquarters but only focus on Chinese company employees. Therefore, a further study could involve some opinions from the headquarters company personnel since they are responsible launching the e-learning system. More comprehensive information from both parts of the company could lead to deeper analysis of this subject.

Moreover it would also be that such a study would expand the study in an interesting direction that would develop this single-case study into a much more extensive study to further develop this subject. The role of e-learning could change because of the different learning cultures of the two operations of the same company and this would allow a comparison of the results from both perspectives. Other branches of the same company could also be included in such a study.

Another direction could be to compare the results from project-based organizations who continue to operate with traditional functional organization structures. Our research focuses on a project-based organization and all the analyses are built on this premise but comparing a traditional organization may indicate some different findings.

7.2 Quantitative Research

Further research could also be quantitative rather than qualitative and thus assess the views of much larger numbers of respondents. Again, researching several Chinese (and/or other) companies in this way could prove interesting.
REFERENCES


IPSOS Website www.ipsos.com


Guidelines for Interviews

The interview guidelines have been developed for the interviews to be conducted. Generally, the guidelines are prepared in two different sets due to the different representativeness of respondents: one for the HR manager and the other for all the other target users. These separate sets of interview guidelines are unique in order to extract different perspectives from the HR viewpoint as well as users’ points-of-views. The guidelines are provided below to help understand the results.

The Guidelines for HR Manager:

1. Can you briefly describe the situation related to e-learning that IPSOS currently has?
2. Can you tell when and why IPSOS adopted this system?
3. How did IPSOS introduce an e-learning system to your staff? Does the HR department arrange some training continuously to let your employees know how to use it?
4. Who is involved in the introduction process of the e-learning system?
5. How does top management treat this adaptation?
6. What is the current situation of the use of the e-learning system?
7. Who is responsible for contents-related issues? Can you give some detail about how this process works?
8. Have you followed the progress of the application of the e-learning system to know the satisfaction with this system in IPSOS?
9. Have there been any problems after adopting the e-learning system?
10. Does top-management ever ask for further feedback reports or information about the e-learning system?
11. Has e-learning changed your way of working? In what aspects?
12. What other changes has the e-learning have brought to IPSOS?
13. Can you compare the training in IPSOS before and after the adoption of e-learning?
14. Compared with your original expectation, how would you describe the current status of e-learning?
15. What would you say are the advantages and drawbacks of e-leaning compared with the training methods previously used in IPSOS?
16. Are there any other unmet needs or some aspects needed to be improved in this e-learning system? Please give details of these aspects.
17. If we ask you to give some evaluation of this system, what would you say about this from different perspectives as:
   2) Individual level
   3) Department level
4) Organization level

18. What do you think about the future of the e-learning system in IPSOS?

**The Guidelines for End-users:**

1. Can you briefly describe the situations related to e-learning that IPSOS currently has?
2. Can you tell us what kinds of training methods were available before the adoption of the e-learning system?
3. How do you know about this e-leaning system?
4. How did IPSOS let you know how to use this system?
5. Have you ever used it? If no, why not?
6. If yes, how often do you use it? how often?(average frequency per week)
7. Generally in what kinds of situation you would like to use the e-learning system? What kinds of information/knowledge do you get from this e-learning system?
8. Did you find any problems in using the e-learning system? How are these problems resolved?
9. Are you satisfied/dissatisfied with this e-learning system? In which aspects?
10. Has e-learning changed your way of leaning? Please give some examples.
11. Has e-learning changed your way of working? In what aspects?
12. What other changes has e-learning brought to you, your team or IPSOS?
13. Do you think the e-learning system supersedes some of your traditional training methods? If yes, which has been replaced? If not, why?
14. If compared to the traditional training in IPSOS, how would you describe e-learning?
15. Generally speaking, what would you say are the advantages and drawbacks of e-leaning in IPSOS?
16. Are there any other unmet needs or some aspects which need to be improved in this e-learning system? Please give details of these aspects.
17. If we ask you to give a general evaluation of this system, what would you say about it?
18. What do you think about the future of the e-learning system in IPSOS?